

THE UNIVERSITY OF HULL

The Religious and Political Thought of Swami Vivekananda

being a thesis submitted for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy in Politics

in the University of Hull

by

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January 1996

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

After having completed this thesis, I am firmly convinced that my part in the project - researching and writing - was infinitely easier than the part played by those who stood by me and supported me throughout. What is most valuable is not the academic knowledge, but rather the insight into human nature, that those people who stood close to and by me, did so because they wanted to and not out of obligation. Their determination far superseded mine.

I dedicate this thesis and the years that have gone into it, to my parents, both of whom have given me more support than I thought possible. Despite coming from a family concerned more with business than academia, they never questioned why I was pursuing a Ph.D. On the contrary, they encouraged me and whenever I questioned why I was pursuing this course, they were there to provide the answers. My whole family - my five sisters and their families, Mr. and Mrs. M. Kaul - who stood by me and motivated me when my motivation had flagged. The dinners, the wine and the whisky all contributed to my motivation, I hope.

I would like to thank my supervisor, Professor Bhikhu Parekh for making all the complicated questions clear in my mind, for his guidance and for his limitless insight. I would also like to thank my internal and external examiners, Professor N.K. O'Sullivan and Dr. S. Kaviraj, without both of whom, I would never have passed. There are many friend who have also given me their support, regardless of whether I would return it or not and I would like to mention just a few of them: Caroline for her

unfaltering resolve and tenacity, Kate for her ability to distract me when I needed it, Leonora for inspiring me, Marta for staying in London, Ntuma for moving to Spain during my last year of the Ph.D., Paddy for helping me through the last panic, Phil for his incredible ability to encourage me to have one more drink, Shivan for still answering my phone calls in the middle of the night his humour and intelligence, both of which kept me up at night, Silvia for staying in London with Marta and Teresa for her vivaciousness. I would also like to thank everyone in the office for helping me re-type the whole thesis in a hurry after my computer had been stolen.

Summary of thesis submitted for Ph.D.

by Aron Harilela

on

Religious and Political Thought of Swami Vivekananda

Vivekananda's thought has been subject to many different interpretations. In the 1890s. Krishna Verma, writing for the journal Sociologist, claimed that Vivekananda was influenced by the evolutionary ideas of Herbert Spencer, which emphasized struggle and the eventual survival of the fittest. Verma therefore concluded that Vivekananda advocated what Verma called 'righteous terrorism', which was an attempt to purify the Indian race, to weed out the weak and to create a society of strong, robust individuals. In recent years, the Bharatiya Janata Party has tended to appropriate Vivekananda for its own political purposes by interpreting him as an ideologist of its brand of Hinduism. There are others who have seen Vivekananda as a socialist; an interpretation that became prominent in the twentieth century Indian nationalist movement.

I wish to argue that although these and other interpretations capture important aspects of Vivekananda's thought, they do not do him full justice. My basic contention in this thesis would be that Vivekananda's project was larger than has been traditionally interpreted and largely consisted in the spiritual and political regeneration of the Indian civilization. Vivekananda thought that India had steadily become degenerate over the last few centuries: its people

were divided, they lacked vitality, and possessed no spirit of social service. Moreover, he thought that the traditional Hindu thought had a deep structural tendency to oscillate between anarchic individualism, on the one hand, and collective authoritarianism, on the other. This was evident, for example, in the fact that while the Hindu was free religiously to choose whatever beliefs s/he liked, socially s/he was bound by the rigid norms of his/her caste. For these and other reasons, Vivekananda thought that Indian society, and especially Hindu society, had reached a point where it must either radically regenerate itself, or disintegrate and disappear.

PREFACE

Swami Vivekananda was born Narendranath Datta on 12 January 1863 in Simla, India. Naren attended the Metropolitan Institution and was greatly influenced by Surendranath Banerjee, the then Principal, who later became a foremost Indian nationalist leader.

Naren completed his First Arts (F.A.) and Bachelor of Arts (B.A.) at the Scottish General Missionary Board (now known as the Scottish church College). He read English, History, Maths and Philosophy for his B.A. At the time of his undergraduate degree, India was witnessing the first stirrings of political awakening. Surendranath Banerjee was particularly predominant, emphasizing that a strong physical culture was a prerequisite for patriotism and eventually a strong Indian nation.

At this time Narendranath's interest in politics grew and he joined the Brahmo Samaj, a society fighting against the moribund state of Hindu society. The leader, Keshabchunder Sen emphasized liberalization as well as conservation, a programme initiated by Ram Mohan Roy. The main thrust of the society was directed against polytheism, idolatry, the doctrine of living incarnations, weakness of the race caused by delusions of spiritual grandeur. In terms of its social policy, the *Samaj* aimed at the eradication of the caste system, the recognition of all humans as equal, education and emancipation for all, raising of the marriageable age and the abolition of religious rigidity. The *Samaj* eventually split into two factions in 1878 and Naren joined the Sadharan Brahmo Samaj, headed by Shivanath Shastri and Vijaykrishna Goswami. This faction laid great emphasis on the education of the masses, irrespective of creed or colour.

In 1881 Naren first met Ramakrishna Parahamsa. Naren's fascination for Ramakrishna was paradoxical because the latter represented traditional India in all its asceticism and spiritual splendour. Nevertheless Naren was fascinated and through this association, Narendranath Datta became Swami Vivekananda. Vivekananda is characterized as the originator of the attempt to combine the life-affirmation of the West with the spirituality of India.

In 1893 Vivekananda left India for America to attend the World Parliament of Religions in Chicago, travelling through South East Asia. He reached America on July 25 1893 and travelled to Boston where he met Franklin Benjamin Sanborn, a man interested in Transcendentalism and who later founded the Concord School of Philosophy. Vivekananda also met Dr. John Henry Wright, a professor of Greek Classics at Harvard and it was he who arranged for Vivekananda to become a delegate at the Parliament of Religions.

The Parliament of Religions took place between 11 and 27 of September 1893. At the Parliament Vivekananda gave many lectures, and captivated the audience. His first formal speech was on 19 September. In this speech he attempted to present a summary of the philosophical, psychological and general ideas of Hinduism, *Vedanta* and the harmonizing of all religions, religious ideas, all forms of worship, viewing them as different presentations of truth and various paths to realization, emphasizing throughout that tolerance was the highest religious ideal. In conclusion, he presented the idea of Universal Religion and the need for one. He made a lasting impression on many in the Parliament. After his final address on 27 September, The New York Herald noted: "He is undoubtedly the greatest figure in the Parliament of Religions. After hearing him we feel how foolish it is to send missionaries to such a learned nation." After the Parliament

Vivekananda toured America, giving lectures and attempting to raise funds for his projects in India.

On his return to India in January 1897, he set about implementing a programme for the regeneration of India. This programme incorporated the destruction of caste, the encouragement of progress, welfarism, life-affirmation, logic in religion and yet the need for spirituality in political and social realms, the spread of *Advaitic* catholicity, organization, education and self-improvement and eventually the betterment of the Indian nation.

Vivekananda set up the Ramakrishna *Vedanta* Mission in 1898 for the implementation of the programme. The monastery was set up initially in 1886 in Barangore but eventually moved to Belur Math in Calcutta, where it still stands today. Vivekananda is heralded as one of the founders of Independent India and his name is still mentioned as one of India's greatest thinkers.

INTRODUCTION

Ever since Vivekananda began to write, his thought has been subject to many different interpretations. In the 1890s, Krishna Verma, writing for the journal Sociologist, claimed that Vivekananda was deeply influenced by the evolutionary ideas of Herbert Spencer, which emphasized struggle and the eventual survival of the fittest. Verma therefore concluded that Vivekananda was an advocate of terrorism, or what he called 'righteous terrorism', which was an attempt to purify the Indian race, to weed out the weak and to create a society of strong and robust individuals. In recent years, the Bharatiya Janata Party has tended to appropriate Vivekananda for its own political purposes by interpreting him as an ideologist of its brand of Hinduism. There are others who have seen Vivekananda as a socialist. The particular interpretation became extremely prominent during the course of the twentieth century Indian nationalist movement, and this is how Vivekananda, for example, has been understood by important personalities such as Jawaharlal Nehru.

I wish to argue that although these and other interpretations capture important aspects of Vivekananda's thought, they do not do him full justice. My basic contention in this thesis would be that Vivekananda's project was much larger than has been traditionally interpreted and largely consisted in the moral, spiritual and political regeneration of the Indian civilization. Like many of his contemporaries, he thought that India, once a great society, had steadily become degenerate over the last

few centuries: its people were divided, they lacked a sense of unity as well as vitality, and possessed no spirit of social service. He also thought that the traditional Hindu thought had a deep structural tendency to oscillate between anarchic individualism, on the one hand, and collective authoritarianism, on the other. This was evident, for example, in the fact that while the Hindu was free religiously to choose whatever beliefs s/he liked, socially s/he was bound by the rigid norms of his/her caste. For these and other reasons, Vivekananda thought that Indian society, and especially Hindu society, had reached a point where it must either radically regenerate itself, or disintegrate and disappear.

The question for him then, was how to go about regenerating the Hindu civilization. He produced a twofold regenerative project. Firstly, although the Hindu society had become degenerate, Vivekananda thought that its constitutive, or central principles, were basically sound. Therefore, he decided to return to and recapture some of the central inspiring principles of the classical Hindu civilization. Secondly, Vivekananda thought that even those principles, despite being fundamentally sound, needed to be supplemented by others, especially those which had particular relevance to the modern times. Vivekananda therefore turned to other religions, especially Islam and Christianity in order to explore why they had been able to regenerate themselves periodically, and create a robust society capable of conquering and ruling over India. He was also enormously impressed by the modern civilization. Although critical of its excesses and materialism, he thought that the modern European civilization had a creative energy and vitality from which Indian society can greatly benefit. Therefore, Vivekananda's project was ultimately to regenerate Indian civilization by appropriating first, the central principles

of Hindu civilization, and second, some of the important insights of other religions and modernity. In this thesis, I intend to explore how he set about this project and the kind of synthetic vision of new India he managed to develop.

My first chapter deals with Vivekananda's observations of Living Hinduism and his analysis of it. He attempted to discern what aspects of Hinduism encouraged life-negation and an indifference to temporal activity. Vivekananda described the contemporary state of affairs as 'Don't Touchism', expounding that Living Hinduism was but a disguise for food regulations and notions of purity and impurity. Hence, he attempted a reformulation and regeneration of Hinduism in the light of the then political predicament, the questions posed by such a predicament and towards the creation of a nationalist sentiment.

The second chapter addresses Vivekananda's analysis of Islam in India, delving into the religion, asking why a Muslim's belief was intense and why they, as a community, were unified in religious, social, economic and political spheres. Vivekananda looked to Islam for inspiration in his intentions in creating the optimum individual and the creation of unity within the Hindu community. Vivekananda's solution for emphasizing political potency was unity. To reiterate, it is not enough to say that politics needs religion to join social service to religion. It is necessary to formulate an underlying reason why one should be politically active as well as socially active. Vivekananda justifies unity by emphasizing that religion teaches singularity, union, totality, oneness, harmony and hence, unity. Vivekananda emphasized that these can co-exist within diversity. Furthermore, strength is a religious dictum. Truth is strengthening, he asserted. Following this line of discussion, nationalism, unity and political

cohesiveness as well as social cohesiveness are the embodiment of active religion.

Chapter Three concerns Vivekananda's critical examination of Christianity with the aim of finding a religious rationale for two purposes: to join active service of humanity to religion, and to incorporate materialism into the Indian religious *Weltanschauung* as a means of limiting spirituality and creating a relationship between religion, morality and rationality: thus, it would create a blueprint for a humanistic temporal salvation in a nationalistic religion. Vivekananda searched for an identity for the Indian individual within this context. The fact that he sought here for an identity; one that transcended religious particularism, is indicative of his opinion that religion is a temporal activity, as distinct from spirituality. A spiritual identity is not bound by religious or political activity. This is instrumental in informing the opinion that, on the one hand, morality - religious, political, social or economic - is circumstantial and that on the other, there is an underlying, universal instinctual righteousness, divorced from temporal activity while it should inform temporal activity. As a consequence, any particularization, segmentation, religious, political or otherwise, loses its validity.

Most studies of Vivekananda recognize that Vivekananda looked to Christianity for inspiration and borrowed from it, a method to join *seva* to religion. However, such studies fail to recognize that this method explains only the guidelines to be followed; it does not explain the limits of active service. This is highly significant because these studies fail to recognize the extent to which Vivekananda examined Christianity. He discerned that the rule of active service in Christianity is dogmatic precisely because it does not separate spirituality from religion; leaving the two conjoined, it

can therefore encourage religious particularization. Vivekananda emphasized that the ideology underlying *seva* must acknowledge that morality is circumstantial. The building of hospitals and schools in Christianity is for the religious salvation of the server, not those who are benefiting from that service. Furthermore, Christianity can offer the same salvation to the hermit as to the server. Vivekananda emphasized that freedom of thought and of action is integral to spiritual salvation, which requires mental and physical *Lebensraum*. Hence, not only the server is advancing his chance for salvation, but is aiding the chances for salvation for those s/he is helping. Therein Vivekananda discovered a rationale why one's religiosity is linked to that of others, and others are advanced. Most studies fail to recognize that Vivekananda looked to Christianity for theories of active service and applied it to the Indian situation; not only this, but in finding fault with them, improved them and found in them a rationale for collective salvation, egalitarianism and religiosity.

Chapter Four discusses Vivekananda as a political activist for independence, as a political thinker for Indian nationalism. Both these roles would be nugatory if he had produced no ideological alternative to British Imperialism. Vivekananda embarked on a political project, combining Western liberal ideals with Indian spirituality and amalgamating them to produce what is here referred to as 'Vivekananda's liberalism'. Vivekananda's liberalism was an ideology incorporating an emphasis on the autonomy of the individual and nation: an attempt to translate morality into the language of rights and obligations and the social contract. Vivekananda's applicability to modern India hinges on his ability to translate spiritual concepts into political terminology. It is incongruous for a Constitution to explain that an individual should respect another's

autonomy because both souls are the embodiment of the Atman, a part of the Brahman. In other words, it would appear ridiculous to base a political system on notions emanating from religious faith. This chapter concentrates on the difficulties in adopting a liberal-humanist code in a country where compromise and bargaining are not possible (because of the nature of imperialism). The chapter assesses Vivekananda's liberalism as a *Realpolitik*.

The final chapter deals with Vivekananda's theory of the state. A theory of the state is incomplete without a discourse on citizenship, citizenship values, freedom, liberty and pluralism. Although Vivekananda attempted to superimpose Western political notions onto the Indian setting, the adequacy of such a translation remains undefined. How Vivekananda reconciled the Indian conception of man with Western views of production, for example, remains unanswered and yet is vital in assessing Vivekananda's blueprint for the Indian nation. Citizenship as an emotion remains, integrating the creation of a sense of belonging, empathy, concern, cooperation, public order and public accountability. Belonging is the fundamental emotion on which a nationalistic religion must rest. This is, furthermore, all the more vital because of India's heterogeneous reality and divided loyalties. Empathy, concern, cooperation, public order and public accountability are required elements in the modern state. This chapter deals with Vivekananda's attitude to these.

CHAPTER I

THE REGENERATION OF HINDUISM

Philosophical Background

The Indian view of reality is highly philosophical in character and content. There is no division between epistemology and ontology in the Indian *Weltanschauung*: Truth and Being are synonymous; the aim of an individual's life is to *live* truth. Religion and reason, rationality and faith, are not seen as binary opposites. The Indian *Weltanschauung* is dissimilar to the Western, where there exists a strict division between science and religion. The Indian would complain of the Western tendency to compartmentalize and in so doing to misunderstand the true nature of Being. To Vivekananda, this compartmentalization has led to the religious intolerance, the doctrine of proselytization and the atrocities which have ensued, because in misunderstanding the nature of Being, one misunderstands the nature of diversity. According to the Indian view and to Vivekananda, the combination of reality, religion and rationality correspond closely to the indivisibility of mankind; the underlying unity of humans, regardless of religion, creed, colour or any other distinction, is based on the notion that the existence of a soul, common to every living being, is the foundation of life. Life not only is the substance of humans, but the substantial cause of the universe. Life, energy and existence are all synonymous with the *Brahman*. Existence, energy and life within a human is called *Atman*, with this and *Brahman* being identical in substance. The idea of tolerance in the Hindu religion and to Vivekananda derives from this indivisibility of life and the identity of *Atman* and *Brahman*.

A category being a way of knowledge as well as a mode of being, the doctrine of categories is both epistemological and ontological. In Kant categories are subjective and then they are applied to the objective world - hence the necessity of transcendental deduction of categories from the point of view of knowledge when we want to have complete world-view. They must be applied to things and then only what is epistemologically true will be ontologically real. To say that the Summun Genus or Being is the highest category is logically valid.

Add to this the nature of Being and the description becomes ontologically complete as well. This is what Hegel did by identifying Reason with Being. With him reality and rationality being one, the ontological categories are necessarily the logical categories.¹

Opposing points of view, such as those in metaphysics, have argued that the doctrine of many independent realities would be logically tenable only with the surrender of one of the essential characteristics of this doctrine - either 'manyness' or independence. However, both are prerequisites of pluralism; the surrender of either or both would be the destruction of pluralism. The Monist contends that independence of being cannot co-exist with 'manyness'. Vivekananda was a 'Qualified Monist' and thus was able to reconcile 'manyness' and independence. There were parts of Sankara's Absolute Monism that, to the Qualified Monists, could not relate to temporal reality.

¹ Ranade R.D., *Vedanta: the Culmination of Indian Thought*, Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Bombay, 1970, p 20.

History of philosophy both Indian and Western has given us instances of all varieties of attempts at understanding the nature of reality - pluralism, dualism and monism. Both in West and East we have the doctrine of atomism - the Greek atomists and the Vaisesikas, dualism in Descartes and in Samkhya, and monism in Spinoza and in Sankara. But Plato is evidently the greatest of the Greek philosophers whose thought has a Vedantic significance. Though the theory of Ideas is peculiarly Greek in character, the central conception of the theory, namely, the Idea of the God, and the emanation of the other Ideas therefrom has a close parallel to the idea of the great Brahman in Vedantic philosophy and the manner in which other things stand related to it. As the Idea of the Great is only Ultimate Reality in Vedanta, all other things being merely appearances.²

There are two fundamental means by which this can be conceptualized: Absolute Monist, and Qualified Monist, as exemplified in Sankara and Ramanuja respectively. The former contended that only the *Brahman* exists; everything else is illusion and a product of the ignorance of man, or *Maya*. Even action is futile because action requires a mind to make decisions and a body to carry out those decisions. Furthermore, the purpose of action is to cause a change in the circumstances and the person; if the *Atman* is identical to the *Brahman*, which is unchangeable either internally or as a product of temporal change, action is futile in both respects. The Qualified Monist view that Vivekananda adopted, is rather more henotheistic in that the *Brahman* is the Ultimate Reality and the *Atman* is simply a divine reflection of it; yet, it accepts the nature of temporal life (albeit as a product of *maya*) and thus accepts plurality and the variety of humans as miniature 'God' (the word 'God' being used for convenience because the *Brahman* is indescribable).

² Ibid., p21.

The category of Samanya (universality) according to the Visesika system is permanent; it is one and persists in many. It is that which exists in more than one individual and is universal in character (Nityamanekamugatam samanyam). There are two meanings to the word Samanya: (a) a universal characteristic and (b) a class-concept (Jati)...If Samanya is one eternal and exists in many things, the highest Samanya will be nothing but the immanent Brahman which though one, eternally resides in the infinite thing.³

The relationship between individuals is not only material according to this philosophy, but is, moreover, spiritual and natural ('nature' has a higher significance in the Indian philosophy because of the perception and symbology of it as synonymously both 'nature' and the 'mother'; and nature has the role, in the philosophy, of the caretaker of humanity because salvation lies in following one's inner nature). Each human is imbued with the same force and therefore each is essentially the same as all others. Hence, the universality and indivisibility of mankind is assumed as by right.

External relations should therefore be characterized by "a device of pluralistic realism which is keen on explaining the interdependence of things but at the same time aware that relatedness will be seriously untenable with their independence."⁴

Pluralism can succeed without the existence of a relationship between people. However, Vivekananda failed to envisage this because he derived and structured his visions of pluralism from his religious point of view. He emphasized the internal relation and the connection between people through their work and action - the goal of work being

³ Ibid., pp23-4.

⁴ Ibid., p25.

the upliftment of India. The internal relationship plays a large part in Vivekananda's theory of interdependence, universality and toleration. On the one hand, there are obvious flaws in emphasizing the working relationship between people as the foundation of interdependence, universality and toleration; on the other, work and action create a dynamic relationship. In religious terminology, *karma* takes on a larger role than *gunas* because "[q]ualities are stationary, actions are dynamic."⁵ The position adopted by Gandhi in this discussion throws much light on Vivekananda's understanding.

Gandhi saw more clearly than most other writers both the interdependence of human beings and the ways in which systems of domination and exploitation were built up and sustained. He argued that all systems of domination rested on a profound misunderstanding of human nature, and wrongly assumed that it was possible for one man or group of men to harm another without also harming themselves. Human beings were necessarily interdependent and formed an organic whole.⁶

Vivekananda echoed the typical Hindu claim about the tolerance within Hinduism, stating that Hindus not only tolerate, but accept every religion, "knowing that all religions...[are] attempts of the human soul to grasp and realise the infinite, each determined by the conditions of its birth and association, and each of them making a stage of progress."⁷ However, there is an individualistic dimension to the idea of tolerance.

[A]s beings capable of morality and critical self-reflection, human beings could not degrade or maltreat

⁵ Ibid., p26.

⁶ Parekh B., 'Gandhi's Legacy?', being a paper given at the Annual Lecture at The School of Oriental and Asian Studies (SOAS), 1995.

⁷ Swami Jyotirmayananda (edited and compiled), *Vivekananda: a Comprehensive Study*, All India Press, Pondicherry, 1993, p50.

others without hardening themselves too against the latter's suffering...building up distorted systems of self-justification, coarsening their moral sensibilities, and lowering their own and collective level of humanity...damaging their capacities for critical self-reflection and impartial self-assessment, and falling victims to moral conceit.⁸

Vivekananda, following the Hindu tradition emphasized that 'God is within' and therefore critical self-examination is the duty of every individual. There is no 'external God' to judge 'the living and the dead' at the 'Gates of St. Peter'. Self-reflection is of the utmost importance in Vivekananda's thought and self-examination is the foundation of the 'realization' of the Ultimate Reality.

Thus, religion to Vivekananda, as to the *Advaitin*, consists not of dogmas and rituals, but of realization, the basis of tolerance. Man's goal is to realize and feel God, a realization that prevents him from succumbing to the limitations of the senses and hence aids in his assertion of his freedom. The idea of realization is a great one to learn and adhere to. "This turmoil and fight and difference in religions will only cease when we understand that religion is not in books and temples. It is actual perception."⁹ In itself, the *Qu'ran* is not realization but aims to help the realization of God. Vivekananda attempted to convey this to Muslims in India. While this may be a very Hindu viewpoint, it is nevertheless the foundation of the religious humanist doctrine and modern, in nature. In this sense, it is not necessarily Hindu; simply because the Hindu religion advocates it, it need not be peculiarly Hindu; it may be modern and universal. The fact that it may not be acknowledged by other religions does not mean that it is not universal.

⁸ 'Gandhi's Legacy?' op. cit., p4.

Vivekananda, following the *Vedantic* religion enthused that religion and life must cater for and accommodate all types of beings and humans - the active, the emotional, the mystic and the philosopher. That is not to say that the Hindu society has mastered this, the failing being readily demonstrated in the existence of the caste system. Types of *yogas* are designed precisely to accommodate distinctions: *Karma yoga* allows the active man to 'realize' through work; *Bhakti yoga* through devotion and love; *Raja yoga* through control of the mind, and *Jnana* through knowledge. The idea of self-abnegation is at the centre of morality. There are two aspects, one negative and the other positive: *Pravritti* - revolving towards, and *Nivritti* - revolving away from. In essence, the former implies the natural tendency of humans: taking things and relating them to oneself and heaping them around oneself and heaping them around oneself. The latter entails the destruction of this tendency and the commencement of religion and morality,¹⁰ which may be achieved not only by the Hindu but by one of any race or religion. Vivekananda wrote that

[a]lthough a man has not studied a single system of philosophy, although he does not believe in God, and never has believed, although he has not prayed even once in his whole life, if the simple power of good actions has brought him to that state where he is ready to give up his life and all else for others, he has arrived at the same point to which the religious man will come through his prayers and the philosopher through knowledge. Hence it is not at all any question of creed

⁹ *Vivekananda: a Comprehensive Study*, op.cit., p55-6.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

or doctrine - even men, who are very much opposed to all religious ideas.¹¹

This has many implications. Religion is not solely about morals. If it were, religion should not be called 'religion' at all, and moreover, there is no reason why man should be religious as opposed to simply moral. Religions such as Islam would respond, unequivocally, that religion is not only about morals, but is a creed. The foundation of the *Vedantic* idea is that life is not a battle between good and bad but that every element in life is a degree of both. Furthermore, time is cyclical and therefore, if only one religion were true, others would become defunct by virtue of accumulated knowledge. Given the cyclical nature of time, religions professing that there is a certain code of ethics, a creed and doctrine, both of which never change, would not be progressive; if man were to act according to such unchanging ethics, creeds and doctrines, he would not be progressive he would be stagnant in every aspect of life. *Vedantins* are fond of echoing Christ's message that 'The Kingdom of God is within' and hence, religions cannot be creeds and dogmas. This understanding of religion is reflected in Vivekananda's thought, as shall be seen later.

What, then, constitutes religion? Vivekananda held that it is the realization and acknowledgement that every soul is potentially divine, that the goal of life is to manifest this divinity, and that the goal of religion is to help in this manifestation. A person who discriminates against others is obscuring the divinity. One's divinity should be manifested through control of the internal and external environment, as is effected through work, worship, psychic control, philosophy or a combination of any of these factors.

¹¹ Ibid., pp59-60.

What is meant by the term “divinity”? Most people have a very vague notion about this. Divinity is an existence which is infinite, immortal, imperishable; absolute, all-knowing, all-powerful, and ever blissful. The word divinity, therefore, implies the state of (1) absolute existence, (2) unlimited power, (3) Infinite knowledge, and (4) eternal bliss...Divine perfection is unlimited and un-conditioned by time, space, and causation.¹²

Our unconscious striving for perfection is manifest in our desire to live without suffering, death and imperfection. Vivekananda interpreted this as being based on the fact that we are born with the conviction that perfection is our birthright. “We want to know. We spontaneously feel that we have a right to attain a state where there will not be anything in this universe unknown to us. We are all looking for that state of realisation.”¹³

There are obstacles to the realization of divinity: non-knowledge, false consciousness, desire and attachment. *Yoga* (from the root *yuj* which means ‘to join’) is the method of overcoming this. *Raja yoga* is to join the individual and mistaken consciousness and to cultivate discipline; *Bhakti yoga* to join the soul to *Brahman*, in order that the ego be purified and emotions directed towards God; *Jnana yoga* is to lift the veil of ignorance to cultivate a faculty of discrimination; and *Karma yoga* is to neutralize the evil effects of *karma* and to take charge of *karma* (causation). All are directed to destroy the ego and I-consciousness, both of which serve to separate individuals from God.

Indian philosophy has a

¹² Swami Gnaneswarananda, ‘What is Religion?’ in *ibid.*, pp111-2.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p112.

universal and primary concern for and almost a preoccupation with matters of spiritual significance - in practically every sense of the word, in all its many ramifications, and perhaps especially with reference to the ultimate spiritual goal of man. (there is not *too much* of an argument against the "characteristic" - except for the entire extensive literature of the Dharma-sastras and the Artha-sastras, in which society, welfare is the primary concern and man's ultimate destiny is of little or no serious concern).¹⁴

This view includes an unequivocal belief in the soul or the spiritual principle within man, *karma* as action and causation. The *Vedantic* strand connects with this, a form of Absolutism or monism, linking to the *Brahman* the spiritual principle within. "There is no Absolutism or monism in any of the Six Systems of Hinduism except the Vedanta."¹⁵ Because of this monism and its ramifications, *Vedanta* (as well as Vivekananda) appears to be preoccupied with the eternal principles of life and ignores the 'peripherals' as being unnecessary aspects of *Maya*. This is precisely why the Hindu has trouble in understanding the rationale behind monotheistic religions. A synthetic attitude urges the Indian to believe that all religions, points of view, philosophies, are partly true, none false, but by the same token, none are completely true and hence lead to the striving of mankind to find this truth. Vivekananda echoed precisely this in his arguments and discussions against such religions as Christianity and Islam.

This concern is manifested in India's deep concern for the inner man at the expense of the outer. To Vivekananda, man's capabilities are infinite because his soul and mind transcend his material self. The disadvantage of this is that Indian social and political philosophy, ethics and metaphysics

¹⁴ Moore, C.A., 'Introduction: The Comprehensive Indian Mind' in Moore C.A., (ed.) with assistance of Morris A.V., *The Indian Mind: Essentials of Indian Philosophy and Culture*, East-West Centre Press, University of Hawaii Press, Honolulu, 1967, p12.

are highly idealistic. Ethics, for example, is subordinated to spiritual enlightenment and should therefore be transcended. Principles such as *Ahimsa* are ultimate, regardless of religion, creed or colour (that is not to say that it is a dogmatic principle - for example, the shepherd who does not kill the wolf is putting himself and the sheep of which he is in charge, in danger).

The relationship between the individual and the *Brahman* should create essential faith in the former. The early period of Indian thought (*circa* 1500 to 1000 B.C.) was characterized by an admiration for the individual which shines through in the social theories and the spirit of Indian Thought from the *Vedas* to the present day.¹⁶ Women were well regarded and many great *Upanishadic* philosophers were women; boys and girls underwent initiation for education together. Even caste was egalitarian: "The primary objective in the whole of India's extensive devotional literature is to refute the idea that a person's social status or class membership is of any significance of all."¹⁷ Vivekananda shared this concern for egalitarianism and a belief in the individual's infinite capabilities.

The religious literature proclaimed equality. Not only were Krishna's *gopis* members of the undercastes, but Rama ate berries previously tasted by a lower caste girl. Women were deemed sacred, and to die for a woman would surely result in the gaining of heaven; in the *Mahabharata*, Svetaketu's father said: "The women of all classes on earth are free."¹⁸ Hence the need for *yoga*, the precedent training necessary for the mental conviction and discipline for this meditation.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Saksena, 'The Individual in Social thought and practice in India', in *ibid.*, p369.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p363.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p364, quoting *Mahabharata* I.122.44.

However, there is an obvious difference between philosophical Hinduism and living Hinduism, Vivekananda claimed. One witnesses the most anachronistic rituals co-existing with the highest forms of religious and spiritual thought in the Indian tradition, culminating in non-dualism (*advaita* or monism). One does not need to believe in the existence of God, in Hindu thought; a belief shared by Vivekananda. Religion is the conviction about the inwardness of man's conscious being.¹⁹ Religion is a Western word and has little significance when translated into the Indian tradition. It is etymologically translated as *dharma* and means 'that which supports'.²⁰ In the Indian tradition, there is no fixed dogma or creed. Hinduism is not a revealed religion, but reflective and thus, instead of conflicting with, complements science and reason. It is not tribal as the *Yahveh* of Judaism, starting as a tribal God, then becoming the god of Israel, and only then becoming universal; the social and ethical code of the tribe still persists. In reflective religions, there is no single code. Müller called the Hindu religion a 'psychological' religion and Hocking called it a 'reflective' religion. Realization is inward and therefore it is universal, not particularist. Vivekananda was greatly concerned with proving this. "Conversion means conferring communal membership; it does not mean conferring of, or initiation into, inwardness. Truth, whether scientific or religious, is open to all; it is not the monopoly of an individual or group."²¹

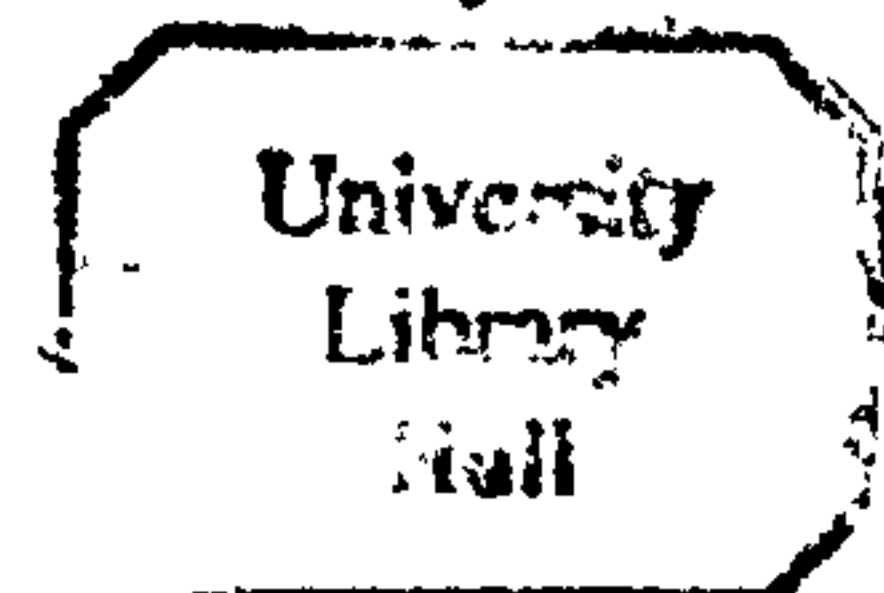
The *Vedas* and the *Upanishads* have been the subject of long and tortuous debates. Their meaning and interpretation have been debated for centuries. Deutsch and van Buitenen give a synopsis of the topics within, omitting consideration of individual commentaries²² from which I have extracted points relevant to understanding Vivekananda's religious

¹⁹ Raju, 'Religion and Spiritual values in Indian Thought' in *ibid.*, p184.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p185.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p186.

²² Deutsch and van Buitenen, 'System; contents summary of the *Brahmasutras*' in *A Source Book of Advaita Vedanta*, The University Press of Hawaii, Honolulu, 1971.



background. The following is from the *Brahmasutras* 3.4. 1-52: *Brahman* does not subserve rite but is independent of it (1-17) which is exemplified in the life of the hermits (*Pravrajikas*) (18-20) for whom knowledge is prescribed, not ritual. Ascetics need no ritual, only knowledge (25). Ritual action does encourage *vidya* (knowledge) (26-7) but indulgences in matters of purity should only be undertaken in emergencies (28-31). The following is from 4.1 1-19: The *Brahman* which is meditated upon is to be regarded as one's soul (3); exemption from evil *karman* even applies to acts which have not fructified (15).²³

These beliefs affected Vivekananda's understanding of the nature of being, politically, economically and socially - derived from his religious understanding of nature and life (since he was primarily a religious man). He regarded the caste system and its emphasis on purity and *karma*, to be a distorted version of the original, religious understanding of those terms. Ritual which had overtaken knowledge and the understanding of *karma* in living Hinduism had to be demolished, according to him. It was not a fanciful wish that stemmed from his love of India; it also had a foundation in the Hindu religion.

Sankara did not discuss how *dharma* purified the mind. Ramanuja held that it does purify the mind and one should thus lead a life of action until death. What is the purification of the mind? In many of the interpretations, it is the bringing of the mind in accord with reality. If action is successful, in accordance with reality, in cognizing the object, this constitutes purification of the mind. Vivekananda held this view and followed this school of thought. An object does not change; it is only a change in the mind of the cognizer which changes and, thus, a true object is one similar to all people; it is this factor which reinforces both the universality of objects and the minds of humanity. The implication,

²³ Ibid.

especially in ethics, is that a person should be rid of the ego that distorts the object in his mind. "As long as there is the danger of man's falling into egoistic particularity, he has to perform right actions."²⁴

Vedanta shares philosophical problems within the Hindu tradition, due to the varied commentaries and the sheer volume of the *Upanishads* and *Vedas*, problems which have never been solved. 'What is *Brahman*?' is the most common. For this question, there are two fundamental answers: one is that it is an undifferentiated being, a non-personal 'oneness' or 'ground' of being. This understanding comes from the non-dualistic, *Advaita* school. The second understanding, from the *Dvaita* or dualistic school of thought, is that the *Brahman* contains within itself a multiplicity of real attributes; it is a personal, Diving Being. In reality and in contemporary philosophy, *Vedantic* thinkers combine these answers in various ways. It was certainly from Vivekananda's combination of these answers that aspects of his ideas on tolerance, monotheism, polytheism, multiplicity and the indivisibility of humanity, emanated.

If the *Brahman* is undifferentiated, without quality or distinction, then the Vedantin is immediately confronted with the fact that ordinarily we do not realize *Brahman* as so conceived. We experience in our normal, rational, sense-based consciousness a world of multiplicity which we take to be real.²⁵

Hence, from this standpoint, the suggestion that all religions are different and that only one holds the truth seems farcical. *Vedanta* teaches that all of humanity is really one and only man's ignorance deceives individuals into believing that there are many realities. According to this understanding, a religion preaching sole possession of the truth appears to

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid., p73.

be preaching a code of discrimination; hence Vivekananda's aversion to, or lack of understanding of, the rationale underlying the loyalty of the followers of monotheistic religions.

Another philosophical question still being debated by the Hindu religion is the psychological relationship between the *Brahman* and the self. The main question concerns how the empirical aspects of the self or selfhood relate to the Ultimate Self or *Atman*, the *Atman* being identical to the *Brahman*. Vivekananda's answer is that this relation is manifested (not created because it is deemed that it has always existed) through work. Work not only emancipates the Self from the shackles of causation but also creates a relationship between other 'Selves' in the quest for freedom. There are two important aspects to this statement: firstly, no person is born into pure freedom and thus, each person must *work* for it, hence the importance of work. Secondly, if the *Brahman* is nothing but the *Atman*, and moreover, the *Brahman* consists of all the *Atmans*, the creation of a relationship and interdependence of *Atmans* is one step closer to the realization of *Brahman*. Vivekananda concluded that the whole population of India must work for India's betterment. Herein lies his combination of the ideas of *Vedanta* with his ideas of nationhood and man-making.

Vivekananda's method centred around the combination of religious ideas, especially contentious ones that he could answer himself, with practical ideas - social, economic and political - to create a ready solution for India's problems, immediate and long-term. For example, the question of how knowledge is validated has been persistently debated. Vivekananda adopted a utilitarian point of view and argued that freedom was beneficial because it aided the majority of the population. However, it begs the question as to how one knows whether this freedom and whether this version of freedom is the desired freedom. Vivekananda would have answered that it helped the majority of the population and therefore it

was freedom and was thus desirable. Philosophically, this would have no grounding because despite its utility for the 'greatest number', it may still be fallible - just as Hitler perceived the extermination of a small race (albeit not so small) as being ultimately beneficial to a larger race: a contention that was permissible in a strictly utilitarian context (but not liberally), but not philosophically. The answer would have been the same to the question 'how are perception and inference justified as a valid means of knowledge?' or even 'what is the nature of error?'

Sankara and Ramanuja held differing views as to whether moral behaviour is sufficient for man to obtain supreme value. The former asserted that good action was simply not sufficient for realization of the *Brahman* and that man should lead a life of contemplation. The latter decreed that action (*karma*) was an important aspect of living in this world. Vivekananda tended towards the latter. The other questions that occupied the minds of such men were 'what obligations, if any, are imposed upon one by the realization of the highest value in one's interpersonal or social relationships and what are the source, nature and validity of man's moral judgements?' Having answered the first question concerning the method of attainment, these thinkers turned their attention to life after the realization of *Brahman* has been experienced. There is a basic consensus that after realization, one naturally acts morally and in accordance with the common good because after experiencing the Divine, one gains the faculty of discernment and differentiation (*viveka*), and thus also gains the ability to discern what is advantageous for the common good. The enlightened individual has, moreover, no wish to go against this. Vivekananda echoed this in his thought.

There are a multitude of opinions and schools of thought concerning whether action is equal to knowledge or subordinate. "Badarayana tells us in Sutra III.4.16 that the knowledge of the Atman destroys the entire

world of Avidya which consists of actions and the means the fruits thereof.”²⁶ In the *Isopanishad*, *Jnana* and *Karma*, both are of equal status. Vivekananda held that they are both of equal status in general, but it must be said that he favoured the *karma* in terms of the building of the Indian nation; yet, he acknowledged that action was not suitable for every person due to different respective inclinations. By admitting that there are different inclinations, *karma* and *jnana* are given equal status. “[T]o grant equal basis to works and knowledge by saying that they go hand in hand is itself to accept that knowledge has a co-ordinate and not subordinate status with reference to works.”²⁷

Despite the varying views on action and contemplation, Indian reformers were more concerned with a dialectical relationship between the Indian religion and intellectual values. Theoretically, religion should not contradict science. The mind, the Hindu religion professes, consists of three substances: ego, reason and intellect. Salvation comes when the ego reaches the level of reason and loses its particularity. It should, then, become one with reason and therefore with science. This is so because man's reason is part of the Cosmic Reason; even science is a product of Cosmic Reason. However, such a philosophy is termed 'religion' because it proclaims that the highest modes of knowledge and life are not rational, but knowledge of the *Brahman*. The *Upanishads* make a division between knowledge of salvation (*jnana*) and knowledge of arts and sciences (*vijnana*). On a more practical level, the failure of rationality would render violence acceptable and hence, not only Vivekananda, but most Hindu reformers, emphasized that the Hindu religion was and should be compatible with science and reason. Vivekananda went as far as to say that religion should be subjected to the criteria of science.

²⁶ *Vedanta: the Culmination of Indian Thought*, op.cit., p150.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

The *Gita* proclaims that man is 'of the nature of his faith'. "What his faith is, that verily, he is."²⁸ It is a common statement, in India, that science does not inquire into questions which the layman asks and therefore is inadequate for a philosophy to live by. There is also a scepticism about philosophical knowledge. Even Bertrand Russell noted that "To teach how to live without certainty...is perhaps the chief thing that philosophy, in our age, can still do for those who still study it."²⁹

To the Indian, philosophical or scientific knowledge is not complete without reference to and combination with religious knowledge. Vivekananda's philosophy attempted to tackle the problems of relating religious beliefs and even secular beliefs to the affairs of men, right conduct and social good. He professed that the problem of this world is suffering, and the solution combines an intellectual puzzle (which many Western political philosophies 'degenerate into') with finding a way of living to combat this. The problem of *maya* should be tackled with 'adhikara':

One of the repeated strains of Indian philosophical thought is that true knowledge and wisdom can be acquired only by the pure in heart, by one who has already attained the requisite moral virtues and is free from the psychological and morally undesirable traits of personality and character. He must have controlled certain ignoble emotions and must be free from unworthy motives and desires.³⁰

The thesis is supported by the theory of *Karma* and non-attachment.

In Indian thought, there is no distinction between religion and philosophy; between reason and faith. Vivekananda contended that this

²⁸ Saksena, 'The Individual in Social thought and practice in India' in *The Indian Mind: Essentials of Indian Philosophy and Culture*, op. cit., p19 quoting from *Bhagavad Gita* XVII.3, in Radhakrishnan and Moore C.A., (eds.) *A Source Book in Indian Philosophy*, p155.

²⁹ Ibid., p20, quoting from B. Russell *History of Western Philosophy*, p xiv.

was not so in Islam. In Hindu thought, philosophy is the theory of religion and religion is the realization of that theory in practice. There is, however, a highly important distinction between the definition of 'practice' in India and in the West. In India this entails changing the inner nature of a person in order to live in harmony with nature, as was assumed by Tagore, Aurobindo and Gandhi as well as by Vivekananda and was even reinforced by the American sociologist Lewis Mumford, who noted that nothing was worthwhile in the social, political and practical programmes "unless it leads at the same time to a desired transformation in the psychological quality of the inner nature of man, the individual."³¹ Moore states that "the intimacy of philosophy and life in India is so fundamental to the whole Indian point of view."³²

The two fundamental aspects of Indian philosophy that play a major role lie in the disputation between the two *dharmas*, the contemplative of the *Upanishads* and the active of the *Vedas*.

In the *Vedas* we start with a very multitudinous polytheism, with all its appendages, and develop gradually to monotheism, finally, to what might be called a strictly philosophical monism resulting unquestionably from the innate intellectual curiosity of the Indian tradition - but the activism of this part of the India tradition is never sacrificed.³³

Buddhism was a rebellion against the Indian tradition and consisted of four schools preaching pluralism *and* monism; realism and relativism; idealism and Absolutism; metaphysical ethicism and transcendental metaphysics.³⁴

³⁰ Ibid., p33.

³¹ Ibid, p38.

³² Moore, 'Introduction', in *ibid.*, p1.

³³ Ibid., p5.

³⁴ Ibid., p6.

Chronologically, the period after the establishment of the four schools of Buddhism came to be known as the 'Scholastic period' and was one of the most intellectually expansive eras in Indian history. India experienced a "continuity of development of all systems, heterodox and orthodox, except the Carvaka."³⁵ It was in this period that *Vedanta* came to embrace such tolerant concepts and this strain Vivekananda held so dear. A wide range of beliefs were incorporated even within one school "as even in the Vedanta, where the range reaches from realistic pluralism to illusionistic monism and practically all varieties in between, and yet all are called Vedanta."³⁶ The difference between Western and Indian philosophy is the categorization into 'points of view'. A point of view seems to be segmented into a school; for instance, if one has a humanistic point of view, it is regarded as 'liberal'. Modern Indian religious philosophy attempts to incorporate the range of opinion developed before, as being common knowledge that is partially correct and should not be refuted completely. A prime example is found in the *Vedantist* school that seek to integrate the knowledge of the Buddhists and other schools of thought. In line with the *Vedantic* ideal, Vivekananda's thought is an attempt to integrate all previous common knowledge into one coherent, complete system of knowledge.

As *veda-anta*, meaning the 'end of the Vedas', the historical roots of the system are unquestionably religious. Vedanta emerged in the context of the theistic ritualism of the Vedas, even though it sought in some sense to transcend the ritualistic perspective of the Vedic age. Even in the theism of the earlier period with its henotheistic tendency, was found to be inadequate to provide either an inclusive enough account of the origins of the universe - despite various cosmogonic myths attempting just this - or

³⁵ Ibid., pp7-8.

³⁶ Ibid., p8.

a way of release from a sense of bondage which appears at the end the Vedic age, i.e. in the Upanishads.³⁷

Much of the debate between the theistic and absolute monist interpretations relate to the question: What is the oneness of the universe, and how does the One relate to the many?³⁸ Vivekananda applied this question to social, economic and political realities in an attempt to discover the basis for pluralism.

In layman's terms, *Vedanta* was eternal wisdom, harmony and goodwill, strength and fearlessness, unity of existence, universal love, tolerance and service. To the Hindu, not only was the message of *Vedanta* applicable to the Indian but "His message of Vedanta had a tonic effect on the materially advanced but spiritually impoverished life of the Occident."³⁹

The message is highly relevant in understanding Vivekananda's idea that the world as a whole would benefit from the thought of *Vedanta*: the West needed a form of spirituality and this specific thought would conquer the world with spirituality. Vivekananda believed in certain fundamental truths of *Vedanta*: the inherent divinity of man; the non-duality of existence; the *Brahman* or *Atman* and Ultimate Reality; the Ultimate Reality or *Brahman* is also the God of religion; the Ultimate Reality as *Atman* is not capable merely of belief in *Brahman* but is capable of the realization and experience (*Anubhava*) of the *Brahman*; such *Anubhava* and the precedent struggle is a dynamic spirituality and is the true meaning of religion; such dynamic spirituality is the progression and growth of man; this should be achieved in the context of his life and it attributes to material as well as spiritual betterment; the worldly implications are service, work, *yoga* the destruction of ignorance, bridging

³⁷ Lott E., *Vedantic Approaches to God*, Macmillan, London, 1980, p6.

³⁸ Ibid., p17.

³⁹ *Vivekananda: a Comprehensive Study*, op. cit., p12.

the gap between the secular and sacred; the world of science and other material disciplines should not be shunned but employed for this growth through the cultivation of the mind; as a by-product, man becomes moral, fearless, courageous, strong, and has an ethical awareness and human concern and even an aesthetic sensitivity. In biological terms, it constitutes psycho-physical evolution

in which the organic evolution, relevant to the pre-human phase, rises to the spiritual dimension, at the human level, in view of nature's giving him the most efficient and versatile organ, namely, the cerebral system which, when released from its thralldom to his organic system and to his ego centred in that system, enables him to expand his psyche in sympathy, understanding, love, dedication and service, and thus manifest his inborn divine nature, his true Self.

The technique for achieving this manifestation of innate divinity consists also of the two broad paths of Jnana or *neti neti*, 'not this', or the path negative, and bhakti or *iti iti*, 'this' 'this', or the path positive, with Jnana and karma forming an integral part, of the latter, and *dhyana* or meditation forming an integral part of both.⁴⁰

Vivekananda also held that different religions are but different paths to realization, suited to different climates and temperaments; the final fundamental tenet is that there is a grave need to establish a harmonious dialogue between religions and a spirit of fellowship between persons in their quest for the same spiritual goal.⁴¹

Vedanta is less dogmatic than many other Indian schools of religious thought. Firstly, there are three types of knowledge which must complement each other, especially because truth and religious revelation consist of three different, yet complementary experiences: sensory

⁴⁰ Swami Ranganathananda, 'Fundamental Truths of Vedanta according to Swami Vivekananda', in *ibid.*, p130,

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

perception (*pratyaksa*); inference (*anumana*); for aspects not addressed by these, revelation. Furthermore, the Exegetes find Revelation solely and fully authoritative when Revelation lays down what actions should be taken in what circumstances. The *Vedantic* school, on the other hand, regards this as correct only in terms of ritual and deems it wholly unacceptable when dealing with that knowledge.

There are degrees of reality in the *Vedanta*: the illusionary creation of dreams; the illusions of perception; illusions of ordinary life. Only spiritual reality is ultimately true according to this view, yet material reality must be accommodated. Vivekananda emphasized that truth is strengthening. There is, however, no criterion for discovering falsehood and truth.

[T]hey do require a criterion to find out error. As far as truth is concerned, they tell us, it is self-revealing; it is its own criterion...does not suggest that the truth-quality is something which is imposed on a statement by an external criterion. Truth is constitutive while the criterion is only epistemic in significance. As compared with truth itself, its value is secondary.⁴²

Vivekananda never questioned the idea of knowledge or whether there is good and bad knowledge because in "Indian Philosophy on the other hand the sources of knowledge and the test of its validity are fused, in that whenever we speak of a means of knowledge, it implies a means of valid knowledge."⁴³ In Western philosophy, there are external criteria that, according to the Indian standpoint, may not only be wrong, but may be confused due to the natural state of illusion, *Maya*, which distorts our sense of perception. The criterion of experience of *Anubhava*

⁴² *Vedanta: the Culmination of Indian Thought*, op. cit., p35.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p36.

is to be contrasted with that of correspondence because...mystical experience is naturally initiated and is not anything impinging upon our senses from the external world...In a God-realiser, according to Kabir, there is a perfect parity between internal perception and external perception.⁴⁴

Vivekananda appears to have been convinced of this, since he appears never to have questioned the epistemological and ontological notion of freedom for India although it might well be that he simply did not convey his cogitation on this topic. He naturally assumed that it was correct for India simply because she was under alien rule. One of the pertinent questions of *Vedanta* is the epistemological, ontological and metaphysical meaning of the world and its constituents because of the nature and non-'describability' of *Brahman* as the substantial cause of the world. It is strange that Vivekananda did not inquire into the nature of what freedom meant for India - how do we know that what has been achieved is 'freedom' and, moreover, how do we know that alien rule is really subjugation and as such constraining? How do we know that the Indian knowledge of freedom is not tainted by the British understanding of the term? How do we know that this idea of freedom relates to spiritual freedom? It seems peculiar that a man trained in this method of inquiry failed to contemplate these questions. He superficially examined them, but, after all, he was a pragmatist:

For the pragmatist there is no intrinsic necessity in truths; the true is only expedient in the way of our thinking yielding maximal combination of satisfactions. The criterion of utility or workability which is palpably relative would ultimately depend on individual idiosyncrasies. One thing is not just true and another just false. Things or ideas will be more and more true as they

⁴⁴ Ibid., p40.

confer greater and greater utility. Theoretically this can be carried to the logical extreme by positing that the truth will be the most useful not only for one person but for the maximum number of persons.⁴⁵

Vivekananda's claim that truth is strengthening seems to stem from this viewpoint. It is manifest also in Hegel's statement that the rational is the real and in the idea of *Werkrational*. In addition, Vivekananda combined this with spiritual dimensions to overcome the fallacies of the notion of 'the greatest good (or happiness) of the greatest number'. In the spiritual and psycho-metaphysical domains, *anubhava* or experience is "immediate, first-hand, intuitive apprehension of Reality...It is self-evident...Reality though ineffable is experienceable."⁴⁶ The idea of experience is highly important in the Hindu tradition. Religion is revealed through realization, which is individual. Revelation has a small part to play in this tradition.

If we are to form a proper understanding of the meaning and scope of 'Revelation', we do well to forget at once the implications of the term in the Mediterranean religions, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Strictly speaking, "revelation: is a misnomer, since ultimately there is no revealer. The Sanskrit term for it is *sruti*, literally "the hearing", which means an erudition acquired by listening to the instruction of the teacher through an uninterrupted series of teachers that stretches to the beginning of creation.

Revelation, therefore, is by no means God's word - because paradoxically if it were to derive from a divine person, its credibility would be impugned. It is held to be authorless, for if a person, human or divine, had authored it, it would be vulnerable to the defects inherent in such a person. It is axiomatic that revelation is infallible, and thus infallibility can be defended only if it is authorless.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ibid., p41.

⁴⁷ A Sourcebook of Advaita Vedanta, op. cit., p5.

The idea of perfection and infallibility in the Indian tradition and in Vivekananda's thought is greatly different from that in Western religious perceptions. In the Indian perception the idea is linked with the ontological, epistemological and metaphysical idea of God, the cosmos and creation. The beginning and the end of the cosmos have no meaning and there is no chronology for the scriptures. Furthermore, because God is without volition, God cannot have talked through a certain person. Moreover, the belief that the world and people are deceived by *Maya* plays a highly important role precisely because, as the quotation states, the 'revelation' would be vulnerable to the defect of the individual. This belief is instrumental in two respects: that all religions are true, but not completely so; and a cynicism regarding the fact that religions such as Christianity and Islam profess that their scriptures are revealed directly by God. To the Hindu, there is no creation because God and the world are one entity and indivisible. "Revelation, then, comes with the world, and it embodies the law which regulates the well-being of both world and man. It lays down first and foremost what is our *Dharma*, our duty."⁴⁸

Vivekananda, as an *Advaita Vedantist* took the substantial cause of the world "to be identical with the principle of consciousness in the phenomenal world."⁴⁹ The most important implication of this is that there is, however, a common identity to be understood between the *Brahman* and the individual self; a deduction derived from the *Vedantic* dictum 'You are that' (*Tat tvam Asi*). In the Absolute Monism of Sankara, consciousness is the *Brahman*. Realization cannot occur without the destruction of the ego-sense, thus, realization is synonymous with the destruction of the ego-sense. The ego-sense is *maya*; it is that which distorts one's view of the world as universal, non-differentiated, and composed of one substance.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

The repulsion of the ego-sense, in Vivekananda's thought and in *Vedanta*, stems from the idea that the ego refers to different entities at different times; the body at times and the sense at others, and hence is duplicitous about the oneness of reality.

The *Vedantic* perception of God revolves around the assumption that God is the only reality and is proven not by sensory perception, such as miracles, but by mystical and intuitive proof or even *Anubhava*, attained in a state of worshipful meditation.

Sankara took the state of self-consciousness to be the 'immutable Selfhood's most significant feature' and on this basis he first devised interrelated methods of realization and the philosophical theory thereafter. Therein lies Vivekananda's concept of individuality and the political ramifications of such a concept thereafter. Self consciousness is not synonymous with individuality, but is the pure consciousness underlying particularization:

True selfhood is thus a state of utter subjectivity, in which the Self contemplates pure Selfhood without any subject-object relationship to confuse that consciousness...the sense of separateness felt by each finitely existent self must be due to the influence of objectifying mental processes.⁵⁰

Hence the *Brahman* and the Self cannot be a mere subject of knowledge to the knower otherwise the transcendent nature of the *Brahman* and of the Self and of the experience of realization would be destroyed.

Knowledge derived from perception can be valid only when it is not sublated by any other evidence. Judged by

⁴⁹ Ibid., p10.

⁵⁰ *Vedantic Approaches to God*, op. cit., p30.

this test only the knowledge of Brahman can be *Prama* [valid]; and the vedanta which leads to that knowledge can alone be the *Pamana* [avenues leading to valid knowledge].⁵¹

Everything is the *Brahman*. The *Brahman* cannot be false and therefore nothing is completely false. By the same token, no element or substance is the complete, perfect *Brahman* and therefore no element or substance can be completely true. Ignorance is the material cause of error in the universe.

Apramam or error has its root in nescience or *Avidya*. The material cause of error which consists in the reciprocal superimposition of two things of unequal reality whether in respect of their existences (*Savrupa*), relations (*Samsarga*) or cognitions (*Jnana*), is ignorance which is of the nature of an existent, beginningless and indeterminable.⁵²

The metaphysical and ontological question in Western philosophy, of what is real and how we know that it is real, poses the same conundrum for the Indian. Indian philosophy questions how to ascertain whether the *Brahman* and the *Atman* are real. The philosophy deduces that this is ascertained through realization. *Vedantic* schools emphasize that one has to look inward to discover the *Brahman*, because it is to be realized as one's soul. Salvation constitutes the realization that everything is the Ultimate Being.

Viewed *sub specie temporis*, the world is a world of finitude around us; but, viewed *sub specie aeternitatis*, it is the *Brahman*...Salvation lies in transforming what appears

⁵¹ Mahadevan T.M.P., *The Philosophy of Advaita*, Ganesh and Company, Madras, Private Limited, 1969.

⁵² *Ibid.*, p79.

to be the material world around us into something spiritual; it is not an escape from the world but a spiritual conquest of the world - not a retreat after defeat but assimilation after conquest.⁵³

The cosmic and wider interpretation of *dharma* is the transformation of the material into the spiritual. *Dharma* is twofold: negative and affirmative. The former entails suppressing the craving of the ego and I-consciousness, and the latter entails recognition of the *Brahman* in all. Vivekananda's combination of both the negative and affirmative *dharmas* constitute the basis of his social philosophy.

The perceptions of good, morality and evil in Vivekananda's thought as well as in the *Advaitic* tradition are widely different from those of the Western religions. Firstly, one must differentiate between evil as defined as sin, disease and cruelty *versus* natural disasters such as earthquakes and floods. The former category is blamed by the *Advaitic* tradition on the earthly and active doctrine of *karma* as action and causation, which are the result of human actions. 'As men sow so do they reap'. It takes the view that one is degrading God in assuming that God is affected by human misery, good or evil. The *Bhagavad Gita* unequivocally states that God is both good and bad, and neither are predicated by God; a *Katha Upanishadic* verse contends that the Universal Self is to be regarded beyond all the happiness and misery of the world.⁵⁴

With the exception of the materialists, all schools of Indian thought have a moral conception of nature. All natural phenomena are "guided by inviolable laws that ensure the conservation of moral values, so that human actions, good and bad, can give rise to appropriate effects, within

⁵³ Raju, 'Metaphysical Theories in Indian Philosophy', in *The Indian Mind: Essentials of Indian Philosophy and Culture*, op. cit., pp55-6.

⁵⁴ *Vedanta: the Culmination of Indian Thought*, op. cit., p131, quoting from *Katha Upanishad*, II.5.11

man and in the outer world in this life or hereafter.”⁵⁵ This conception is derived from the idea of *Rta* or the natural and moral nature of the cosmos. Vivekananda’s ideas of ‘organic’ and his faith in evolution emanated from this understanding:

This moral conception of Nature generates in the Indian mind a deep confidence in cosmic justice. We find it reflected in the oft-quoted maxims: “Truth alone prevails, not falsehood...the entire world rests on *dharma*”⁵⁶

Vivekananda’s version of this contended that truth was strengthening.

An integral aspect of the Hindu philosophy and religion is *yoga*, the discipline of meditation and concentration. In philosophical terms, *yoga* means unity with the Ultimate Reality.

According to Hindu philosophy, a genuine philosopher must have direct knowledge of reality. Ultimate reality, or the first principle, differs from scientific reality. It belongs to a supramental realm and is known through direct and immediate experience. The knowledge acquired through the senses is colored by the condition of the sense-organ and the mind. But ultimate reality belongs to the universal experience of humanity.⁵⁷

Concentration is necessary for the discipline to avoid sentiments such as anger or attachment which taint motivation and the goal. Furthermore, Indian philosophy holds that the potential of the mind is infinite. For example, it would explain the law of gravity as being a formula already in the mind of Sir Isaac Newton. *Yoga* is necessary in order to manifest this potential. Furthermore, the Hindu proclaims that *yoga* is not only for the

⁵⁵ Datta D.M., ‘Some Philosophical Aspects of Indian Political, Legal and Economic Thought’. in *The Indian Mind: Essentials of Indian Philosophy and Culture*, op. cit., p268.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Swami Nikhilananda, ‘Concentration and meditation as Methods in Indian Philosophy’ in *ibid.*, p

Hindu because every human has such potential, and it is beneficial for mankind as a whole that this potential be manifested in every person. Hindu philosophy proclaims that the mind consists of three elements, or *gunas*:, *rajas*, *sattvas* and *tamas* and that it is necessary to manifest the correct ones in the proper balance. Reality does not itself change, only the perception of reality; perception is tainted by the predominance of one or more of these *gunas*. For example, the same girl is perceived by her disappointed lover with bitter pain, by the prospective suitor with great joy and by the ascetic with indifference; the girl has not changed. *Yoga* is supposedly a method to discipline the faculties which create this perception. Furthermore, *yoga* teaches ethical behaviour and moulds the mind to think in ethical terms. Concentration, as it can be misused, should necessarily be coupled with ethical behaviour. Self-abnegation and discipline form the basis of any action, Vivekananda claimed. Furthermore, self-abnegation and discipline arrest the possibility of man's choosing a form of action because s/he is attached to the fruits of that action. Hence, non-attachment is the basis of Vivekananda's social and political projects. The problem with this conception is that the Vivekananda never contemplated the possibility that non-attachment is another form of illusion just as is the bitter anger felt by the disappointed lover. Non-attachment is the goal of religion but non-attachment is never questioned. Why should such indifference be the enlightened approach to such a problem? Are strong emotions really wrong?

Yoga trains the individual to meditate on the *Brahman*, so as to realize that the individual self is no other than the *Brahman* and thus to realize the unity of existence. *Yoga* destroys the multi-faceted hypnotic effects of *maya*. The subject-object relationship, space, causation and finiteness are all destroyed through *yoga*. This conception obviously had a

bearing on Vivekananda's idea of religion and the destruction of categories, even religious ones. "Meditation is defined, in the *Vedantic* philosophy, as the direction of attention on a stream of ideas consonant with the non-dual *brahman*, to the exclusion of such foreign ideas as body, senses, mind and ego."⁵⁸ That thou art', the *Vedantic* dictum, revolves around precisely this. After merging with the *Brahman* and after realization, man is aware of his existence with all other beings and hence he has neither prejudice nor passions and cannot do anything which is not conducive to the common good. He becomes the *Jivan-mukta* while still in the human form. "To be free while living on earth is the goal of the Vedantist."⁵⁹

Salvation entails the destruction of any ego-sense and therefore of any worldly emotions, and is achieved through the *yoga* discipline created especially for achieving this aim. However, contrary to common belief, neither the Indian tradition nor Vivekananda profess that one should have no feelings. Vivekananda preached that emotions should be channelled to a higher level of experience. This is the wider meaning of *yoga*. What is life without marriage, dancing, music and other enjoyments? There is a scheme of values: *artha*, *kama*, *dharma* and *moksha*. Even *kama* which is enjoyment is to be channelled for the higher experience. *Karma* is really the theory of action, work and causation. The caste system in its non-distorted form is a form of spiritual economics, interdependence and kinship.

Man is not only an intellectual and active being but an emotional creature. If he has to treat the Supreme Being as the source of his intellect and as the goal of his action, he is to treat it as the object of his love also...The Supreme Being is of the nature of intense bliss, and can satisfy emotional needs also.⁶⁰

⁵⁸ Ibid., p147.

⁵⁹ Ibid., p148.

⁶⁰ Mahadevan 'Social, Ethical and Spiritual Values in Indian Philosophy', in *ibid.*, p194.

This is the basis of *Jnana*, *Bhakti* and *Karma* in the Indian philosophy. Vivekananda emphasized that one should want to see and know *Brahman* with as great an intensity as one feels for his/her own mother. Furthermore, desire can be intellectually, emotionally or actively motivated, as long as there is desire. Ramanuja said that *dharma* leads to *jnana* which in turn leads to *bhakti*. Again, the Indian tradition emphasizes outward to inward.

The three outstanding goals of life in Indian philosophy are *artha*, *kama* and *dharma*; the combination of the three, Vivekananda interpreted to constitute all temporal action. *Artha* is effected necessarily in this world; life is uninteresting without *kama* and both should be carried out in accordance with *dharma*. It is only then that man would be free from the prejudices and wrongful passions in this world. Salvation, *moksha*, cannot be enjoyed if the person is a slave to pleasure and greed and anger, the religion insists. Furthermore, if individuals achieve their goals in accordance with their *dharma*, it will benefit the society as a whole. If each individual in a society is righteous, the society and welfare of each member would be beneficial. The converse is also true. Vivekananda regarded society as a facility for the use of its members and not as an end in itself, because in religious terms, progress is not a battle between the State of Nature and civility. 'Good society' is not the victory of good over evil as in the Manichean view. *Advaita* does not regard evil and good as being two separate entities. In the traditional Manichean view, human existence is a struggle between good and evil. Consequently, no cause is nobler than the destruction of the latter and every means employed for this goal is justified. According to this theory, even humans and society can be assigned to a certain person, class or group. Hence, one group can be privileged with the position of governing and judging the other, while the

other is subjugated. Under the Indian scheme, every person bore the responsibility for an unjust society. Vivekananda ventured not as far as Gandhi in stating that good is tainted by evil.

[T]he theory located good in the ends of action, judging the allegedly amoral means in exclusively instrumental forms. Since the so-called ends were in turn means to some other allegedly higher ends, everything ultimately got reduced to a mere means. Violence, mendacity, cunning, duplicity, manipulation of the opponent, and so on were all considered legitimate if used in the pursuit of good ends. By resorting to such means, good subtly became transformed into evil and its victory was really its defeat.⁶¹

However, Vivekananda declared that progress must be moral as well as social, political and economic. The means and the ends must be interrelated. For Indians, the meaning of progress is individual. Furthermore, progress is closely connected with the concepts of *dharma*. In the West, progress was traditionally understood to be 'good', and was even regarded as the victory of good over evil; the victory of civil society over the state of nature. Furthermore, in some instances, this perception supplied the motivation for progress.

If there is no good and no evil, why should one strive, if not to be good?

[B]e it carefully noted even at the start that the way to the Beyond is easier to be found through the good than through the bad; for even the customary and the conventional good represents certain essential and permanent features of the highest Good, viz., the life in Brahman. To take only one; there may be a risk in speaking the truth and gain in telling a lie. But in the former case the man is at peace with himself and

⁶¹ 'Gandhi's Legacy?', op. cit., p6.

possesses on that account courage, fearlessness, joy and a sense of internal freedom.⁶²

Liberation, according to Vivekananda (and Sankara), is attained by s/he who has control over the senses, has refuted the fruits of action, acts disinterestedly, aspires for liberation and has mastered virtues such as endurance and sacrifices his/her self interest for that of the society.

The *Mahabharata* and the *Smritis* took the very practical problem of life and tried to offer solutions, bearing in mind the social and spiritual ideal of the individual. These solutions were not dogmatic, but rather emphasized that there were different solutions applicable to different circumstances; each solution should be in accordance with two main principles: the advancement of society together with the maintenance of social order and the realization of the self. If a person were moral, his/her duty would naturally be moral. *Karma* is causation, where a person's actions ultimately depend on his character; *karma* therefore depends on the person. Hence, Vivekananda embarked on a project to discover the optimum individual. "So, from every point of view, the social good or the personal, the final responsibility for actions rests on the individual alone."⁶³

There should be no conflict between morality and the path to salvation. In terms of the society, an individual's path to salvation is no different than the good of society.

[M]orality implies conflict, in human nature, of good and evil or right and wrong. There is an oscillation between two aspects of the dual nature of man, the higher and the lower. A moral man is one in whom the right perspective

⁶² *Vedanta: the Culmination of Indian Thought*, op. cit., p147.

⁶³ Dasgupta, 'The Individual in Indian Ethics' in *The Indian Mind: Essentials of Indian Philosophy and Culture*, op. cit., p345.

and good emotions dominate can keep the evil in check. In a spiritual man the evil has been overcome completely, and goodness has become spontaneous.⁶⁴

Of greater importance, concerning the idea of morality and salvation of the individual in Hindu ethics and metaphysics, is, as Dasgupta clearly specifies:

To love my enemy as myself, to follow the advice that one should turn his left cheek to anyone who may smite on the right, is in flagrant contradiction to the formula of evolution involved in the struggle for existence and the survival of the fittest. Yet, it is by carrying out demands of this type, however imperfectly it may be done, that the progress of humanity has been possible, and that charity, fellow-feeling, love, and forgiveness have been extended far beyond the expectations of society and have succeeded in wielding humanity together as it is today. To distinguish the social ideal from the spiritual we may say that the former may have variations and sometimes be limited in its use and content, but, in the latter, human virtues such as love, compassion, and forgiveness become limitless. To do to others as you would be done by is a social or moral virtue, but to forgive your enemies when you are hurt and to pray that they may attain a correct perspective of values and attain good in the end shows an ideal of love and compassion far beyond the sense of right and wrong or fairness and justice in society.⁶⁵

This is a reflection of Vivekananda's idea of spirituality and India's spiritually conquering the world. Many Indian reformers and thinkers have admired the morality of Christ and the advice to 'turn the other cheek'. This moral stance is integral in the doctrine of transmigration. If

⁶⁴ Ibid., p350.

⁶⁵ Ibid., p351.

one acts morally in this life, one will return in the next life, to a better position.

Transmigration is an axiomatic doctrine within the *Vedantic* tradition; yet, it is problematic. Ritual adopts an importance not afforded to it, because of the nature of the relationship between ritual, good deeds and God. Ritual action takes on an importance many *Vedantic* thinkers, such as Vivekananda, rejected for it. Ritual action is seen to be effected for the benefit of the world, the underlying assumption being that the world is good and ritual is essential in preserving this goodness.

Still the Brahmanist tradition, down from the Vedic times, had exalted the significance of *dharma* as the instrument of goodness. The tenet of transmigration now has come to hold that a man who acts perpetuates, by his very action, the cycle of birth and rebirth, even if the acts he accomplishes are *good* acts. This ethics of duty has been transcended by a different, seemingly incompatible ethics

of release which demands that man quit acting at all and rise "beyond the good and evil" of being in this world.⁶⁶

The underlying idea is that the natures of *Brahman* and that of the world are synonymous, and *dharma* holds the world together; therefore, *dharma* leads to an insight of the nature of *Brahman* (the *Brahman* cannot therefore, be other than this world). There must be a continuity between living in this world and fulfilling one's tasks; gaining the insight into the nature of the link that liberates us from bondage. This dialectical relationship between the body (effecting worldly affairs) and the mind (devotion, desirelessness, *yoga*) is advocated in the *Bhagavad Gita* and is promulgated by Vivekananda.

The freedom of man is constrained by causation. The *Bhagavad Gita* states that man's actions are determined by the interplay of three *gunas* of nature. Hence, there is a need for self-control, work and concentration and meditation.

Thus, the presupposition that man is essentially free in the midst of the opposite tendencies of his nature is very clearly stated and emphasized. A man is free in his spiritual nature and has to have free control over the inclinations and impulses which proceed from his psychophysical existence.⁶⁷

To the Qualified Monist such as Vivekananda, if the world is not real, one must live in it as if it were: the world is real, time is real and causation is real. Causation binds humans to the world and time, both of which are elements of suffering. Humans are slaves to causation. *Karma* (action) is a means to take control of causation and action in the form of, work is an

⁶⁶ *A Sourcebook of Advaita Vedanta*, op. cit., p35.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p355.

extremely important aspect of freedom, destroying the shackles of causation. Work is freedom. The importance of reality in Indian philosophy is similar to and predates Descartes' *cogito ergo sum*. The former states that knowledge implies a knower and ideas imply the self which requires another knower *ad finitum*. This is essentially a negative doctrine contradicting the separability of the *Brahman* and *Atman* and it thus also contradicts multiplicity. Vivekananda adopted the positive aspects of this and built upon its variation.

Variation is understood only when one understands oneself, *Vedanta* proclaims; and in understanding oneself, relations with the external world become evident. The relationship between the self and the society revolves around the understanding of the self in relation to the *Brahman* and whether one should, according to Ramanuja's interpretation, accept material reality. Insofar as the self is embodied and the body is an inseparable member and product of Nature and the world, one should accept the material bond between humans, not in *lieu* of, but representative of, the divine bond between them. This bond creates the social *corpus*. Civil society is part of the cosmic organism and the individual is part of the social organism. *Varna* is not the "preaching of an indiscriminate equality of rights and duties...considered an unrealistic confusion of thought leading to social chaos."⁶⁸

It is important to comprehend the Hindu understanding of law and social regulation in order to fully comprehend Vivekananda's thought. *Dharma* always occupies a higher position than ritual and sacred observances. The doctrine of *Danda* (law/power) has evolved from the 'law of the fish', similar to that of the Western 'State of Nature' in which 'might is right'. *Danda* is to restrain and compel. If control were to be eliminated

⁶⁸ Datta, 'Some Philosophical Aspects of Indian Political, Legal and Economic Thought', in *The Indian Mind: Essentials of Indian Philosophy and Culture*, op. cit., p272.

from organizational life, *samuha* (the state as an entity) would be obliterated. Thus, *dharma* and property are essential to the maintenance of the state. Manu wrote that *dharma* is created by the state, has the sanction of the state and is essential to the state.

A people can have no *dharma*, according to Indian philosophy, when, through loss of freedom, revolution, or anarchy, the state and its life come to an end. *Dharma* is a very elastic term; it comprises all the attributes of law as analyzed by Western jurists as well as the concepts of natural justice as perceived by regulated conscience.⁶⁹

The philosophical undergirding of Vivekananda's often repeated phrase 'unity in diversity' must be understood when analyzing any Monistic *Vedantic* thinker. The *Vedas* and *Upanishads* state that there is but one reality, manifest in many forms. Differences are only a matter of names and forms. The phenomenal world is not ephemeral but is rooted in the *Brahman*. *Advaitins* allow degrees of reality and values and 'identity-in-difference' "and to be able to realize identity through diversity is a necessary and valuable step toward the ultimate truth."⁷⁰ Furthermore, it is instrumental in the attitude that monotheistic religions are surely deceived, and if only the peripherals are eliminated, the essence would prevail. "This logic of the manifold truth exposes the weakness of every cocksure dogmatism that tries to monopolize truth."⁷¹

On a more positive level, it is the foundation of tolerance and accommodation, judging every circumstance by its own merit. Even war is subject to this morality. The Indian tradition does not condemn outright every war, as is shown in the *Bhagavad Gita*.

⁶⁹ Aiyer 'The Philosophical Basis of Indian Legal and Social Systems', in *ibid.*, p253.

⁷⁰ Datta, 'Some Philosophical Aspects of Indian Political, Legal and Economic Thought', in *ibid.*, p 273.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p 274.

If the cause is right and the means adopted is fair, war is called righteous. Righteous war (*dharma-yuddha*) is justified by the *Mahabharata*, the *Gita*, and the works on *dharma*, e.g. Manu's. It is regarded as the duty of the warrior caste; the battle fought without fear is commended as leading to the most desirable ends, fame here and heaven hereafter, an ethical code of personal chivalry and fearlessness is formulated.⁷²

Even violence is occasionally necessary. The shepherd who fails to kill the wolf is instrumental in the destruction of the flock and himself. According to this logic, there is virtuous and undoubtedly dutiful violence. If property and spirituality are to be protected, the state must, at times, resort to violence. The problem is that the guidelines as to when the state should and should not resort to violence must constantly be altered to suit the circumstances. There must be guidelines not only when violence is used, but also regarding the type of violence that should be used. The term 'necessary' should be re-evaluated. In spiritual and righteous terms the state destroys itself because by resorting to violence, it degrades itself to the level of what it sought to destroy. If this is pyrrhic, why should that state be preserved? Vivekananda wrestled with this difficulty when he questioned the nature of the state in India, and thus he incorporated religious ideas into the concept of the state.

The quintessential state is exemplified in Asoka's rule, where he emphasized moral conquest and realized the superiority of peaceful relations. He sent missionaries as far as Greece to preach toleration and universal human values. He established welfare services and hospitals. He was the strongest monarch but did not condone war; he made treaties of non-aggression. It is pertinent, however, that he established his kingdom

⁷² Ibid., pp282-3.

by devastation. This is a reflection, in a sense, of Vivekananda's ideas: both realized the superiority of peace and yet both realized that to establish such peace, it was necessary to take charge and to do this possibly to use aggression. In philosophical terms, there could be a limit to the violence that needs to be effected in proportion to the peace that can be achieved, before the state 'degrades itself to the level of what it is seeking to destroy'. I may not be able to establish peace without bloodshed.

But the idea of moral conquest (*dharma-vijaya*) rather than territorial conquest, which he conceived and subsequently tried to practise, has left a blazing trail for humanity's uphill struggle toward an ethical state and ethical international relations.⁷³

The secret of *Vedanta* and its appeal is that it not only preaches, but believes strongly that there are infinite potentialities in each individual; infinite courage, bravery and ability in all spheres. Jyotirmayananda explains the religious implications:

'I have neither death nor fear, I have neither caste nor creed, I have neither father nor mother nor brother, neither friend nor foe, for I am Existence, Knowledge, Bliss Absolute; I am the Blissful one. I am not bound either by virtue or vice, by happiness or misery. Pilgrimages and books and ceremonials can never bind me...the body is not mine, nor am I subject to superstitions and decay.'⁷⁴

There is a strong political implication. It is a central foundation of *Vedanta* - not simply a peripheral idea - that man has infinite potential and thus, he is capable of any vocation. His identity should not be characterized by

⁷³ Ibid., p285.

⁷⁴ Jyotirmayananda, Section I, 'His gospel of man-making' in *Vivekananda: a Comprehensive Study*, op. cit., p24.

his job (hence Vivekananda's vehemence against the atrocities and rigidity resulting from prejudice within the caste system). *Vedanta* is opposed to socialistic and communist theories of the state, society and the world. Although it can readily co-exist with the internationalist aspect within these theories, it contradicts fundamentally the idea that man is defined in terms of his work and his whole autonomy, ontological being is related to his work. Such an identity is a product of 'names and forms' and not the essential of man.

Vedanta emphasizes that not books but realization make a religion. It is very different from religions such as Islam which hold that religion consists of obeying the commandments within the religious book. By the same token, it is opposed to doctrines such as socialism that deny man's spiritual essence and concentrate on his material existence in the world. Vivekananda repeatedly criticized socialism for its materialistic approach to life. To him, spiritual knowledge is the solution for the internal miseries which the temporal world causes. Material solutions are only for the outward resolution. Furthermore, it is a fundamental belief that spirituality can be communicated.

Man suffers under the crushing weight of his own self-image. He could not but create such an image as a result of his upbringing in a particular family and environment. He is caught, as it were, in the cocoon of his own limited ideas and attitudes. Nevertheless, he can come out of this narrow

and trivial existence, if he holds on to his real nature which is Divine.⁷⁵

On this religious foundation, Vivekananda formulated his political thought. It gave respect and dignity, faith and courage to man, however downtrodden and degraded he was. This teaching was inspirational and timeless because it imparted knowledge of the Eternal and was not only applicable to a certain man in a particular situation. He taught “[d]ivinity of the soul and faith in oneself, unity of existence and universality of outlook, harmony of religions, brotherhood of man and service of God in man”, as both a religious dictum and a social and political one. Swami Jyotirmayananda goes on to say:

The greatest benefactor of humanity is the man of pure heart. The moral purity of character qualifies him for an exalted spiritual life which culminates in spiritual enlightenment. The veil of ignorance covering his heart and obstructing his spiritual vision is then torn asunder, and he discovers in his own heart the great effulgent Light that is God. He now knows that God, as the one Divine Principle, dwells in the heart of all and that He has manifested as the whole universe. Seeing the same divinity in all others he dedicates himself to their service...So his humanism is based on this spiritual perception which is so vivid and real to him.⁷⁶

Political terms such as ‘veil of ignorance’ and ‘alienation’ as well as the character of this whole passage can easily be translated into political rhetoric and yet still maintain their essential religious and spiritual character. This is precisely what Vivekananda accomplished. The basis of his religious thought revolves around the belief that the man who has

⁷⁵ Introduction, in *ibid.*, p1.

realized the *Atman* becomes a 'store-house' of real power, tranquillity, with the ability to manifest his infinite potential. Furthermore, the individual is able to influence others around him because of his obvious radiance. His social, religious, political and economic dealings are all informed with spiritual philanthropy. In religious terms, he is an instrument of the Divine Will and every action he performs is spiritual, motivated by love and by the acknowledgement that all of humanity is simply one entity. The basis of Qualified Monism is the belief that in reality, there is an inseparability between the world and the individual and the notion that this is realizable. If the individual is righteous, the society would be righteous and in turn, the nation and the world would be righteous. The goal of *Vedanta* is to change oneself first, and through changing oneself, the society and the nation change.

Unless man's psyche changes, society cannot be deeply and permanently changed. After all, our society is an exact replica of ourselves...The various social, political and economic problems in the world are only the outward symptoms of an inner psychological malaise.⁷⁷

The assumption behind this statement, which Vivekananda postulated, is that if a person is motivated by prejudice and a deep sense of inferiority, he would not, for instance, do business with a person of a lower class because of his own psychological malaise. If this is perpetuated by other members because of their inner despondency, the economic relations of the society and the society's economic status would be affected as a result. However, Vivekananda was different from Gandhi in that although he believed that a person's character would ultimately transform the character of society, his conception of revolution was not as systematic and

⁷⁶ Ibid., p2.

⁷⁷ Ibid., p5.

sustained as the social pressure “designed to break down emotional, ideological and moral barriers”⁷⁸ envisaged by Gandhi. Gandhi’s *satyagraha* gave an insight into a Hindu political praxis which contradicted neither the Hindu religion nor modern politics. The significance Gandhi afforded to rational discussion (even though he acknowledged the facility with which it could be manipulated) is indicative of Vivekananda’s idea about a Western-Eastern transaction of spirituality and economic acumen.

Vivekananda’s approach was characterized by a sense of optimism for the nature of man and hence for the future of society and civilization at large. He believed that the material self superimposes its beliefs onto the inner Self. “This occurs because the mental faculties, which stand as it were between the inner Self and the objects of sensory experience, are sufficiently close to the person’s inner being to act as a kind of mirror for the Self.”⁷⁹ Paradoxically, because of this, the ‘mirror’ is tainted by the inner self and thus it has a chance of eventually being contaminated by it. Thus, the mirror and the reflected objects would be destroyed. The Absolute Monism of Sankara claims that the self cannot engage in action because action implies change and impermanence; it is preceded by desire and results in misery. The self, an agent of action, is a product of ignorance. Action requires all the qualities of the phenomenal level of existence: the mental organ to draw distinctions, the body for operation. The body must transcend all this.⁸⁰ It is evident that Vivekananda was a Qualified Monist, according to this definition of Absolute Monism. Qualified Monism accepts the reality of the temporal world and thus advocates action as a means to take control of causation; the bondage. Sankara denied cause and effect as a form of ignorance.

If the self and the *Brahman* are the same then the latter is

⁷⁸ ‘Gandhi’s Legacy’, op. cit., p8.

⁷⁹ *Vedantic Approaches to God*, op. cit., p42.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p97.

the real, the one without a second, pure, the essence of knowledge, taintless, serene, without beginning or end, beyond activity, the essence of absolute bliss, transcending all diversities created by *maya*, eternal, ever beyond the reach of pain, indivisible, immeasurable, formless, undifferentiated, nameless, immutable, self-luminous...infinite, transcendent,... beyond the reach of mind and speech...the perfect, one's very self, of surpassing glory.⁸¹

According to this analogy, God has no volition, grace or any other direct effect on the material world. It is the influence of the Self that creates effect and cause. This is the essential meaning of *Karma*: "a man becomes good by a good deed and bad by a bad deed"⁸²

There is a disjunction between Vivekananda's ideals of the perfect person and his serving the world. It presumes that all perfect people want to serve God by serving the society and the world. It assumes that all perfect people have the same 'perfectness' - the same motivation, aspirations and same influences. Ironically, this destroys the multi-tolerant facets of Hinduism, in contrast to the Judao-Christian ethic. It may be the case that Vivekananda implied that it is not necessary that all perfect people are thus inclined.

REGENERATION OF HINDUISM

About India, Vivekananda said:

It is like a gigantic building all tumbled down in ruins. At first sight, then, there is little hope. It is a nation gone and ruined...The truth is that so long as the principle, the ideal,

⁸¹ Ibid., p125, quoting from *Viveka-Cundamani*, stanzas 237-40.

⁸² Ibid., pp151-2, quoting from *Brhadarnyaka-Upanishad* 3.2.13

of which the outer man is the expression, is not hurt or destroyed, the man lives, and there is hope for that man.⁸³

Vivekananda was concerned about the dismal state of the Indian nation. Indians were being subordinated by the British, as they had been by the Mughals. India was so divided that she could not produce the unity necessary for the creation of a nationalist sentiment. There was a myriad of reasons for this, the most important of which Vivekananda saw as being the lack of education and active participation in politics. The former perpetuated ignorance within the nation politically, socially, economically and otherwise, and also the divisions between castes. As a result, mass politics that would create a sense of political community, and hence a form of unity, were non-existent. However, this would presume too, that nationalism is an active and systematic structure of activity, posing poignant questions about the existing state of affairs, destroying divisive aspects of that system and creating more. Nationalism was, however, more than a system of action. It required an internalized set of values, norms and aspirations (not necessarily the same as in Western nationalism) conducive to unity, and intense enough to incense people to take a stand, jointly and severally, to fight against the British. Vivekananda was confused as to whether nationalism was essentially a sentiment or an active doctrine built on a background of education and requiring mass politics. The situation was very grave: none of these factors was possible because of the internal divisions within the Hindu social and religious structure, which was independent of influence from the colonial government, and was perpetuating a situation of dominance and subservience. This situation was accentuated because in an attempt to climb the social ladder, many lower castes created further divisions into

⁸³ Swami Vivekananda *Complete Works*, Advaita Ashrama, Mayavati Memorial Edition, Calcutta, Eighteenth Reprint, 1991, Vol. VIII, p73. Henceforth, S.V.C.W.

even lower castes. India was divided not only through wealth, occupation and prejudice but another, more fundamental aspect: there were those whose ideas were predominantly influenced by religion; and those whose were not. To include the latter, nationalism could not be too strongly religious. Nationalism must emphasize the greatness of civilization and politics, both purged of all of the idiosyncrasies of religion. The less strict adherents of religion wanted a secularist solution and Vivekananda's task was to convince this modernized section that religion and politics could be joined in a modern fashion. To include the religious-oriented, nationalism must be guised in the religious rhetoric, incorporating ritual and ideas of salvation. This section did not want to be involved in politics and Vivekananda's task was to convince them that politics, if joined with religion, was not amoral.

Vivekananda's solution was to juxtapose nationalism and religion, making 'Indian-ness' and Hinduism inseparable. Essentially, Hinduism and Indian-ness could not be seen as separate; but it was this factor that created a problem in a multi-cultural, multi-religious and multi-racial India. The religion supplied the determination, while Indian-ness assumed the goal. This latter concept is more difficult to understand until one recognizes that Vivekananda was concerned with creating a typically Indian solution, according to the Indian character, *Weltanschauung*, to modern problems. He was opposed to the Indian habit of looking to the West for solutions and imitating the West's own methods. In reality, 'Indian-ness' was a potential recipe for strength, but Hinduism was encouraging fatalism. It was not the fault of the religion, he contended, but rather a misinterpretation of it by the *Brahmins*. It became a religion with a creed of 'Don't Touchism'. The solution was to make the religion a handbook for strength and unity, eliminating all of the crystallized superstitions and rituals. A religion was needed, one compatible with

modernity and yet incorporating fundamental aspects of a religion, such as salvation, in order to rectify the situation of the lower castes who had been robbed of salvation from birth; a religion encouraging people to embrace their Indian identity (Indian-ness) regardless of religious or any other differences

The relationship of dominance and subservience between the *Brahmins* and *Shudras* was the embodiment of traditional Hinduism. *Shudras* were stripped of any dignity or pride and *Brahmins*, given *carte blanche* to dominate. The relationship and rules of the domination became ossified and dogmatized. The *Brahmins* had a free reign, and because they were seen as being semi-divine, obeisance to them was never questioned. Generations of such a relationship created a situation where birth determined whether one was to obey or be obeyed. Sin was, by definition, a breach of this relationship.

A new source of superiority emerged as a result of years of colonial subjugation. Consequently, anything British or Western was regarded as superior, and anything Indian, inferior. A prime example was the English language, and anyone who spoke English climbed the social ladder. This widened the division in Indian society for more than the obvious reason. The lower castes had no opportunity to learn this language because their time was occupied in serving the benefit of the higher echelons of society and they did not have access to learning English. This new element of superiority through the English language created in Indian society a further division which transcended the religio-social partitioning of caste. Caste had an advantage in political terms because traditionally, caste was a social institution with no political affiliation and the sectioning of castes had a religio-social foundation. As a result, two castes from opposite ends of the spectrum may be united through a political affiliation. In this light, caste acted as an institution nurturing fraternity. However, the new split in

loyalty transcended caste and consequently a caste was divided between those who admired the Raj and those who did not. The fraternal element of caste was thenceforth destroyed.

This produced a new surge of fatalism. The power of the British was strengthened. Many castes knew no alternative as they already had their destiny invented by a minority with whom they probably had not even come into contact; and they accepted their destiny as their heritage. Vivekananda emphasized that people had no pride in themselves and therefore accepted such degradation with humility; this only perpetuated slavery, whether the British were masters or the *Brahmins*. For him, the problem in India was more acute than for other countries overtly practising slavery. Other countries exploited foreigners such as Blacks in America. Hinduism was exploiting its own religionists, while Christianity and Islam appeared to be practising very egalitarian ideologies.

From an objective point of view, it seemed almost anarchic. Indians were simply creating notions of superiority, and imposing those upon others with little or no justification. How could it be wrong when not only the *Brahmins* were doing this but also the British, who were powerful and ruled such a large nation as India? The only semblance of a structured relationship was one of dominance and subservience between the British and Indians. No one dared question the highly regulated structured hierarchy. Vivekananda maintained that in the present state of India, the caste system became a cover for food regulations, inter-human rivalry and notions of pollution. Religion had been manipulated to give this a false legitimation: "*We are neither Vedantists, most of us now, nor Puranics, nor Tantrics. We are just 'Don't Touchists'. Our religion is in the kitchen. Our God is in the cooking pot, and our religion is 'Don't Touch me, I am holy.'*" (Italics mine.)⁸⁴

⁸⁴ Ibid., Vol.III, p167.

Vivekananda contended that such a situation, being perpetuated to a great extent by Indians, would cause the downfall of India. Antagonism and particularization pervaded India, and these were directly contrary to the teachings of Hinduism. To this question, Vivekananda asked: "Who is responsible? And the answer comes every time: Not the English; no, they are not responsible; it is we who are responsible for all our misery and all our degradation, and we alone are responsible."⁸⁵

The present state of the caste system, to Vivekananda, firstly, was based on a selfish, individualistic, utilitarian and weak sentiment directly contrary to the spirit of fraternity needed by a country for it to prosper, let alone contrary to religion. In the religious context, the means and ends should be determined in accordance with religion. Secondly, the pervading ignorance that was a product of the lack of education created a situation in which people could not conceive of any means to improve themselves other than degrading others. Thirdly, it destroyed the advantageous aspects of institutions such as caste and fraternity. His solution was mass education informed by religion.

He proclaimed that India remained whole despite neglect on the part of Indians and contempt on the part of invaders.⁸⁶ She is unshaken despite the vehement rattling that she has endured. Why then must her foundations be reformed? Survival is an ambivalent concept. Aspects of a civilization do not survive because they are necessarily good; the exploitative aspect of the caste system is a clear example, yet Vivekananda assumed that survival, endurance and strength are necessarily good. In the beginning, he maintained, the Hindu civilization was perfect; over the years certain aspects have been distorted due to periods of invasion. He criticized three main areas: the aspects of traditional Hinduism that

⁸⁵ Ibid., p192.

⁸⁶ Ibid., Vol. IV, p331.

indirectly encourage vicious and deleterious corruption of these elements; the misinterpretation of Hinduism; and the manipulation of the tradition to cater to people's desires. It is a combination of the exploitation of the ideology and the apathy of people who adopt a passive stance and simply witness the deterioration; these, to him, were in most desperate need of being reformed but Hindus and Hinduism in its present state were in no position to reform themselves.

What we want is strength, so believe in yourselves. We have become weak, and that is why occultism and mysticism come to us...they have nearly destroyed us. Make your nerves strong. What we want is muscles of iron and nerves of steel. We have wept long enough...It is a man making religion that we want. Anything that makes you weak physically, intellectually and spiritually, reject as poison; there is no life in it, it cannot be true. Truth is strengthening.⁸⁷

We must remember that Vivekananda's definition of strength was endurance, the power to self-rejuvenate, and survival. Furthermore, his idea of reform was ambivalent. Not only did it incorporate the modernization of Hinduism to co-exist as well as influence modernity, but it also meant returning to the quintessential and lost glory of Hinduism as it had been in the beginning.

To Vivekananda 'True Hinduism'⁸⁸ is the backbone of India. It is characterized by 'Unity in Diversity' in which all variations are accepted and accommodated, out of which all dogmatism and superstition has been repulsed. The goal of religion is to create a man out of an animal - from a lower grade of truth to a higher grade. No path in life is intrinsically

⁸⁷ Ibid., Vol. III, pp224-5.

⁸⁸ Vivekananda specified spiritual principles on which Hinduism should be founded. However, this section must be distinguished from the religious bases of Vivekananda's thought, which is addressed later.

erroneous; it simply needs improvement and education. This is the essence of 'Unity in Diversity'. Only through progression can one reach self-realization.⁸⁹ Vivekananda was confused as to why there is extensive and intense rivalry and intolerance within this ideological, political, economic and social structure. Why was Living Hinduism so intolerant? Even the original function of caste, that of honouring the natural hierarchy of society, has been perverted. It now serves the pernicious wishes of its corrupt benefactors. The *Brahmins*, supposedly the most holy of men, who dedicate their lives to the service of others, have now transformed themselves into the most exploitative of men; they have distorted the social system, which is now fraught with malicious intention and is the nemesis of ethical equality. The question we should ask ourselves is whether the reality of caste is as sinister as Vivekananda described. Only then can we truly understand Vivekananda's concepts of nationalism and patriotism.

It is important to ascertain what ambitions Vivekananda wanted to implant in the minds of the would-be protagonists of his strand of nationalism. What is the ultimate goal? What methods and intermediary goals can be justified in aspiring to the ultimate goal? On what grounds did Vivekananda promulgate the intolerance of the Muslim and Christian invaders? Was he furthering the corruption of the True Hinduism? To Vivekananda, the answer is inherent in the theory of 'Unity in Diversity'. This idiom explains not only the diversity of the life of humankind but also that there is an interdependence of society, politics, economics and religion; these also have a corresponding interdependence in the minds of men. Each can exist harmoniously with the other aspects and yet differ in intention. Eventually, their respective conclusions should converge. This is a particularly religious way of looking at life. In this way, Vivekananda

⁸⁹ To Vivekananda, a term that connotes the ultimate stage preached by all religions.

could justify the expulsion of the British, for the benefit of India, and it is clarified in examining the basis on which he dissented against imperialism. Vivekananda's aspiration is nationalistic rather than solely religious. It is on a political and national level. He gave political aspirations a religious legitimation simply by translating them into religious rhetoric. For example, he emphasized that the independence of India was necessary for the survival of Hinduism. He stated that the invaders, whether the Mughals or British, are an obstacle to cleansing True Hinduism of corruption, ossification and stagnation. Vivekananda saw the invaders as representatives of conquering religions who instigated the demise of True Hinduism; however, the religion was still in danger because with the continuation of British Rule, Hindus would continue to adulate the West, feel ashamed of their own religion and hence perpetuate the demise of India. Furthermore, only Hindus could capture the lost spirit of Hinduism and thus this was their responsibility.⁹⁰ To Vivekananda, it was the responsibility of religion to build what had been destroyed politically, socially and economically.

His intention was to create a nationalistic and patriotic religion. To him, the religious and the national (or political) were intimately connected. This is made clearer when one considers that the Mughals and the British were not simply economic or colonialist conquerors: they also conquered religiously (there are obviously exceptions to the rule such as Akbar, the Mughal Emperor). Additionally, they were symbolic of the disintegration of the Hindu nation, and more poignantly, the weakness of Hinduism. (On a contemporary note, the current rise of Hindu nationalism in instances such

⁹⁰ There are two very important points to note from this. Firstly, Vivekananda blamed the Muslims for initiating the demise of Hinduism. Whether he was primarily concerned with the demise of Hinduism and not India as a whole is a contention. Secondly, it was the Hindus who continued this trend and it was only they who could recapture the spirit. In this context there seems to be no contradiction. However, in the context of Vivekananda's influence over the whole of India, this poses obvious problems.

as the destruction of the mosque at Ayodhya in December 1992 is seen as being symbolic of the decay of the Indian state.)

Vivekananda was concerned about the disintegration of Hinduism and hence called for Hindus to be strong and not to succumb to the lure of other religions or the West. This was possible only if the influence of Christianity and Islam were to decline. They must weaken for the survival and evolution of Hinduism to be assured. "Hindus...are always for punishing their own bodies and never for cutting the throats of their neighbours. If the Hindu fanatic burns himself on the pyre, he never lights the fire of Inquisition."⁹¹ This quotation discloses the ideals of True Hinduism. Self-sacrifice and salvation are forms of bravery found on the most difficult path towards attaining *moksha* whereas 'lighting the fire of Inquisition' simply paves the easier road; bravery of this kind is allegedly characteristic of the Hindu nation. Ideally, it is in this manner that Hindus should fight; other methods are seen to be cowardly, which could only lead to the further dissolution of Hinduism. Again, there seems to be a contradiction in this assessment of True Hinduism. Vivekananda placed fanaticism and bravery in the same category. "Hideous fanaticism" he is known to have termed it and yet in this section he devotes his whole praise to the Hindu fanatic who burns himself on the pyre. Surely it seems a given that parochial fanaticism and broad-minded gallantry and bravery are opposed, obverse and reverse sides of the same coin? In the first place he said that the fanatic is brave because his sole aim is not self-preservation and yet he also said that this would be the sole aim if the individual was confined to the selfish "I" consciousness?

There is a further contradiction. Self-sacrificial methods of fighting presuppose that by inflicting pain on oneself, the opposing party will develop a conscience and eventually concede. (With hindsight we can see

⁹¹ S.V.C.W., Vol. I, p18.

that this is a Gandhian method.) It does not involve any form of action being imposed on the opposing party. Vivekananda was intent on destroying the invaders, not through self-sacrificial means, but in order to re-build India. Furthermore, Vivekananda constantly stated that India needed the strength and bravery of the West⁹² but here he is praising a peculiarly Hindu bravery; implying that the holiest of Hindus is more brave than the human-slaying, nation-conquering Western. Vivekananda contradicted himself on many occasions. In some instances such as this, he was guilty of looking back to an imagined glorious age of True Hinduism, and then attempting to create corresponding methods.

Vivekananda's statement concerning the destruction of invaders actually derives from a genuine desire for freedom for India. The ousting of the British is incidental to freedom. This goes against the grain of the concept of freedom in Hinduism. Essentially, a Hindu should be able to function as a Hindu in Colonial India (presuming that the colonial administration has no laws designed for the destruction of Hinduism) because freedom as a concept in Hinduism is freedom *from* and not freedom *to*: freedom from good as well as from bad. Even mental attachment is seen as a form of bondage. A Hindu should thus be able to be free under the colonial administration without being influenced by Christianity, Western influence and so on, just as a Hindu would be able to live in Britain. Ideally, Hinduism as a religion should not be affected by a system of government. The other side of the coin is that authenticity and freedom are simultaneous, and both are integral aspects of the realization of True Self and of True Religion. Furthermore, the intention of Christianity in India is to convert the Hindu. Vivekananda was nevertheless a realist and realized that Hinduism and Hindus were in danger under such an administration. As a result and about which Vivekananda was overly

⁹² Ibid., p383.

concerned, during times of adversity, people cling onto aspects of material life as and regard these as part of their identity. The higher classes have held onto their position of dominance over the lower classes with abnormal ferocity. Ironically, the lower classes have also held onto their position of subservience, as a form of identity. In other words, Vivekananda was concerned with the false consciousness that affected India.

“Work through freedom! Work through love! The word “love” is very difficult to understand; love never comes until there is freedom.”⁹³ In this there are a myriad of implications. It is primarily through education that a person can strive for freedom; understanding the bondage, the freedom and the methods for demolishing the subjugation. In metaphysical terms the first method is an attempt to reach the state of “‘we’ consciousness’. Paradoxically, the human condition renders this impossible. Each individual perceives of him/herself as a ‘body’.⁹⁴ Moreover, Vivekananda stated, metaphysics explains that an individual has no consciousness beyond the ‘mind’. The mind, *as perceived by the individual* is separate from other ‘minds’: “Dualism is the natural idea of the senses; as long as we are bound by the senses we are bound to see...the world as it is.”⁹⁵ However, any progression in an attempt to reach this state, is a good progression. In the state of “‘we” consciousness’, there is no separation, but simply gradation between good and bad, as if good and bad were simply opposite ends of a ruler. They are both subjective evaluations and thus belong to the “‘I” consciousness’ which the “‘we” consciousness’ - the exemplary state of Brahman - does not possess. The idea of non-separation and gradation characterizes the Hindu view of the world. Analogously the world consists of different elements constituting a compound that is the world, the *Brahman*. No one element is more important than another. The

⁹³ Ibid., p57.

⁹⁴ Ibid., p10.

⁹⁵ Ibid., Vol. III, p349.

“we” consciousness’ is free from delineations and definitions. In Hindu theory, only when one is free from the subjective and temporal worldly denominations of good and bad, for example can one achieve authenticity and freedom. This rests on the assumption that one’s identity is divine and independent of worldly considerations. Only when one recognizes this identity can one work through freedom, for work’s sake and without eagerly awaiting the fruits of one’s action. Secondly, the love which emanates from the *Brahman-ic* state is faultless. It does not separate the object from the subject, thus is free from such delineations. In the theory, love is not a feeling between two different, independent and separate entities, but rather the feeling that arises from the recognition that two entities are simply adjacent elements in a compound. Metaphysically, such a recognition is a step closer to the realization that all elements are ultimately parts of the same entity; a step closer to the realization of the *Brahman*. In temporal terms, this recognition is manifested as love. In political terms, this is translated as fraternal feeling for one’s fellow man, regardless of race, religion or any other distinction and without attachment but with a genuine desire to help the nation and the world as a whole.

Work that is unattached is perfect. Vivekananda recounted Krishna’s saying: “[A] man ought to live in this world like a lotus leaf, which grows in water but is never moistened by water; so a man ought to live in this world - his heart to God and his hands to work.”⁹⁶ If we bring Vivekananda’s idea about this to its logical conclusion, we can deduce that if the Indian race is constantly under the control, influence and jurisdiction of another nation, it is always in the position of slave to that nation and its identity is dependent on the master nation. By definition, neither nation can be unattached. Imperialism creates a distorted version of reality and a false consciousness. The structure of society, inter-personal, professional

⁹⁶ Ibid., Vol. I, p12.

and personal relationships between the state and citizens are determined by this false consciousness; the whole state is determined by this distorted vision. There can be no authenticity. "We have to believe that we are free, yet at every moment we find we are not free. If one idea is a delusion, and if one is true, the other also is true, because both stand on the same basis - consciousness."⁹⁷ Vivekananda also stated: "Come up, O lions, and shake off the decision that you are sheep."⁹⁸ These statements had a political, in addition to religious and metaphysical connotations: "Now freedom is only possible when no external power can exert any influence, produce any change."⁹⁹ "[F]or what makes the difference between the Englishman and you?", Vivekananda asked, "[T]he Englishman believes in himself and you do not. He believes in his being an Englishman, and he can do anything"¹⁰⁰

Indians must fight energetically against such subjugation and weakness. Vivekananda utilized the notion in *Jnanayoga*, namely that dutiful action and prayer are the same, in his theories of social service - Practical *Vedanta*. Love for love's sake and work for work's sake. In a religious vein, Vivekananda proclaimed that only through unattached action, could India be liberated. This had practical implications because if Indians were constantly looking for rewards, British domination would be perpetuated because only the British are in a position to give rewards. Consequently, the ignorance and weakness of the Indian nation were sustained. The ignorance of a subjugated people arrests any cultivation of the faculty to understand the battle against the objective situation.

Ignorance and knowledge are ambivalent notions. Vivekananda understood that a thorough knowledge of intricate caste regulations and delineations may well be used to perpetuate such delineations; on the

⁹⁷ Ibid., p254.

⁹⁸ Ibid., p11.

⁹⁹ Ibid., Vol. IV, p256.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., Vol. III, p224.

other hand, knowledge could ultimately liberate the Indian nation. The problem was that Vivekananda did not differentiate between knowledge as a concept and knowledge of a particular subject. He simply stated that knowledge would uplift the Indian nation. The Hindu assertion that everything in this world is transient is double-edged. The initial implication is that the "I" consciousness' is futile. The "I" consciousness' is, by definition, peculiar to the human predicament and thus none of its perceptions and none of its achievements are everlasting or worthwhile. This can act as a recipe for apathy or a disincentive to achieve. Vivekananda believed that only the "we" consciousness' is permanent, religion encapsulates it and hence the whole structure of religion is designed for the manifestation of the "we" consciousness' as a living doctrine: only through religion can one effect everlasting change. Using this rationale, one could deduce that British colonialism is transient. Why should one expire energy to obliterate something which would eventually disappear? The answer supplied by Vivekananda is that the removal of British colonialism has as its only consequence the regeneration of Hinduism and India; furthermore, because it is transient, it is not a sin to remove it. One is acting simply as a catalyst. Moreover, removing British colonialism should not be looked upon as the destruction of an entity, but rather the salvation of Hinduism.

It would appear that Vivekananda had in mind a militant, energetic and utilitarian religion, a religion in which each religionist is akin to the Nietzschean superhuman, regardless of gender, creed or caste. It is this type of religion that needs to play an integral part in social laws which by nature differentiate, while religion amalgamates; it needs to influence the field of politics, which is based on an amoral foundation. According to Vivekananda, religion should be amalgamated with politics and economics and has a large part to play in society; in turn, this would aid in the

manifestation of the Hindu theory of 'Unity in Diversity' on the temporal plane.¹⁰¹ The problem is that Vivekananda was making an essentialist claim, implying that religion consists simply of morals. It is the moral foundation on which society, politics and economics should rest. It is evident that religion includes more than this; it includes morality but also much more. The amalgamation of religion and politics and economics is not only the moralization of society. Religious politics includes a very specific ideology, is run by religiously-minded people, and so on.

A related problem to which Vivekananda directed his attention was the notion of *Dharma*. In the above context, one's *dharma* would be to moralize society, politics and economics. However, duty is objective, *dharma* is individual. The greatest religious ethic is 'do not kill'; yet even this is relative.¹⁰² The *Gita* appears to advocate battle, but the ultimate didactic message is that *dharma* is individual and it is when these individual *dharmas* join in unison, each making up an element in the whole, that the whole is complete. Each executes his own *dharma*. Vivekananda complained that in India, the notion of *Dharma* has become dogmatic. It has become 'duty'. "Duty is seldom sweet. It is only when love greases the wheels that it runs smoothly."¹⁰³ The implications of this in reality are vast but it is not possible or relevant to try and examine all of these. *Dharma* cannot be dogmatic because firstly, it is individual and secondly, an integral aspect of *dharma* is that one is not concerned with the fruits of action, and is thus work-oriented, not success-oriented. Duty is circumstantial. A duty can be carried out by any person; it is not specific to a certain individual and therefore the morality that is joined to it is rigid. Vivekananda was opposed to rigidity in morality (see footnote 102).

¹⁰¹ In a later chapter, I shall argue that this is Vivekananda's idea of secularism.

¹⁰² The common philosophical dilemma questions when killing, is in effect, saving. It can be argued that killing Hitler would have saved millions of Jews and hence one's killing Hitler should be viewed as 'saving'.

¹⁰³ S.V.C.W., Vol. I, p67.

The corruption of Hinduism has been made possible because of the deceptive, fanatic, selfish and obfuscating nature of Living Hinduism. This has had an overwhelming effect on the religion and institution of Hinduism as well as on the Indian society and system.

[M]aterialistic ideas prevail, and everything in this life - prosperity, the education which procures more pleasures, more food - will become glorious at first and then that will degrade and degenerate. Along with the prosperity will rise to white heat all the inborn jealousies and hatreds of the human race.¹⁰⁴

The ultimate goal preached by Hinduism is release from worldly attachments and delineations. For example, 'pleasure' is the delineation of what causes satisfaction and what does not. Life is the perpetuation and multiplication of these delineations. With each delineation, a limitation and an attachment are created. The search for pleasure in this world inevitably leads to misery. The problem in interpreting Vivekananda is that he confused metaphysics with politics, economics and society. In this way, he advocated religious ideals with political means and *vice versa*.

There are two important points to be made. Firstly, a person learns by experience and worldly sentiments are a very important aspect of experience. In a religious sense and as Vivekananda stated, the search for pleasure in this world will eventually lead to misery¹⁰⁵ and yet he acknowledged the temporal reality, that misery might be a great teacher. He confused politics with metaphysics. The second point is that Vivekananda concentrated on the relationship between means and end. To him, religion must be the foundation of temporal activity and thus, the means and the end must relate dialectically. "Our great defect in life is that

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., Vol. III, p157.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., Vol. I, p27.

we are so much drawn to the ideal, the goal is so much more enchanting, so much more alluring, so much bigger in our mental horizon, that we lose sight of the details altogether.”¹⁰⁶ This reiterates the first point in that if one does not pay attention to the means one cannot learn, even if it be through misery. Vivekananda criticized the Hindu race for being attached to transient pleasures, despite professing their deep religiosity. The problem is accentuated because pleasure is transient, the goal may be permanent, thus attachment may be long-term or the goal may even be impossible to achieve; the attachment may be doubly futile. The Indian has become apathetic, Vivekananda contended, because he has experienced this unbalanced situation. In *dharmic*¹⁰⁷ terms, if this were to happen to a number of individuals simultaneously, the nation would undergo a period of inaction. India would turn into a decadent nation with no potential for progression. All attachment leads to weakness and subjugation.

As a result the individual would inevitably shower the blame on the outside world. It is not the external world which has a monopoly on our destiny, it is ourselves, explained Vivekananda. An individual cannot be subject to anything unless one makes oneself susceptible to it. Blaming the world is being resigned to the world. “You only make your offence greater by heaping misery upon misery, by imagining that the external world is hurting you.”¹⁰⁸ One should take responsibility for one’s own *karma*. Vivekananda translated this into the political sphere. If one looks to the British for pleasure or comfort, one becomes dependent on them and thus sustains their domination. Self-rule requires that Indians have the ability to govern themselves, let alone that to govern others. They should not look elsewhere for sustenance. In religious terms, they should look inside for

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., Vol. I, p27.

¹⁰⁷ In the sense that each person must contribute, by acting out their own *dharma*, to maintain cosmic evolution. All *dharmas* joined make the whole.

¹⁰⁸ S.V.C.W., Vol. II, pp8-9.

happiness, life, strength and similar qualities. Individual weakness leads to the destruction of the nation.

The fact that the Hindu blames the external world is indicative of his lack of faith in his own power to alter his destiny. In blaming others, one creates a division between people; this is what has happened in India, Vivekananda protested. A by-product of blaming others, is that of not accepting responsibility for one's actions. If this were to continue, he added, the society would regress. He stressed that only faith and strength could save India from this regression. Strength is necessary to act and faith is necessary to put that action to the test. To Vivekananda, courage, individuality and identity are all interdependent. A weak man is only concerned with self-preservation even at the expense of others.¹⁰⁹ He emphasized that responsibility was a requisite for a strong, personal, modern, self-governing nation. Hinduism must dispose of the life-negating notion of *karma*; the doctrine of *karma* as explained by Vivekananda, was a recipe for life-assertion, by recognizing the temporal laws of causation. *Karma* is action. One reaps what one sows. It is the power to make one's own fate and not the converse; it is definitely not resignation to subservience, to subjugation. In this context, it is a call to awaken and to fight. In the recognition and utilization of *karma* lies the difference between men and animals. An animal does not understand the laws of causation and hence cannot use them to its advantage.

In a religious sense, *karma* is instrumental in *moksha*, the realization of the *Brahman*. 'Realization' implies an active step. In this temporal world, one must actively play one's part in the stage of life. The *Gita* proclaims that Utopia is accessible only through action. In his religious vein, Vivekananda stated that the Hindu must act on this *Atman* now! He accommodated this into the political realm by adjoining it to the notion of

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., p84.

non-attachment: The *Atman* is above any human feeling. By not feeling the effects of another's actions, one diminishes the power of the other, thus acquiring power oneself. This can be worked into a political manifesto, as Gandhi did years later. This is a method to disarm the enemy and gain that power for oneself. Concepts such as non-attachment and desirelessness, realization of the *Brahman*, activity, *Karma* and the laws of causation, interdependence, and exercising influence are all translated into the political sphere. "[F]or instance, I feel unhappy because a man scolds me. My struggle will be to make myself strong enough to conquer the environment, so that he may scold me and I shall not feel."¹¹⁰ This renders the other powerless and the oneself powerful.

The Indian nation is in a state of false consciousness. Self-deception is comforting. Self-deception is a short-term comfort which inevitably leads to weakness. "There is one idea that often initiates against it. It is this. It is all very well to say, "I am Pure, the Blessed," but I cannot show it always in my life. That is true; the ideal is always very hard." To Vivekananda, the method to show one's 'blessedness' in this life is through the combination of love as an active doctrine and knowledge. *Bhakti* (love) and *Jnana* (knowledge) are not as different as is commonly supposed. If followed to their respective logical ends, they coincide. One without the other leads to disaster. The nature of *Bhakti*, or of love as an active doctrine, has been either misinterpreted or rejected by the Indian nation. Even the caste system has been justified by reference to love of the higher classes in creating this structure for the good of all members of society. This inverted 'Robin Hood' effect has destroyed the foundations of the social structure, the nation as a whole and even the religion. The majority of the adherents know no alternative. To them, it is neither good nor bad. It has become a manner of life. More suffer than benefit. This is why

¹¹⁰ Ibid., p137.

Vivekananda promulgated that the combination of love and knowledge must be the solution. Vivekananda translated love as an active doctrine as '*Bhakti*', at times, 'universal love', at others, and simply 'love' at yet others. This notion, to him, cannot be corrupted. One surrenders oneself for the good of others. This notion, to him, cannot be corrupted. One surrenders oneself for the good of others. It is the amalgamation of humanity, goodness and selflessness. Only this can arrest the destruction of the Indian nation. Love can do so by binding as opposed to destroying and secondly, because when one loves India, one would act in her best interest.¹¹¹ To Vivekananda, India can only be saved through whole-hearted devotion. "If we love the sum total, we love everything. Loving the world and doing it good will all come easily then...the Bhakta is in a state of perfect resignation."¹¹²

The emphasis on 'perfect resignation' should be noted. Perfect Resignation is very different from 'passive resignation'. The former has absolutely no hint of ignorance but rather, is driven by knowledge; it is instigated by a conscious and informed judgement and requires a disciplined mind which is usually the product of meditation or *yoga*. In religious terms, it is resplendent in the "'we" consciousness'. Ignorance spreads its lascivious, enticing effects on the Indian nation, which is in turn bound by its capacity to follow unconsciously. Ignorance and the resultant descending spiral create the antithetical relationships, antagonistic love, intolerance and transient pleasure in which solidarity becomes impossible.

Our Upanishads say that the cause of all misery is ignorance, and that is perfectly true when applied to every state of life, either social or spiritual. It is ignorance that makes us hate each other, it is through ignorance that we

¹¹¹ See quotation affixed to footnote 83, Chapter III.

¹¹² S.V.C.W., Vol. III, p82-3.

do not know and do not love each other, love goes, must come, for are we not one?¹¹³

The overriding criticism made by Vivekananda of the nation as a whole is the same as that of the individuals who compose it: that of weakness. People are lazy, they do not work; they do not love each other, they are intensely selfish; each is imbued with jealousy. A pervading nihilism has resulted from the combination of weakness and the prospect of retributive destiny (as *Karma* has been interpreted). Weakness, both physical and mental, a lack of courage and a lack of strength are the gravest of India's problems. Weakness is at the root of one-third of India's miseries.¹¹⁴ In order to ease the guilt, man adopts spirituality. This becomes an antidote for material pleasures, and an excuse for blaming the outside world. Precisely because the reason for this spirituality is false, man clings on to superstitions. Superstitions are dichotomously opposed to initiative and originality. In this case, India would be plunged into the adversity anew.

It is not spirituality that India needs, but bread.¹¹⁵ "Avoid all mystery"¹¹⁶, Vivekananda shouted. Living Hinduism is simply the embodiment of food and the palate, and not the evil lurking in the mind: "that we cannot eat from the hands of any man who is not of the highest caste, even though he be the most wise and holy person."¹¹⁷ If a *Brahmin* eats with a *Pariah*, he is an outcast. However, he is permitted to dine with a thief from the same caste. This can only inspire a contempt of fellow man, intolerance, lack of fraternity, and stagnation. The Hindu thinks that a little spirituality will cleanse him of all his material sins. This pseudo-salvation is making him weak without his realizing it. External purification

¹¹³ Ibid., p241.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., p432.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., p278.

is mandatory, but only when it is combined with internal purification can it be useful.

Hinduism as an institution and Hinduism as praxis in India are very different. Vivekananda's criticisms were aimed at the latter, Living Hinduism, which he saw as manipulation of the former for the benefit of few at the expense of the majority. The downfall of Hinduism was inevitable if this were to continue. Religion is and should be the backbone of life of the nation.¹¹⁸ To replace the spiritual backbone for a political one would inevitably result in annihilation.¹¹⁹ Religion as the basis of India is what differentiates her from the civilizations that are temporary.¹²⁰ It seemed to him that India was changing this theme for a political foundation¹²¹ for three reasons.

The first is by exploitation and manipulation. The superstitions that took root in the Indian mind in turn led to 'Don't Touchism', food regulations, over-indulgent classifications of society and the antagonism between the lower castes and the higher. There is also the factor of the animosity between the *Brahmins* and the rest of the society. 'Don't Touchism' is mistaken for the religion proper; and because Indians are primarily concerned with religion, they become obsessed by 'Don't Touchism'. This creates hatred and aversion, dividing individuals and society. The aim of religion is amalgamation and not division; the mission of India is "to accumulate, as it were, into a dynamo, all the spiritual energy of the race."¹²² Religion is now, however in the kitchen.¹²³ Fanaticism is an integral component of 'Don't Touchism'.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., p361.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., p220

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ Vivekananda continues after admitting that India is not proficient in politics: "Ours is the only true religion because, according to it, this little sense-world of three days' duration is not to be made the end and aim of all...Ours is...beyond the senses, beyond space, and beyond time...all your power is finite." Ibid., p180.

¹²¹ For example, *S.V.C.W.*, Vol. III, p108.

¹²² *S.V.C.W.*, Vol. III, p108.

The solution to avoid extremism in one's own sphere, to work and to imagine that everyone else's work is completed and the only unfinished work is one's own. Alternately, the whole burden of work is on one's own shoulders.¹²⁴ Fanaticism is destruction. It can be easily mistaken for religion. "The greatest mistake is that the ignorant people think that this local custom is the essence of our religion."¹²⁵ Customs change and they must be accepted as being temporary. Vivekananda once explained that originally the Hindu was a beef-eating, soma-drinking individual and the reason for the prohibition on beef is social, emanating from a situation when this restriction was beneficial for social and dietary reasons. These social norms should not be mistaken for the religion proper. Even morality is a product of consequence and circumstance, Vivekananda emphasized.¹²⁶

It is the ignorant rather than the cultured who understand the temporary nature of customs; they understand the concept of the oneness of everything.¹²⁷ This is a strange proclamation for Vivekananda to make because he realized that the ignorant must be educated to understand the temporary nature of customs. He proclaimed this only because he saw the cultured as being the manipulators of these traditions and thus they must have been more closely attached to them. Vivekananda saw a need for reformation because 'the religion was in the kitchen and God was in the cooking pot'.¹²⁸ Even the interaction of two humans within the same group was regulated. He was ashamed that such intolerance and inflexibility was disguised as religion. He prophesied that the solution was to be progressive and yet conservative and faithful to traditions.¹²⁹ The essentials of religion

¹²³ Refer to quotation affixed to footnote 83.

¹²⁴ *S.V.C.W.*, Vol. III, p199.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, p173.

¹²⁶ See footnote 102. This is an extensive philosophical and political question and one Vivekananda did not consider in much depth. His point was that morality is not cut and dried. This opinion is especially evident when he was referring to Islam.

¹²⁷ *S.V.C.W.*, Vol. III, p241.

¹²⁸ See quotation affixed to footnote 83.

¹²⁹ *S.V.C.W.*, Vol. III, p174.

must be acknowledged as divine and the non-essentials of the religion, such as the social norms, must be recognized as such.

Through religion, aspects of the social structure have been exploited. If a social regulation is given religious legitimation, it can easily be manipulated. By the same token, aspects such as discipline can be implemented through religious legitimation. There must be a dividing line between these. Where it should be posited is a difficult matter. Who has the objective authority to provide this line and to whom does the authority belong to enforce it? Traditionally, the power resided with the *Brahmins* but it is these *Brahmins* who are the targets for Vivekananda's criticisms. The antagonism within the society is a manifestation of the *Brahmins'* positing these lines in places that are advantageous only to them.

Vivekananda argued that society must be founded on the principle of interdependence - in religious terms, 'Unity in Diversity' - of a variety of people and occupations. It appears that Living Hinduism has rejected it as a social, political principle and only superficially accepted it as a religious principle. Thus, many Hindus have been converted by the fraternity of Islam and the charity of Christianity. The imminent death of Hinduism seemed certain. Apart from the criticisms Vivekananda launched at the caste system, the regulations of social interaction and the Hindu mind, he also criticized the aberration he perceived in *Brahminism* and the contributory features.

Vivekananda's criticisms of the caste system follow an established school of thought which supported the notions of the natural hierarchy of society, interdependence and the relativity of life. The caste system in essence was the embodiment of these and an organized structure maintaining them. To destroy it would be only detrimental. Dogmatic equality, in Vivekananda's eyes, was inegalitarian and rejected the variety and interdependence of life. He was dissenting on humane grounds against

degradation. The subjugation of, for example, the *Shudras* has no grounding in any Hindu text nor any moral order, nor even the utility of a society. It is effected simply for ulterior motive and selfish gain. The most vehement of Vivekananda's criticisms are directed towards what Hinduism has done to itself. The *Brahmin* should ideally, raise others to his own level: that is the quintessential knowledgeable and egalitarian-minded *Brahmin*.¹³⁰ Theoretically, the *Brahmin* is the ideal man.¹³¹

In essence, the advantages of the caste system outweigh the disadvantages.¹³² This situation is multi-faceted. Firstly, the caste system is purely a system of kinship, welfare, fraternity and interdependence. Diversity is an established fact of life and society cannot exist without a structure to contain the diversity of life, yet Vivekananda was intent that the *Brahmin* should elevate all others to his level of existence. If this were practically possible, caste would be defunct. However, the diversity of life would still exist but there would be no system to organize this diversity; hence, interdependence would be nothing more than anarchic, transactive communication. There must be divisions in the physical realm, and the unity of mankind in the minds of people. Caste must exist, honouring the natural interdependence of life. Caste kept the nation alive:¹³³ If all road-sweepers in a village were on strike, the whole village would be in disarray.¹³⁴ Caste is essentially an advantageous institution in which difference and diversity can be transformed into interdependence. In reality, caste has been defiled: kinship has decreased, antagonism has grown and hence solidarity is impossible. *Brahmins*, instead of perpetuating the concept of interdependence of the castes and the metaphysical egalitarianism of humans, have accentuated the animosity by

¹³⁰ For example, *ibid.*, Vol. III, p294; Vol. V, p214

¹³¹ *Ibid* on both references.

¹³² *Ibid.*, Vol. VIII, p242.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, Vol. II, p489.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, Vol. VII, p246,

simply fitting the natural laws of hierarchy into a social regulation in which the lower classes are devoid of any dignity and pride, deprived of any equal status, inculcated with notions of inferiority and imbued with the idea that they are deficient: for them, equal opportunity is thus a farce. Vivekananda contended that, for their own gain, *Brahmins* have manipulated that situation to such a risory extent that society, the essence of the caste system and interdependence have been distorted.¹³⁵ Vivekananda battled with the question of whether such a distortion could be rectified by re-orientation or whether it required a complete abolition of caste and the antiquated and exploitative notions of interdependence as they exist in India.

He was confused and never solved this confusion in his mind. Consequently, he advocated that *Brahmins* should raise others to their level and in doing so, the whole society is elevated. He imagined that the whole society should be elevated and only then should another caste-type system, neither manipulative and exploitative, be installed. If people were constantly elevated, society would be progressive. *Brahmins* in India, Vivekananda complained, oppress by instilling superstition and contaminating the theory of *Karma* by adding to it reductionalist and fatalistic overtones. Inequality, they explain, is predetermined.

It would appear that the idea of natural inequality is inherently ambiguous, if not a contradiction in terms. Nature presents us only with differences or potential differences. With human beings, these differences do not become inequalities unless and until they are selected, marked out and evaluated by processes that are cultural and not natural.¹³⁶

¹³⁵ Ibid., Vol. IV, p300.

¹³⁶ Béteille A., 'The Idea of Natural Inequality', in *The Idea of Natural Inequality and other essays*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1983, p8.

Vivekananda believed that equality was inherent and disagreed vehemently with the notion that caste was simply a manifestation of the ontological inequalities of humans - to Vivekananda inequality was social and not ontological.

The fatalistic overtones of *karma* create a disregard for humans and human life. Whilst in Calcutta in 1897, Vivekananda was conversing with a member of an organization that apparently cared and saved mother cows. Vivekananda inquired as to what this organization was doing for the people suffering from the present famine in Central India. To this, the answer came that nothing was being done by the organization because the famine was a result of *karma* and it was *karma* of the starving people to suffer. Agonized by the farcical nature of this answer, Vivekananda replied "Yes, that the cow is our mother, I understand: who else would give birth to *such* accomplished children?"¹³⁷ It is this evaluation of *karma* that makes people weak, readily accept servility and adopt a defeatist outlook.

The most potent form of power is when the protagonist has the authority to determine the goal and the manner in which to reach this goal. Traditionally, the *Brahmins* had this authority and exercised it in manipulative and deceitful ways. Vivekananda claimed that the middle classes perpetuate these dichotomous divisions, thus permitting the domination. What is significant in this respect is that, as Dumont claims, the *Brahmins* are in no better a position than the Untouchables. They have no choice but to accept this structure. As the *Shudra* is found in the position of the exploited, the *Brahmin* is in a position of the exploiter. Dumont elucidates on the system in which each Indian is allotted a place. The individual is kept in this place not by means of punishment or arbitrary exercise of power but of a universal acceptance of the values of

¹³⁷ S.V.C.W., Vol. VII, p451.

hierarchy: the *Brahmin* no less inevitably than the *Shudra* accepts his allotted place.¹³⁸ Dumont calls it 'holism' as opposed to totalitarianism. The Untouchables have been stripped of all human dignity. They have no faith in their ability and thus no confidence to rebel. The elevation of society mentioned by Vivekananda, is the responsibility of the *Brahmins* because it is only they who understand the level to which humans should be raised; it requires the dynamism of character Vivekananda saw as a characteristic of the *Brahmin*. Additionally, it is the responsibility of every person to raise his own position and it is here that Vivekananda's exclamations about courage and faith in oneself take on their significance. The power of the *Brahmin* resides in everyone. When society were to be raised, India would be impenetrable.

Men will be born differentiated; some will have more power than others; some will have natural capacities; others not...That some people, through natural aptitude, should be able to accumulate more wealth than others, is natural: but that on account of this power to acquire wealth they should tyrannise and ride roughshod over those who cannot acquire so much wealth, is not part of the law.¹³⁹

In another volume, Vivekananda stated that the tyranny of the wise is more powerful than the tyranny of the ignorant.¹⁴⁰ To Vivekananda the welfare and the kinship of the caste system must remain while the selfish exploitation of it must vanish. Caste is a problematic and controversial issue. Whether it imposes more detriment than advantage or *vice versa* has been a subject of much speculation. Whether numerous divisions or four divisions (*Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaisya, Shudra*) are more conducive to

¹³⁸ Dumont L., *Homo Hierarchicus. The Caste System and its Implications*, Weidenfeld and Nicholson, London, 1970, p80.

¹³⁹ S.V.C.W., Vol. I, p435.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., Vol. VIII, p76.

creating a superstructure or even for organization has been debated vehemently. For instance, Hutton noted that caste made it possible for a myriad of customs, creeds and geographically imposed unity, diversity induced variety and the vast amount of people in India to be accommodated within a single, stable social system.¹⁴¹ This stability is the same sentiment Vivekananda praised in the caste system. Cox makes an interesting point, stating that even though it creates stability, it is not the *desired* stability. Vivekananda's point was that if society were organized around the four *varnas*, the stability ensuing would be of the *desired* quality. Only if these divisions are multiplied, *undesired* stability would ensue. Vivekananda nevertheless maintained that even if the divisions were multiplied, they could be located and weeded out.¹⁴²

One can imagine Vivekananda proclaiming that keeping four castes, the authority and knowledge of the *Brahmins* could find the cause of the multiplications of divisions, and overcome them. With dogmatic egalitarianism, this would not be possible as there would be no authority. However, problems arise with this: firstly, if the divisions are created within the *Brahminhood*, where lies the authority to combat the divisions? No human is perfect: even religion proclaims this. Thus, the perfect *Brahmin* cannot exist. It is therefore possible for this authority to be abused and for divisions to emerge in the *Brahminhood*. Secondly, with the existence of castes, there is always the possibility for outcasting, multiplying the castes. Further divisions are inevitable. Cox also specifies that caste and not *varna* provides an identity. Identity is a very problematic issue. Actually to sense or recognize one's own identity is difficult. To create a correlation between the concepts of self-image and the identity attributed to an individual by others is even more difficult.

¹⁴¹ Hutton J.H., *Caste in India*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1946,p1.

¹⁴² S.V.C.W., Vol. IV, pp 469-70.

Caste gives an identity for the individual to adopt and for the rest of society to accept. The contradiction is that it appears that the smaller the community is, the stronger the identity. However, this is not necessarily the case. In a situation in which there is a person in conflict with society, there is a disjunction between the identity through which society recognizes him, and that which he gives himself. He probably regards himself as righteous or at least correct. Society sees him as obstreperous, certainly wrong and possibly an outlaw. The case is the same if there are two people in conflict with society, no matter how they recognize themselves and each other to be. However, when there is a large mass or movement, the individuals within identify with the aims of the movement and society will also view them thus. Where the line is drawn is not clear.

This relates to the difference in terms of identity between caste and *varna*. The latter is a larger group in which the link between people is weak, and the aims, ambitions and vocations of individuals may not coincide. The identity of being member of that smaller group of caste is much more intense. Individuals are joined either by vocation, aspiration, occupation, through servility or even through being exploited. Identity and unity are always strengthened in adverse circumstances; or for the victorious, in celebration. The sense of identity and unity within a group identifying itself as being exploited (or even the exploiter) is far more intense than that of a mass of discrete individuals who indirectly relate to each other for some less immediate ancestral reason, as in *varna*.

Another controversial topic in the caste debate is the lack of equality. Tully states that caste is an institution which reinstates the opportunity to compete on an equal footing, because each person in the cohesive social structure are in the same predicament; egalitarianism, on the other hand, destroys the communities which support those people who start life with

no opportunities.¹⁴³ Vivekananda echoed the same sentiment in prescribing that it is caste that delivers the equality of opportunity.¹⁴⁴ However, he also specified that it is *varna* and *jati* in their essential sense that creates this opportunity. *Jati*, he explained, is man's individual destiny that he has the power to shape. The original idea of *jati* is freedom for the individual to express his nature, his caste.¹⁴⁵ Interdependence cannot exist without a sense of equality, albeit a flexible or progressive equality (*viz.* Vivekananda's about road sweepers). Sentiments of superiority and inferiority are perversions of this.¹⁴⁶ Natural equality is followed by competition in *varna*. In this state, every man has the space to manoeuvre in order to fulfil his destiny, as opposed to the rigidity of social laws ensuring equality and encouraging competition. "For no matter how scrupulously we ensure equality of opportunity, there can be equality only before competition and not after it."¹⁴⁷ The discriminatory caste system arrests any potential for competition by nullifying equality. Competition cannot exist without a foundation of equality¹⁴⁸ without which complete ossification of the society results. Vivekananda talked about *jati* characterized by, as Bêteille phrases it: "The orders of rank revealed by free and fair competition must correspond to the natural scheme of things."¹⁴⁹ As can be seen, inequality is a phenomenon created by laws whereas differences are natural. If castes can be divided in accordance to the natural scheme, there would be an ideal, egalitarian system promoting competition. Competition, Vivekananda stated, aids progress and a recipe

¹⁴³ Tully M., *No Full Stops in India*, Penguin, London, 1992, p6.

¹⁴⁴ *S.V.C.W.*, Vol. II, p489.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p372.

¹⁴⁶ This is examined by Vivekananda in a chapter entitled 'Privilege', in *S.V.C.W.*, Vol. I.

¹⁴⁷ Bêteille, *op. cit.*, p8.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

for strength and not stagnation. However in India, the higher castes base their power on inequality and thus are immobilized by egalitarianism.¹⁵⁰

Another criticism directed at the caste system is the practice of intermarriage and child marriage. The prohibition on intermarriage even within a caste is farcical. Vivekananda claimed that the tradition of Hinduism has been perverted to such extreme that intermarriage is restricted not because of any metaphysical or perhaps a logical reason but on the grounds of contamination. It is an extension of food regulations. To Vivekananda, the Hindu mind is nearly completely ossified. It ponders only ridiculous matters such as whether marrying someone of a fractionally lower standard of living may contaminate the suitor. "Endogamy is the essence of the caste system."¹⁵¹

Child marriage is another issue that cannot be ignored. When the parents sacrifice their daughter, they are searching for their own salvation through the sacrifice of another. Vivekananda was vociferous in his stance on child marriage, abhorring the whole practice: the sacrificing of others is an act inviting opprobrium. However, when he was in America in the Shakespeare Club in Pasadena 18th January, 1900, he said that Indians are socialistic and therefore child marriage is good because, before love develops, the parents chose for the child. This issue is very pertinent to understanding Vivekananda. On the one hand, he was not 'washing his dirty linen in public'. On the other, he was sincerely in favour of, as he called it, a socialist understanding of society and institutions therein. In India, marriage is a contract between two families and not two individuals, yet the essence of this statement goes beyond a mere contract. Vivekananda dissented against the individualistic stance ubiquitous in the West, which he saw derived from a materialistic view of life. This

¹⁵⁰ Tully, op. cit., p6.

¹⁵¹ Westermarck, 'The History of Human Marriage', in Cox O.C., *Caste, Class and Race. A Study in Social Dynamics*, Monthly Review Press, New York, 1959, p54. No other reference.

individualistic stance ignores the common good, the wishes of other individuals and the good of any society.¹⁵² In India, people are more considerate and hence more humanistic. Vivekananda fluctuated between promulgation of intermarriages, socialistic India, social caste law and dissent against it. Vivekananda regarded a 'socialistic' view as more humanistic.¹⁵³ Vivekananda proclaimed:

When you would be able to sacrifice all desire for happiness, then you would be Buddha, then you would be free: that is far off. Again, do you think the way to it lies through oppression? Oh what expressions of self-denial are our widows! Oh how sweet is child marriage!...But as to men, the masters of the situation, there is no need for self-denial for them! The truth is that in this country parents and relatives can ruthlessly sacrifice the best interests of their children and others for their own selfish ends to save themselves.¹⁵⁴

Vivekananda contested this on two main grounds: firstly, on egalitarian grounds. Secondly, reaching salvation cannot be attained by 'ruthlessly sacrificing the best interests of their children'. This is precisely the opposite of what Vivekananda wanted to instil in the Indian people and what he saw as the saving characteristic for India: Universal Love. Cox says marriage in India is a religious contract; the bride and the groom have no place.¹⁵⁵ Vivekananda claimed that marriage was more a social contract between two families than a religious one. When discussing the Age of Consent Bill, Vivekananda contended that religion does not consist of making a girl a mother at the age of twelve or thirteen: "And what rejoicing of the whole family if a child is born to her at the age of thirteen!

¹⁵² S.V.C.W., Vol. VIII, pp61-2.

¹⁵³ Ibid.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., Vol. IV, p491.

¹⁵⁵ Cox, op. cit., p54.

If the trend of such ideas is reversed, then only there is some hope of the ancient *Shraddha* to return.”¹⁵⁶ *Shraddha* roughly translates as faith in the potential and actual power of oneself. One is prevented from gaining this faith if one begets children at the tender adolescent ages. The birth of a child does not produce a mother or a father: it produces the states of motherhood and fatherhood. Maturity and the ability to discern the best interests of the child as well as of oneself are needed for one to become a parent. Physically becoming a parent only brings responsibilities with which the adolescent parent may not be able to cope. The child will not grow up as a child should, with the proper treatment. The child will not cultivate characteristics it ideally should, such as strength, courage, faith, selflessness, and so on.

Shraddha is impaired as the parents lose faith in their ability, when they observe the deterioration of the child. Child marriage is not only a union of two children, but it is in many cases the marriage of a child to an elderly or middle-aged man. In 1891, public attention in Bengal was directed to the number of cases of intense suffering and often death caused by premature co-habitation and only then was the age of consent raised to twelve. “Hindu and Muslim law severely punished the offence of rape outside marriage, but the idea of making intercourse between husband and wife below a certain age illegal seems to have originated with the Law Commissioners who drafted the Indian Penal Code in 1846.”¹⁵⁷ Having been affected by the fervour in Bengal, Vivekananda wanted a new type of Hindu, who by the time they had reached their prime, were not bound by children and family responsibilities. “Marriage reinforces and refurbishes the socio-religious structure which has existed in India for

¹⁵⁶ S.V.C.W., Vol. , p 343.

¹⁵⁷ Rathbone, E.F., *Child Marriage: The Indian Minotaur. An object Lesson from the Past to the Future*, George Allen and Unwin Ltd., London, 1934., p17.

centuries.”¹⁵⁸ This entails re-affirming the religious dogmatism set by the *Brahmins*. Vivekananda was mentally immured because he could not agree with Cox in affirming that marriage is a religious contract since then religion would be seen to be advocating the morality of such a marriage, the early pregnancy and the ensuing atrocities. He was also in a dilemma because he realized that the bonds of love are stronger than the bonds of compulsion. Early marriage prevents the blossoming of love. These bonds of love are the ideal foundations for the creation of the Nietzschean Hindu. These bonds of love create the husband-and-wife relationship and eventually or possibly the husband/wife/child relationship, creating a single unity, thus destroying the “‘I’ consciousness’. Vivekananda also dissented with the individualistic stance of the West.¹⁵⁹ He implied that love in an Indian setting is different from love in a Western setting.

There is also another element which created a dilemma for him. On the one hand, he proclaimed that misery is a good teacher. Silent suffering will lead to *shraddha*. On the other, he could not advocate the constant misery of a marriage into which a child has been forced with her middle-aged husband constantly beating her. A separation would lead to her outcasting. He could not consent to this silent suffering. There is a contradiction in Vivekananda’s reasoning. He wanted people to stand up and fight against repression. The courage to do so emanates from endurance and silent suffering. Why, though, if one can endure, why should one stand up and fight? Complementary to this is a psychological phenomenon. The sole agent acts with more energy and vigour than the collective mass; especially when surrounded by ideological opposition. If the individual has been inculcated in the norms of the society, there will be no adverse reaction, but if that same agent has the education to realize

¹⁵⁸ Gupta R.G., *Marriage, Religion and Society. A Pattern of Change in an Indian Village*, John Wiley and Sons, New York, Halstead Press, 1974, p1, Introduction.

¹⁵⁹ S.V.C.W., Vol. VIII, pp61-2.

the deleterious nature of some particular custom, the flight against it when the agent is alone will be more vehement. The conviction of that sole agent in the position of defence or attack is usually more vociferous than in the mass. This is the type of strength and conviction that Vivekananda discussed.

There are advantages and disadvantages both to early marriage and to the prohibition on widow remarriage. Both of these provide a sense of security and identity, even though of a dubious nature. The child is sure of security and identity despite possibly being unsure of welfare. The potential widow is certain of her identity as a widow. In India, the identity of a mother is the most prestigious and revered. If one remarries, the identity of 'mother' is overshadowed by the newly acquired one of 'suitor'. A widow always maintains the mother status, assuming obviously that she has indeed had children. Although Vivekananda did not agree with the prohibition on widow remarriage, there are certain ambivalences. Firstly, the prohibition *may* mean that the widow maintains her identity as a widow as opposed to a mother. Conversely, becoming a suitor again is reverting to the identity of a woman, emancipating oneself from the fixed identity of widow (and even mother). However, the crux is when the widow/suitor remarries and the overriding identity is that wife, an identity requiring the existence of a husband. 'A mother' requires children and 'wife' requires a husband, whereas 'woman' can be independent and strong. The independent, strong identity is conducive to Vivekananda's ideal person; the issue of identity is always a contentious one. There may well be a disjunction between society's views of an individual's identity and an individual's own perception. However, this issue is more straightforward for the identity of a mother. A woman identifies herself as a mother when she begets children, when she lactates, and so on. Others look upon her as a mother. There is no disjunction in the subjective and

objective evaluations of identity. Mother is seen as the giver of life to all. There are obviously childless women, but in the majority of cases, motherhood is predetermined. As the giver of life, the mother has ultimate authority. Vivekananda phrased this in the following manner: "The one thing that fulfils womanhood, that is womanliness in women, is motherhood."¹⁶⁰

This overarching question is whether having and relating to an identity is more important than having a comfortable life. In the initial stages of reformation this is a significant issue, as a choice may have to be made between one or the other. Mansour Farhang, Revolutionary Iran's First Ambassador to the U.N., proclaimed that the Islamic Revolution succeeded because Islamic people wanted to reclaim their traditional identity more than they did the basic necessities. Vivekananda was uncommitted on this issue. On the one hand, religion is the most important factor in his own life and religion was instrumental in supplying an identity; moreover, he claimed that it is the backbone of India. On the other, religion means nothing if it does not give happiness and 'bread' to its adherents.

He further accentuated the importance of motherhood by explaining that in all Hindu scriptures, the prenatal influence is what gives the child the impetus of good or evil.¹⁶¹ There is, however, another contradiction. Vivekananda claimed that in higher castes in India, there are more women than men. With the prohibition on intermarriage, how can all women marry and achieve the status of motherhood? Some are confined to an isolated life of a spinster. The prohibition decreases this probability. Although he dissented with the prohibition of intermarriage, he also disagreed with the prohibition on widow remarriage. Vivekananda's

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., p59.

¹⁶¹ Ibid., Vol. III, p60.

criticisms of Hinduism centre on lack of courage, faith, strength and such qualities. All of these ultimately rest on the lack of security and lack of I of the Indian people. The former was more complex because security is relative. Vivekananda wanted India to be wholly secure with her place in the community of nations and thus he proclaimed that she should take her place as the community's spiritual adviser; he wanted Indians to be secure within their own country; and he also wanted each individual to be secure that they were safe from exploitation from their fellow men. Identity was less contentious because there are no degrees of identity as there are of security. He simply aspired to have an identity with which Indians collectively and individually related and to which they were happy to relate. A lack of identity and security causes fanaticism, antagonism and exploitation; the degradation of others to make oneself feel superior, pseudo-strength, subjugation of others, killing and looting, he contended (this is one proposed reason for the animosity towards Muslims and the Ayodhya issue of December 1992.).

One can attempt to gain security by attaching oneself to a group especially if the group is antagonistic towards a topic or target. Identity is intensified if there is an enemy to oppose and it coheres the identity as 'fighters for the cause'; or if the identity *subsumes* the enemy. Opprobrious acts are committed in the name of security and identity; to attain or to maintain them. This perpetuates the communal sentiment. In many cases, people are admitted into groups because of acts that they have committed against rival groups. This may translate into the case of marriage, where an individual is incorporated into an established group with an established ideology. On the one hand, the individual may take on ideas of that group. If those ideas are honourable, it may be beneficial to the country as a whole. Vivekananda was very insistent that a permeating of grand ideas through the nation would eventually create a situation in which every

Indian would desire and work for independence. In this sense child marriage may well be beneficial for the country at large. On the other hand, if the group's ideals are deleterious, the individual may take on those ideas. There is a slight possibility that the individual would fight against the established ideas of either group, although this is indeed slight because an integral aspect of joining a group is ritual to aid this conversion. Rituals have three objectives: norm setting; status affirming; co-operation ensuring.¹⁶² "The rights of transition are practised throughout the lifespan of the individual and thereby fail to provide a lucid view of the permanent status of the individual."¹⁶³ The views and ideals of a group can change. The incorporation of rituals, even new ones, can catalyse this change. The new spouse can introduce into the group new views and new rituals if he or she is charismatic enough - Vivekananda's ideal was the charismatic person and his theories have here been expanded. His duty is set: to imbue the individual with patriotism, and strength-enticing ideals. The one who will implement his ideals is the impressionable individual.

What our country now wants [is]...gigantic wills that nothing can resist, why is that we three hundred millions of people have been ruled for the last thousand years by any and every handful of foreigners who choose to walk over our prostate bodies?¹⁶⁴

What is needed is faith in ourselves.¹⁶⁵ The Hindu nation through years of servility has lost its faith in its ability and in members of the nation. They have resigned themselves to inferiority because of this lack of faith in the ability to bear the weight of the responsibility. "The idea of Shraddha must be brought back once more to us, the faith in ourselves

¹⁶² Gupta, op. cit., 'Introduction'.

¹⁶³ Ibid., p5.

¹⁶⁴ S.V.C.W. Vol. III, p 190.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid., p 191.

must be reawakened and then only, all the problems which face our country will gradually be solved by ourselves.”¹⁶⁶

This is certainly a grand idea. Undoubtedly, a nation and its inhabitants instilled with *shraddha* will rebuild India with a solid foundation. India will regain her apparent lost splendour, the glory of a fierce nation and the *shraddha* of a lion. This is, however, not practicable. The relativity of life to which Vivekananda constantly referred also depletes this theory of pragmatic potency. Yet Vivekananda said that the British and the Americans are full of this *shraddha*.¹⁶⁷ The Indians are always uttering ‘I am not’. They must be taught the glory of their souls.¹⁶⁸ Every soul must be proclaimed, irrespective of weakness or strength. There still remains an inherent contradiction. Vivekananda looked back and apparently discovered an era of brave Hindus, overflowing with *shraddha*, eagerly awaiting another opportunity to exercise this vociferous, reactionary faith. This brave age never actually existed. The first recorded conquest of what is now called India was by the Aryans. Hinduism never defended the homeland and, moreover, has never possessed this *shraddha*. Vivekananda’s ideal of *shraddha* may be looked at as a progression: Indians developing a characteristic which they have never possessed.

To Vivekananda, one faction to deplete this *shraddha* in the Indian people is the lack of egalitarianism. “Ah Brahmins, if the Brahmin has more aptitude for learning on the ground of heredity than the Pariah, spend no more money on the Brahmin’s education, but spend all on the Pariah.”¹⁶⁹ Equality is then ensured for all. Elevation of the lower castes to the level of ultimate *Brahminhood* obfuscates the manner and reasons the *Brahmins* utilized for the exploitation of the masses. The whole nation is raised to a

¹⁶⁶ Ibid., vol. V, p 332.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid., Vol. III, p 191.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid., p193.

superior level of ability, knowledge and strength. This duty also has ultimately advantageous humanitarian implications. "Therefore our solution to the caste question is not degrading those who are high up, is not running amuck through food and drink but it comes by everyone of us becoming the ideal Brahmin."¹⁷⁰ The ideal *Brahmin* is a person of immeasurable strength, impeccable control and the ability to contemplate the proper end, resolute determination to work towards it, realizing the selfish goal from the righteous one. If everyone were the ideal *Brahmin*, and part of the *Brahminhood*, there would be an element of alienation. Many people would lose their identity, or simply not 'feel' it because there is no difference. There are many instances in which identity is expressed through difference. Recognition consists of acknowledging different people with different priorities, separate principles and so on, recognizing each other for their differences. In Vivekananda's theory, one hopes that the ideal *Brahmin*, since this definition includes members from all sects, will retain his own separate individual identity. In addition to this, the elevation of people in society must be simultaneous and constant. If such an elevation, if it were to happen, were not systematic and organized, the elevated individuals would probably or possibly attempt to suppress others who had not been elevated, creating a relationship of dominance and subservience - a possibility similar to what caste has become: Vivekananda was opposed to any possibility of this happening.

Systematic elevation is also impractical. "Let us tell our countrymen of the danger, let them awake and help us to awaken people to their situation and their duty."¹⁷¹ It must be repeated that Vivekananda did not intend to remove caste. He believed that caste is a system providing and enhancing the capability for organization and progression. Furthermore, he

¹⁷⁰ Ibid., p198.

¹⁷¹ Ibid.

claimed, this system of interdependence was well suited to the Indian mind. India would be in ruins without such organization. The problem with Western Indologists is that they always take an objective view of caste and are thus unable to see its advantages. In metaphysical terms, if one stands separate from it, one can only despair for it. By being a part of it, one is helping oneself, and this is the best form of aid. *Brahmins* must accept, Vivekananda said, that each caste is of equal importance. One cannot exist without the other, and thus *Brahmins* should help all others. Caste is a welfare system for all its members. Ideally, caste should exist without exclusive privileges and degradation.¹⁷² Religion must be the bonding factor and the recipe for the creation of the Nietzschean man. What India needs is a man-making religion.¹⁷³ The social implication of this is well phrased by Vivekananda: "Live in any caste you like, but this is no reason why you should hate another man or caste."¹⁷⁴

Vivekananda exclaimed that he was no social reformer or caste destroyer. In essence, caste is kinship; it is a unit of community. It is welfare. "Caste is a very good thing...Indian caste is better than the caste which prevails in Europe or America. I do not say it is absolutely good. Where would you be if there were no caste? Where would be your learning and other things, if there were no caste?"¹⁷⁵ Vivekananda even proclaimed that India fell because caste was prevented and abolished.¹⁷⁶ On the other hand, caste is the division of patriotism. With the existence of any divisions, loyalties are divided. the occupations, vocations, ambitions and loyalties differ from section to section in society. "When castes come to mobilize themselves politically, they are concerned with the distribution of

¹⁷² Chakravarty, P., *Hindu Responses to Nationalist Ferment, Bengal 1906-1935*, Subarnarenkha, Calcutta, 1991, p 4

¹⁷³ S.V.C.W., Vol. III, p 224.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid., p 94.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid., vol. v, p 214.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid., Vol. IV, p 372.

values, status, and resources within a political system, not with the realization of nationhood.”¹⁷⁷ Vivekananda wanted not reformation, but growth, development and expansion on national lines: modernization on a national scale. The division of patriotism could lead only to antagonism within the society and eventually to stagnation. This is the contradiction: stagnation was what Vivekananda attempted to eradicate.

There is a further apparent difficulty in Vivekananda’s claim that caste must not be abolished in order for India to flourish. He began by claiming that caste is a social institution.¹⁷⁸ In India, the essence of caste is the organization of social hierarchy and is, in a sense, the essence of social diversity hence the essence of society. If in India caste were to be abolished and then not replaced with another social institution regulating such social diversity, there would be an anarchic vacuum. One would possibly be justified in claiming under such circumstances, that society did not exist. Thus, caste-lessness is society-less. Essential *jati* is natural hierarchy and not social hierarchy. Furthermore, social caste must incorporate outcasting and further divisions (as has been mentioned before). This is the very aspect Vivekananda was fighting against. Thus, it must logically be implied that Vivekananda was enjoying the notion of a society-less nation. What does a society-less India entail? There is already a problem of identity and security in Hinduism. A society-less nation would accentuate this problem, by removing from Hindus the one institution to provide them with a form of security and identity. Religion can only be the foundation on which to build a society. To exist, religion needs people in organized relationships. Religion cannot exist without a society. This religion cannot be the backbone of a society-less India.

¹⁷⁷ Rudolph, L.I. and Rudolph, S.H., *The Modernity of Tradition, Political Development in India*, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1969, p 68

¹⁷⁸ Ibid.

The Hindu religion does not ordain that a certain section of the community should have power and authority over the others at all times. Authority and power can easily be transferred. *Brahminhood* is supposedly the knowledgeable section of the Hindu community. All other castes have their respective functions. Vivekananda was intelligent enough not to advocate a society-less and anarchic India. As a remedy, he advocated that society be structure around *varna*, following the cardinal divisions. In the 'organic' vein¹⁷⁹, this state can be called the 'State of Naturalness', different from the State of Nature; in the former, 'might is *not* right' and the relationships of inferiority and dominance are not antagonistic. Relationships of superiority, dominance, inferiority and subservience guard against anarchy. Vivekananda was in certain of his theories very idealistic. He saw the relationships in the 'State of Naturalness' as being similar to the quintessential relationship of master and servant. The servant needs only his work for his identity but the master needs the servant for his. Thus, in reality, it is the master who is the slave. This is not individual egalitarianism as in the West but an interdependent egalitarianism where equality actually depends on interdependence. Ironically, for Vivekananda, it is this lack of structure that would lead to relationships of organized interdependence.

In his religious vein, Vivekananda preached that Love was the method to reach this stage of evolution. for an India full of antagonism, "it is love and love alone."¹⁸⁰ Universal love has always been the Indian way, he proclaimed. The West has substituted this for rationality and individual love. India must not abandon her heritage.¹⁸¹ Most of our

¹⁷⁹ Vivekananda and other Indian reformers have a *penchant* for organic terminology and saw progression as organic in nature. The Indian society represented the body. The body would not get better if the 'heart' and the 'liver' did not get better as well.

¹⁸⁰ S.V.C.W., Vol III, p 194.

¹⁸¹ Ibid., p 195.

modern reform movements have been inconsiderate imitations of Western means and methods of work; and that surely will not do for India.”¹⁸² The abyss in Indian society (mentioned above) can only be unified through universal love. What is the essence of Indian-ness? Vivekananda’s answer is religion. The only element that is truly Indian is Hinduism, along with anyone who has India as the highest priority. To Vivekananda, any person who would fight loyally for India and for Hinduism is the quintessential Indian. There are two immediate problems. Firstly, the idea of universal love being a practical method of progression seems far-fetched. Vivekananda maintained that Universal Love amalgamates. I fail to understand how love can be a pragmatic method for progression. I can understand that the details of progression should be carried out with feelings of fraternal and universal love; this shows that Vivekananda did not prescriptively create a blueprint for the regeneration of India. The second problem is that India is a *mélange* of religions and cultures. If the essence of being Indian is fighting for Hinduism, Vivekananda was being very factional. It appears that he omitted to take into account the respective situations of Islam and Christianity in India. On the one hand, he was concerned about the demise of Hinduism, and thus his attention was obviously centred around fighting for its survival. On the other, he was also concerned about the demise of India, which included the situations of Islam and Christianity.¹⁸³

The chapter from Vivekananda entitled ‘To My Brave Boys’¹⁸⁴ insinuates that the first step, that of attaining bravery has been propagated and understood.

¹⁸² Ibid.

¹⁸³ This will be examined in greater detail in chapters III and IV.

¹⁸⁴ S.V.C.W., Vol. IV, 367.

What is life but growth, i.e. expansion, i.e. love? Therefore all love is life, it is the only law of life; all selfishness is death...Wait, money does not pay, nor name; fame does not pay, nor learning. It is love that pays; it is character that cleaves its way through adamant walls of difficulties.¹⁸⁵

Vivekananda also stated:

That is the state in which we are - hopelessly disorganised mobs, immensely selfish, fighting each other for centuries as to whether a certain mark is to be put on our foreheads this way or that way, writing volumes upon volumes on such momentous questions as to whether the look of a man spoils my food or not...what is the cause of that? Physical weakness. First of all, our young men must be strong. Religion will come afterwards. Be strong my young friends; that is my advice to you. You will be nearer Heaven through football than through the study of the Gita...You will understand the Gita better with your biceps, your muscles, a little stronger. You will understand the mighty genius and the mighty strength of Krishna better with a little strong blood in you.¹⁸⁶

The Hindu nation needs physical strength. Vivekananda asked how a person can struggle mentally if the physique is not strong.¹⁸⁷ In other words, discipline is manifest in all areas of life. An intelligent man is not necessarily a disciplined and hard-working man. To Vivekananda, one can discern if one is disciplined if one takes care of the body as well as the mind. The liberal may respond that the intellectual is not concerned with his body, and may still have discipline. Vivekananda would reply that precisely because he is not concerned with his body,

¹⁸⁵ Ibid.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid., Vol. III, p 242.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid.

the chore of building it up is more difficult and therefore a greater test of his discipline. To Vivekananda the physique should be built first in order that the mind be controlled. "The weaker the man, the less he has of restraint."¹⁸⁸ Vivekananda failed to consider the 'dull-headed' who are strong in body. He does, however, say the strong in body who understand the goal will be able to carry out, the directive to the logical end.¹⁸⁹ The problem is that strong people with a 'dull head' may not have the initiative to realize what to do afterwards: Vivekananda's solution requires initiative, not only obeying commands.

Vivekananda's understanding of material civilization was far from perfect. He was very idealistic about how strength in its religious connotation was linked to ability. He believed that strength, which entailed discipline, a desire to fight for the right cause, mental strength and courage was religiously informed, contrary to common belief. He compared the notions that the Englishman can understand religion through politics and the American can understand it through reform movements. The Hindu will understand politics through religion.¹⁹⁰ Strength must come through religion. The problem is that physical strength through religion is not the ultimate goal. It is only the proximate aim. The ultimate goal is metaphysical strength for rebuilding. People must be directed into the mode of reconstruction. They must initially be mentally prepared, and then they must manifest this. The British must be removed from India and only then can the construction of India commence. Each nation has a destiny to fulfil¹⁹¹ and it is impossible for India to fulfil her destiny with the imposition of British imperialism. Furthermore, this is an obstacle to India's

¹⁸⁸ Ibid., Vol. I, p 206.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid., Vol. III, p 321.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid., p 314.

¹⁹¹ Ibid., p 369.

conquering the world with spirituality. To fulfil its initial destiny, it must occupy its own territory. It must rebuild; it must strengthen.

“I want root-and-branch reform...theirs is the method of destruction, mine is that of construction. I do not believe in reform; I believe in growth.”¹⁹² Vivekananda gave an allegory about a philosopher talking to a drowning boy.¹⁹³ The latter says ‘take me out of the water first’. Vivekananda was referring to India: there was no one to pull her out of the water. People must drag themselves out. Through education the impetus is supplied. Vivekananda envisaged an order of Vivekanandian missionaries who travelled around India ‘Mao-style’, preaching to and educating the nation. The masses must learn that the government fashions itself after public opinion and thus it is the public who have the power. Ironically, the reverse is generally believed. For the government to have ultimate authority, there must be a universally accepted relationship of power and powerless. Power is nothing if any power is exerted in exercising that power. The authority of a government can be rendered powerless. Authority is then transferred to the people. In this manner, Indians can remove the justification of British Imperialism. The first step is that Indians should regain confidence and faith in themselves. (Might this eventually cause complacency? How is the different from the “I” consciousness’? Is it not simply an extension of the “I” consciousness’?) The role of Qualified Monism in this context is to help people to relate with others as if they were all one entity, by its propagation that, metaphysically, all people are part of the *Brahman* and therefore should act in this temporal world as brothers. With this relationship, faith in oneself would automatically lead to faith in others. Vivekananda was unclear as to

¹⁹² Ibid., p 213.

¹⁹³ Ibid., p 215.

whether the metaphysical situation should be rectified or the British ousted, first. Vivekananda wanted to educate a revolutionary class with a new sanction; new power to the people. It is radical reform and what India needs. "Put the first there and let it burn upwards and make an Indian nation."¹⁹⁴

Vitality comes through religion and everything must work through it.¹⁹⁵ In India, social reform has to be preached by showing the people how spiritual the new life is; and politics must be shown to reinforce and improve spirituality.¹⁹⁶ Every improvement in India firstly requires an upheaval of religion.¹⁹⁷ Vivekananda dialectically related religion with politics, society and economics, emphasizing that all these must have religious sanction because the only way they can achieve moral status is through religion. This will be examined in more detail later.

I believe in patriotism, and I also have my own ideal of patriotism...feel from the heart. What is intellect or reason? It goes a few steps and there it stops. But through the heart comes inspiration. Love opens the most impossible gates; love is the gate to all the secrets of the universe. Feel therefore, my would-be reformers, my would-be patriots!¹⁹⁸

The emotional appeal played a major part in Vivekananda's programme. The incentive of reform, for Indians, as Vivekananda envisaged, was that an individual 'feel that Indians were suffering'.¹⁹⁹

There are many contradictions in Vivekananda's theories. He was always preaching that one should work for work's sake, while he also

¹⁹⁴ Ibid., p 216.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid., p 220.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid., p 221.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid., p 225.

mentioned that man should not work for nothing. There is constantly, lurking behind, a concept of reward. His reward is always the victory of Hinduism and India; the victory of each individual contributes to this.

If non-attachment is so important, why then should a person cling to Hinduism as an ideology? Vivekananda emphasized that one should, ideally, not call anything 'mine', and should not fight for one's family but instead fight for Hinduism.²⁰⁰ Why should one fight for Hinduism? If one is not attached to Hinduism, why should one fight for it? The only answer that Vivekananda can give is that one is in the world, bound to it by causation and attachment (bondage, as he referred to it) and therefore has no choice. On the surface this seems trivial. However, this is precisely the liberal argument as to why one should obey social and political authority, or even why one should restrain from exercising freedoms. The answer to the first part is that society is conferring benefits so, in taking those benefits, one is responsible to society, but not necessarily attached to it; to the second part, if one benefits from others' restraining themselves, one should do the same. Ignorance is selfishness, taking society's benefits without reciprocity, benefiting from restraint while not exercising any: "ignorance is taking the non-eternal, the impure, the painful, and the non-Self for the eternal, the pure, the happy and the Atman for Self."²⁰¹

He also said that people who are capable of seeing only the gross external picture can see only the Indian nation as a conquered nation with suffering people, a race of dreamers and philosophers.²⁰² However, he incessantly talked about India as a spiritual nation with only one life-force. Immediately after this quotation, he mentioned that people

¹⁹⁹ Ibid., p 226.

²⁰⁰ This argument is elucidated in *S.V.C.W.*, Vol I; chapter entitled 'Freedom'.

²⁰¹ *S.V.C.W.*, vol. I, p 238.

²⁰² Ibid. p 383.

seem incapable of perceiving that in the spiritual realm, India conquers the world.²⁰³ How did he reconcile the two? He stated that India is more than that: she is strength personified. However, this is precisely what he criticized India for not being. Was he more concerned with military power or spiritual power? He vociferously rejected the notion, put forward by Western Indologists, that India was an effeminate nation.

As in a universal sense, the primal state is a state of sameness in the qualitative forces - disturbance of this equilibrium and all succeeding struggles to regain it composing what we call the manifestation of nature, the universe, which state of things remains as long as the primitive sameness is not reached - so in restricted sense, on our own earth, differentiation and its inevitable counterpart, this struggle towards homogeneity, must remain as long as the human race shall remain as such, creating strongly marked peculiarities between ethnic divisions, sub-races and even down to individuals in all parts of the world.²⁰⁴

Each nation has a specific mission and life force, he avowed. India's is spirituality and religion. Any momentous ideological earthquake will shake India in terms of religion. To Vivekananda the spirit of oneness and homogeneity meant that a political upheaval in the West would affect the religion in India (religion was her backbone, while politics was the backbone of the West). "India, that land which again and again has had to furnish the centre of the wide-spread religious upheavals; for above all, India is the land of religion."²⁰⁵

He also preached that man in India to be strong should counteract the *tamas* by *rajas* and then conquer the *rajas* by *sattvas*.²⁰⁶ The now-

²⁰³ Ibid.

²⁰⁴ Ibid., Vol. IV, pp 321-2.

²⁰⁵ Ibid.

²⁰⁶ Hindu philosophy claims that nature is composed of three substances: *tamas* which roughly translates into darkness, or evil; *rajas* which roughly translates into pleasure yet has the connotation

weak India is a product of the overabundance of *tamas*. With *rajas*, India will be brave and will conquer the British. *Sattvas* is utopia. In political terms this is when India will rule herself. In social terms, this is when the society will be free of divisions. In economic terms, this is when India will be independent of Britain for industrial knowledge and economic capacity.

Life is a mixture of Good and Evil, said Vivekananda. Moreover, these evaluations are due only to the subjectivity of life. However, Vivekananda is recorded to have uttered, when commenting on attachment: "had it not been for this, life would have been all sunshine. Never mind!"²⁰⁷ It is this attachment which reinforces or even makes the subjective evaluations. Vivekananda was referring to 'all sunshine' in the subjective sense.

There is another contradiction that necessitates elucidation: it is Vivekananda's claim that education will produce strength and courage. He also stated (and it was firstly clarified by Socrates) that when one knows everything, one realizes that nothing is permanent, unchangeable and axiomatic; nothing is completely good and nothing completely bad: everything is transient except the "we" consciousness'. If Vivekananda's evaluation is correct, the educated would realize that their work was temporary and their spent energy futile. This is where Qualified Monism fits into the equation: "To the Bhakta there is really no difference between this higher knowledge and this higher love",²⁰⁸ but not all characterised by the madness of intensely active love".²⁰⁹

that a person who is predominantly imbued with *rajas* knows that pleasure is ultimately destructive but does not care; and *sattvas* which is the most righteous of all these elements and is translated as faith in goodness.

²⁰⁷ *S.V.C.W.*, Vol. II, p 2.

²⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, Vol. III, p 85

²⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, p 93.

The work should be carried out with love and not with vehemence because of the product. Work should be done for work's sake.

One wonders what the difference is between conquering the world with spirituality and conquering with military power. This is an important point but one not addressed by Vivekananda, who simply saw it as the answer to India's quest. He had an ambivalent attitude to the latter. He both abhorred it, regarding it as characteristic of war-loving people and religions and thus utterly inapplicable to Hinduism, and also saw it as a necessary precondition to the greatness of India. India could not be great for two reasons: Indians were weak and undisciplined, and the British had taken control. Both needed physical strength to overcome. Spirituality is far less relevant in this context. Why did he then preach spirituality? He was an intensely religious man, yet his initial aim, that of removing the British imperialism in India, did not incorporate religion. In the same breath he advocated strength in the religious sphere as the only real goal; and he transferred all political and social aims into the religious sphere. He said that man can be closer to Heaven through football than through study of the *Gita*. Which is more advantageous, ontological strength or physical strength? Which helps more in reform? Vivekananda was undecided on this point. Endurance, discipline, strength and determination he saw as being products of both physical and spiritual strength. The question that should be asked is whether, in proclaiming the importance of physical strength and its use, was he not advocating what he meant to destroy, the opposite of 'True Hinduism'? Vivekananda's statement about understanding the *Gita* better with one's biceps is indeed important because Vivekananda realized that a slave cannot be spiritually perfect since such perfection requires the freedom to explore oneself.

Vivekananda attempted dialectically to relate construction and deconstruction by explaining that the deconstruction of British rule is ultimately the construction of Indian freedom. The major problem Vivekananda would have encountered is that the qualities necessary for deconstruction and those necessary to reconstruction are different. Physical strength, mass mobilization through love, the non-judgement of fellow men, the lack of antagonism and so forth are all qualities better suited for the deconstruction of an alien power than for rebuilding greatness. Qualities for the construction are realization of the goal and motivation towards it: theoretical, intellectual qualities. Vivekananda manoeuvred around this obstacle by expounding that the removal of the British is but a stage in construction. Deconstruction is simply one of the obstacles before the goal can be achieved; it is a means to an end. It is here that one of Vivekananda's greatest contradictions arises. In most circumstances, he stipulated that the goal and means are indivisible, yet on some occasions, he contradicted this. Thus, we must conclude that many of his aims were not primarily religious, but practical, political and social.

In theory the Indian psyche is well endowed as regards the indivisibility of means and ends. The Indian believes that there is no beginning and no end, thus deconstruction and construction are simply two sides of the same coin; and not dichotomous. Deconstruction is often a given for construction. The notion of the Hindu trinity of the creator, the destroyer and the preserver reinforce the belief that construction and deconstruction are mutually necessary. The main problem still exists: the qualities that Vivekananda attempted to nurture and culture are more suited to deconstruction. He had no further handbook for progression. In other words, he had no alternative method. Vivekananda's answer to this would be: "[T]he practical is no less potent

in forming the ideal. The truth is in the practical.”²¹⁰ and “[i]ts work on us is in and through the practical.”²¹¹ In addition to this, he explained that the mental element in reality is very different from that in theory. For example, even if a person were destroying an edifice, he could easily convince himself that his job was part of its eventual reconstruction: “Each man calls that alone real which helps him to realize the ideal.”²¹² From such reasoning it follows that providing Vivekananda could have implanted that ideal into the minds of the people, he would have succeeded. It fails, however, to reconcile the fact that the ends and the means relate dichotomously; thus, this is not a solution created according to religious criteria. Vivekananda’s justification could be that this is the true meaning of unity in diversity. The goal is the same and the ideal is the same but all are working in different ways towards them - similarly to the squirrel in the *Ramayana*. “This is the way to freedom. No man and no nation can attempt to gain physical freedom without physical equality, nor mental freedom without mental equality.”²¹³ Again, Vivekananda provided a religious justification for political means: “India will be raised, not with the power of the strength but with the power of the spirit.”²¹⁴ He wanted growth and not reform (religious)²¹⁵ and yet wanted radical reform (political and social).²¹⁶

Vivekananda deplored fanaticism. Taking all the evils out of society would cause only greater detriment. One example is the abolition of slavery. Now the slaves belong to no one and therefore people are killing them with no hesitation, he proclaimed. This does not

²¹⁰ Ibid., Vol. IV, p 285

²¹¹ Ibid., p 286.

²¹² Ibid., p 322.

²¹³ Ibid., Vol. IV, p 328.

²¹⁴ Ibid., p 352.

²¹⁵ Ibid., Vol. V, p 215.

²¹⁶ Ibid., p 216 and p 334.

offend anyone because they are non one's property. Taking out all the evil in Indian society can only bring the same effect. But what is the evil in Indian society? The corrupted *Brahmins*, laws and institutions must be removed. Still, is caste an evil? It is welfare. Is poverty an evil? Poverty holds the roots of the desire for reform. These are all aspects Vivekananda neglected to consider in depth. He overlooked many issues because of his vehemence.

Through education, Vivekananda wanted to reform India. The fact that education had not been accessible to the masses made it easy for them to be instilled with a false consciousness. However, Vivekananda attempted to penetrate the heart of the matter and concluded that it was because of their permissiveness that the masses allowed themselves to be suppressed and exploited. The only solution would be found in the strength and power of the people.²¹⁷ Vivekananda also attempted to rid India of the abyss in society between the wealthy and the poor. It is this very abyss that creates a revolutionary class. If poverty holds the roots of reform, who comprises the revolutionary class? It cannot be the majority; it must be the poverty-stricken.

I am thoroughly convinced that no individual or nation can live by holding itself apart from the community of others, and whenever such an attempt has been made under false ideas of greatness, policy or holiness - the result has always been disastrous to the secluding one.²¹⁸

The crux of Vivekananda's theories is in that he did not discern a revolutionary class in the sense that Marx did. The whole of society must battle against injustice, otherwise the result would be limited. One

²¹⁷ Ibid., Vol. III, p 216.

²¹⁸ Ibid., Vol. IV, p 365.

class may act as the catalyst, but the whole society must be instrumental.

Bring all the forces of good together. Do not care under what banner you march. Do not care what be your colour - green, blue or red - but mix up with all colours and produce the intense glow of white, the colour of love. Ours is to work. The results will take care of themselves. If any social institution stands in your way of becoming God it will give way before the power of the spirit....The ancient mother has awakened once more, sitting on her throne rejuvenated, more glorious than ever. Proclaim her to all the world with the voice of peace and benediction.²¹⁹

I believe that this quotation needs elucidation because it is one of Vivekananda's most complete statements about his intentions. He referred to bring all good forces together; caste, essentially a social organization, and spirituality, strength and so on are included. The idea of striving under one banner is a call for unification for *all* of India under a pan-Indian scheme which encapsulates both pride in India and the recognition that India has the answers to her problems, so need not necessarily look to the West. His reference to colours is indicative of his sentiment of the destruction of prejudice throughout the length and breadth of India whether this prejudice be racial, caste-driven, regional or due to any other factors. Patriotism should of course be towards India as a whole and not based on parochial issues; it should comprise Hinduism and Indian-ness. His reference to white is symbolic because in India, white is the colour of purity and mourning. One must understand the Indian idea of death - it is a step closer to purity. 'Ours is to work' means that it is the responsibility of the Indians to create

²¹⁹ Ibid., p 353.

this purity in India. Each Indian should concentrate in his respective way to help this creation. One must note that Vivekananda said that if any *social* institution stands in one's way, it should be destroyed by the power of the spirit, which is a plea for deconstruction. He even referred to the supposed age when India was great - the ancient mother - and then mentioned that this glory should be regained, creating a new Hinduism, the incentive for which is '*Shivoham*' or 'I am that', I am greater, I am God. Strength, faith in oneself and courage are instrumental in construction and deconstruction. The final sentence of the quotation refers to the notion of spiritual conquering through which India and Indians will gain a renewed, stronger confidence.

On the one hand, this is a plea for unification regardless of religious, caste, linguistic, national or regional differences. On the other, Vivekananda did not consider the other religions in India. This would inspire Hindus, but it would not inspire Muslims or Christians, for instance. Most of the references are very Hindu-oriented. Vivekananda had also hoped for a nation of people whose preeminent loyalty was to India, not to Hinduism, Islam, Christianity or any other religion, religious, linguistic or other difference. This will be examined in greater depth in subsequent chapters.

CONCLUSION

Vivekananda's reconstruction is not only a reformulation of an ideology; it is a redefinition (or as he may have seen it, reinterpretation) of evolution. This extreme solution can only be

justified on two grounds: the first is that of survival; the second is self-definition or self-assertion. Vivekananda claimed both. He attempted to realign, to reunite, real Hinduism with traditional Hinduism, the former having been ostracized due to an over-abundance of dogmatism, fanaticism and selfish interest. None of this could have been possible without the passivity of the subjugated, thus creating a deformed caricature of Hinduism and Indian-ess. The obstacles are ultimate subservience, dogmatism and parochiality. Quintessentially, the newly-acquired strength and vision of the Indian nation should weed out parochiality. Religion is both the means and the end. It is the means in the sense that even though the solutions may not be religious, they will be expressed in religious rhetoric to make them more accessible to the nation. Ideally, the means should be founded on the morality of religion and relate dialectically to the end, which is religious. Religion has three objectives: initially, it had the authority and potential to make any proposition accessible to each and every person. Secondly, the idea of renunciation is basically religious. The strength, determination, discipline and power of renunciation is very potent. This was the strength that Vivekananda wanted to cultivate in people. Thirdly, it was a recipe for unity. It combined Hinduism and Indian-ness into one homogeneous personality. The combination of Hinduism and Indian-ness included not only Hindus but also Buddhists, Christians, Jains, Muslims and Sikhs among other religions. It had a singular goal, which was dedication to India.

Vivekananda's vision consisted of a nation inbred with overflowing courage, bravery and sophistication, determining its own destiny. India, the most conquered of nations, would become India, the unconquerable, a nation of strong, undefiled spiritual warriors shaping the future of this great nation and eventually procuring supernation

status by spiritually conquering the others. As Marx propounds, economic power leads on to social power and eventually to political and reverting to spiritual power as the ultimate goal; but only after political powers.

Whatever future aspirations Vivekananda had for India, a critic cannot help the cynicism that creeps into the idea of a spiritual supnation which will gain control of the majority of the world through mysticism. The concept of dominating but not ruling the world assumes spirituality to have a dominant force or power playing a part in each and every action of an individual, steering those actions to coincide with the ethics of this spirituality. Thus the underlying ethic is the guiding force in the life of an individual. It also presupposes that the West understands the concept of Qualified Monism in order that every sphere of an individual's life is bound by those morals. The penultimate aim is to direct all nations towards it. The cynicism increases with hindsight when one regards the difficulty of the West to comprehend the Indian psyche and its *penchant* for, as Louis Renou describes, finding correspondences between concepts that belong to entirely different conceptual systems.²²⁰ The circular notion of time to which the Indian mind has been so accustomed and the concept of monism are but two examples of subjects incomprehensible to the Western psyche. Scepticism further increases when one recounts the derogative terms that have been employed in describing the Orientals because of their lack of understanding of the Western concept of the nature of evolution. Examples of this range from William Wilberforce's referring to the natives of India as 'barbarians' to E.M. Forster's categorizing all Indians under the not-so-euphemistic term of 'manure'.

²²⁰ Dalton D.G., *Indian Idea of Freedom*, The Academic Press, 1982, Haryana, India, p 18 quoting Renous, L., 'Religions of Ancient India', Series of Lectures on Ancient India Religions.

All of these prognostications also take for granted that there is in the human psyche a void that needs filling. The human predicament encourages the quest for meaning. The most damaging longing is for the answer to the futility of life. No answer has yet been discovered although many have been invented. Religion filled this void by explaining to mere mortals that they cannot comprehend the meaning - but there is another world where the meaning will be clear. This provided a meaning for suffering the material world. Faith proved too illogical for the West and rationality replaced religion. However, the notion that 'what was right was rational' always came under dispute because of the human subjective predicament and the relative nature of life in its widest sense. Vivekananda intruded at this point to offer an answer - religion, again; but a new form. However, what he failed to take into account is that the West has re-filled this abyss with 'love'. The Renaissance attempted to supply the meaning of life by humanizing God and creating a bridge between mortal and the immortals; but the Renaissance never succeeded in convincing man that God was mortal or even convincing mortals of their infinite capacities. The German Romantics emphasized the importance of intensified emotions to the extent that for them, the natural progression was that love took the place of religion in the quest for meaning. People strove for love, not religion. It became accepted that life was not worth living without love. Love was the meaning of life. The emptiness of life was stereotyped as lack of love. Broken-hearted lovers are still depicted as being on the verge of suicide with no will to live without the lost love. The obvious progression from this concept is the criticism of this selfish and subjective love, necessitating a subject and an object; a separation. Universal love joined what individual love separated. Universal love transgresses any form of dialectical relationship. Dialectic can easily

transform into dichotomy. Universality stretches beyond humanitarian love. Love which breeds love can only be reciprocated by love, a love that has no opposite. In this sense the West has taken on a flawed idea of love and, ironically, only religion, with its idea of universal love, can correct it.

However, Vivekananda's solution adopts a much more militant character than the implicit manner of a spiritual army. The demand for strength and manliness is intended for physical purposes. It was obvious that the British would not abdicate through spiritual persuasion. The stress on manliness assumes that if circumstances necessitate, the protagonists would use ignominious methods for ousting the opponent. Vivekananda said that he would have robbed for Ramakrishna.²²¹ Surely, the cause of regaining humanity for the slaves of India should have proportionate means. With a wide subcontinent warring against the British, the victory would be a certainty. The problem is whether there is a victory for Hinduism in this battle. What can be cherished, if in order to destroy brutal imperialism, Hinduism now adopts the same method. Is it any victory at all if, in order to win, Hinduism becomes precisely that which it hates, what it is trying to destroy, what has subjugated it for many years? Vivekananda wanted a spiritual victory but this is pyrrhic. Defeat is implicit in the triumph. The militancy of imperialism is replaced by the militancy of the servile, undoubtedly tainted with antagonism. This is assuming that India has resorted to violence as a last resort, as Vivekananda would not advocate violence if it were not necessary. He hoped that there could be a harmonious solution and one in which the relationship between the West and India would be ameliorated.

²²¹ S.V.C.W., Vol. VI, p 241.

Defeat is also implicit for another reason. Vivekananda's plea for strength is aimed more at the overthrow of the British than its utility in the creation of a new religion. The new religion is an attempt to dispose of the dogmatism and bigotry of the *Brahminhood* and the servility of the populace. Strength in this sense is only transcendental and ontological, stemming from the practice of covert power, and it cannot be attained through football rather than study of the *Gita*. Exclusion of the 'I' consciousness' integral to this cannot be attained by muscles of iron. The defeat is the myth that Vivekananda creates for the population. He gives them a goal of utopian-style political religion, a state containing religion institutionalized as the life-force; its society, politics and economics are based on religion.

This view of religion as panacea is not as one would immediately envisage; it is of the archaic state in which the priesthood pervades the life of all the members of the state. That was the corrupted version of Hinduism that India has witnessed. In this Utopia, religion is omnipresent and pervasive and not obstructive. The vanguards of the religion are each and every member of the nation. The problem stems from Vivekananda's propagating a myth to the protagonists. As Plato once remarked, truth slips easier into the minds of men if coated with honey. Why strength is so important is because the immediate goal is the extradition of the British. It cannot be achieved without manliness, and vigour on a grand scale. It is precisely at this that Vivekananda aims. One should question whether Vivekananda would have attempted a reformation of India and Hinduism had the British not been in India. This is not to say that he would have been any less disgusted with the circumstance that India and Hinduism were in. The question is whether the British proved to be the catalyst for his blueprint for reformation. If they were, we should look at Vivekananda's call to strength very

differently. Only after the British have been removed, can Vivekananda commence the growth of Real Hinduism. This causes problems at the grass roots. Deception cannot form the basis of any aim requiring perfection. The population will always grasp onto the initial commands, regarding them as integral and because they can relate to them. That deception can furthermore not be the basis of a religion. Obviously, one can retort that the freedom and autonomy of the Indian nation was the most important aspect; also, that the ends justify the means, especially in this case because physical strength would be the only feasible method of ousting the British. The whole of the Indian nation, its population, was at stake.

The unity of Hinduism of which Vivekananda spoke is also a myth. Unity is a relative notion, one relating to a specific sphere. For example, from unity in the nationalistic sphere it does not necessarily follow that there is unity in the economic sphere or the social. The Golden Age was also a myth. From one perspective, this is a factor relevant as long as the population does not question it. On the other hand, the nationalism based on this is a forced nationalism with false sentiments; if the truth is ever revealed, it will crumble. Religion, it seems was used only as bait for people. Furthermore, it has been argued that nationalism as a movement or even a sentiment is a Western invention. Traditionally, the East based its premisses of defence on religious and not territorial boundaries. If this were the case with Vivekananda, India would be divided along religious lines and this would create more havoc. I disagree with the notion that nationalism is a Western import because it appears that it is a natural progression from the situation of alien-imposed servility and the ensuing discontent. Nevertheless, it cannot be denied that religious patriotism is a system to gain support from the people who do not altogether

envisage the emergence of a perfected nation from the disintegration they perceive in their environment. Again, this false sentiment is antithetical to any system based on truth. Vivekananda's initial aim was undoubtedly the removal of the British administration from India and some of his theories have been directed to this aim.

Vivekananda used religious theories which have their base in Qualified Monism, that seem to apply in all areas nullifying the contradictions which arise. A prime example is found in his idea that India would exist as a self-sufficient nation after the British leave simply and solely because there is a shared identity between Indians. This seems absurd yet it is here that religious notions of the unity of mankind are utilized to explain why Indians should co-exist naturally, interdependently and ideally. Because his theories and methods were all directed to the removal of the British, the enemy, how can the rebuilding of 'religion proper' exist without an enemy ensuring the unity of the defender? What would eventually happen is that an enemy would be found within the society; it would once again become divided and ruin the initial intention. Theoretically, the initial situation arises anew. Vivekananda's method for recapturing the dynamism that Hinduism once supposedly possessed encapsulates the opinion of the Western Indologists who have plagued India from within as well as providing the world with an image of India formulated on a mythological perception akin to the Avalonian land of enchanters and fairies. The desire of Vivekananda to recapture this age of strength presupposes that there was once a time of dynamism of individual and nation. History proves otherwise. The first recorded invasion of India was not that of the Mughals but the Aryan invasion. This conquest, although there is still speculation about the date, is generally accepted to have happened in approximately 1500 B.C. These Aryans brought

with them their religion; it fused with the animalistic and animistic religion of the natives to produce what is commonly known as Hinduism. Previously to this, there had been a religion not regarded as Hinduism proper.

When has there been an era of quintessential strength within Hinduism? Furthermore, when was there an era when what is commonly known as India exercised that powerful, intrinsic strength that Vivekananda mentioned? The Aryans conquered without much resistance. They were able to do so partly because there was no unity: the community was tribal, based on small units of territory and thus territorial nationalism could not have existed. Vivekananda based his theories on false premises. Vivekananda interpreted territory as the ultimate qualification for nationhood and as an integral element in his theories. The penultimate paradigm of strength, as Vivekananda implied, rests on this criterion and the age lost. He attempted to recapture a lost age that never was; an era of vigour and intensity which could never have existed. The premise become nugatory.

The quotation eighty-three serves as an allegory for Vivekananda's wishes: the survival of Indians, India and Hinduism. The only method is through strength, synonymous with the throwing out of weakness. The dogmatic and intricate regulations, created by the *Brahmins*, in Hinduism, commanded subservience of the majority. Vivekananda contended that the *Brahmins* also were slaves, because firstly, they too were subject to these regulations, but furthermore, "the obverse is tyranny and the reverse is slavery. The slave and the tyrant are synonymous."²²² Vivekananda equated this with his intention of destroying imperialism and then building on it. No nation can build its happiness on another's pain, which is what colonialism enacted and

²²² Ibid., Vol. V, p 14.

what Vivekananda was imitating, actually fulfilling the role of offender in his criticisms.

Vivekananda also made his criticisms not on Hindu grounds, that is, on the basis of the Hindu concept of man, but on basically Western liberal grounds. At times he referred to a religious concept of man and insisted that the reason man should battle against subservience was that he was being unfaithful to his inner, divine self, essentially free and needing freedom to expand, be cultured and nurtured in order to reach the final stages of enlightenment. At other times, he referred to political and social concepts of man - man is the house in which political notions of freedom reside and therefore man is doing himself a disservice by allowing himself to be abused. Vivekananda conflated his religious understanding of man with his political and social understanding, without correlating them. For example, he criticized the caste system because it exploited social and political man and was manipulative in political and social manners, yet he urged to fight against the caste system on the basis of the innate divinity of man. This is even more paradoxical given that he did not want to abolish caste as an institution which he perceived as preserving the divine, metaphysical and ontological hierarchy. Caste was distorting the notion of natural differences and making them inequalities and therefore it was the duty of man as a social and political animal, of man in his social and political capacity, to fight against it. Why should a man because he is imbued with innate divinity fight for the abolition of *caste as it exists at the moment, when it is not affecting man as a divine creature?* The criticisms are always changing and no consistency is found in his criticisms. Furthermore, when reading Vivekananda, one is always confused as to whether it is political man that he has in mind when formulating his criticisms, or it is Indian, religious man. The

circumstance and the implications change accordingly. In later chapters, I shall examine how Vivekananda correlated religious perfection with social and political perfection. However, he never cogitated why man as a religious being should fight against social and political injustices: he simply stated that the religiously perfect man would never do anything even socially or politically, that was not conducive to the common good.

CHAPTER II

VIVEKANANDA'S ATTITUDE TO ISLAM

That which makes a race is its religion...no matter if a Buddhist is a Chinaman, or is a man from Persia, they think that they are brothers, because of their professing the same religion. Religion is the tie, unity of humanity.¹

To Vivekananda, it appeared that Islam had succeeded in binding a unified religious community superseding any caste, racial or ethnic differences, while Hindus were predominantly preoccupied with trivial delineations separating one Hindu from another. Islam as a religion had overcome even national boundaries, as is exemplified in '*Umma*', the Muslim universal community, while living Hinduism was creating more internal divisions based on food regulations, contamination, degrees of purity and so on.²

Vivekananda was intent on ascertaining what specific aspects and differences caused Hinduism to fail dramatically and Islam to triumph. Moreover, this section explains why Vivekananda took Islam as a model for success and Hinduism as having totally failed. Perhaps he read too much into the distinction between Hinduism and Islam: the strength, organization and discipline of Islam as compared to the weakness and disunity of Hinduism. Vivekananda discerned a marked difference between the ideologies of Islam and Hinduism as well as the manifest living religions. Hinduism he saw as being characterized by a pervading disunity while Islam, of pervading unity. He studied the religions in depth and concluded that unity created a situation in which the ideology of a religion could systematically infiltrate the religious community. It

¹ S.V.C.W., Vol. IV, p143

was the very infiltration of the religious ideology that created this unity: "it comes, slowly through, to the whole race through unconscious percolations...history reveals the silent process of permeation through which truth is absorbed by the masses."³ The systematic infiltration of ideology and unity resulted in many consequential differences between the religions. It is important to note that Vivekananda protested that the monotheism of Islam did not itself substantiate its unity and the polytheism of Hinduism did not create a disunity.

Vivekananda battled with the question of whether unity is compatible with a polytheistic religion or, rather, whether a polytheistic religion could create a sense of unity to supersede all differences of belief within. On the one hand, monotheism obviously had an advantage in this field with one God, one Truth and a centralized structure through which this Truth is indoctrinated into the religionists. Many saw it as the foundation for unity. Moreover, a belief integral to many monotheistic religions is that non-belief in this Truth is punished by the wrath of God. Fear plays a large role in obedience and unity. Vivekananda was vehemently opposed to obedience induced by fear. The hierarchy in Hinduism is neither linear nor vertical, creating a situation opposed to a centralized authority.

Hence, Vivekananda concluded that Islam's internal unity, patriotism and expansion (with one factor being a product of another), its external strength, are products of unity. "You find in every case. compact nations always governing and ruling huge unwieldy nations, and this is natural because it is easier for the little compact nations to bring their ideas into the same focus, and thus they become developed. And the bigger the nation, the more unwieldy it is. Born, as it were, a disorganised mob, they cannot combine."⁴ Vivekananda was puzzled by two phenomena: that the Islamic nation, a minority in India, had

² With Islam, this does not always hold true, as can be seen in the Gulf War in 1988.

³ S.V.C.W., Vol. Iv, p258

⁴ Ibid., p300

succeeded in ruling such a large number of Hindus; moreover, Islam, collectively, has never yielded to subservience. It has never been ruled by smaller, more compact nations or religions. Vivekananda sought to comprehend how a large 'religion national' has maintained such strong discipline and organization. It appears to be a result of strength of faith. This same faith has however, caused extreme irrationality in Hindus. This faith has proved itself manifestly beneficial in the temporal world for Islam and incompatible with the same world for Hinduism. Vivekananda's new *Vedantic* religion was intended to emulate the former, hence his search to ascertain the differences and their causes.

Being of one mind is the secret of society, Vivekananda asserted.⁵ His aim was to emulate but not to imitate, to learn from other nations or religions. The unity of Islam is an example. Emulation could also have the adverse effect of further convincing Indians that their culture, tradition and religion are flawed and inferior to those from whom they are learning. Emulation and imitation, in practical methodology, are the same, with absolutely no practical difference between them in this situation. The methods, the results and the psychological effects would be the same. There are long passages in Vivekananda's *Complete Works* dedicated to accounts of the detriment of imitation and the benefit of emulation. The latter is viewed as a process of learning and education. V.S. Kostyuchenko interprets Vivekananda: "If you have mastered six objects and put them in your mind and character, you have more knowledge than a man who has committed to memory a whole library of books."⁶ It is important to understand from the interpretation, the full disadvantages of imitation, in Vivekananda's thoughts, bearing in mind his intentions of revivifying Hinduism and paying special attention to whether there is a difference in practice between emulation and

⁵ Ibid., p299

⁶ Kostyuchenko V.S., 'Philosophical Teachings of Swami Vivekananda', in *Swami Vivekananda Studies in Soviet Union*, p267, translated from Russian by Gupta H.C., The Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture, Calcutta.

imitation. In the following quotation, 'take what is good' and 'absorbed' have been italicized in order to accentuate their similarity.

Do not be in a hurry, do not go out to imitate anybody else. This is another lesson we have to remember; imitation is not civilisation...Imitation, cowardly imitation, never makes for progress. It is verily the sign of awful degradation in man. Ay, When a man has begun to hate himself, then the last blow has come. when a man has begun to be ashamed of his ancestors, the end has come. Here am I, one of the least of the Hindu race, yet proud of my race, proud of my ancestors. I am proud to call myself a Hindu...And do not imitate, do not imitate! Whenever you are under the thumb of others, you lose your own independence...but do not imitate, *yet take what is good from others...you put the seed in the ground, and you give it plenty of earth, and air, and water to feed upon; when the seed grows into the plant and into a gigantic tree, does it become the water? It becomes the mighty plant, the mighty tree, after its own nature, having absorbed everything that was given to it. Let that be your position.*⁷ (Italics mine)

Herein lies the crux of Vivekananda's relationship with Islam. It is ambivalent in that he disliked it and yet he admired it, especially for what it has and Hinduism lacks: all-round strength. He was adamant that no more Hindus should convert to Islam; he thus attempted to Islamicize Hinduism. The principle is the same as Vivekananda's statement that when a powerful individual appears, his/her personality infuses others; hence, the others become powerful.⁸ The individual then appears to have lost his/her powerful characteristics because s/he simply blends in. Once the strength of Islam has diffused into *Vedanta*,

⁷ S.V.C.W., Vol. IV, p381

⁸ Ibid., p299.

there will be nothing that differentiates between them. Thus, there would be no necessity or even desire to convert.

Vivekananda believed that the perfect combination for a religion, or *religio-politik* would be the amalgamation of the 'mind of *Vedanta* and the body of Islam. It is significant that Vivekananda was concerned with the 'mind' of *Vedanta* and the 'body' of Islam. The body of Islam is characterized in its all-round strength, patriotism, expansion and even intolerance. The 'mind' of *Vedanta* was, to him, universally tolerant and has a capacity to incorporate any religion, creed, caste or race. Furthermore, *Vedanta* can be as "intense as the most devoted Mohammedan and as broad as the most raring atheist."⁹ and therefore has the same potential for intense faith and loyalty as Islam. To Vivekananda, *Vedanta* was not producing the same rationality and compatibility with modernity as was Islam.¹⁰ This indiscriminate tolerance of the past of *Vedanta* was also most disadvantageous to it, because it tolerated each and every irrational belief that people could conjure up. The 'body' of Islam would be instrumental in neutralizing such a characteristic.

Vivekananda's admiration of aspects of Islam is always coupled with a correlating promulgation that this particular element being admired is, and always has been, integral to Hinduism; and furthermore, *Vedanta* embodies it. One example is Vivekananda's emphasis on *shraddha*. The strength and faith in Islam exactly translates into *shraddha*. After all, the results that *shraddha* can produce are what Islam has symbolized in the temporal world: strength, unity, courage and faith, all derivative from expressively rational (*Wertrational*)¹¹ faith, and moreover, it is instrumentally rational (*Zweckrational*) in the temporal world, as can be seen by examining the bonding strength of

⁹ Ibid., Vol. VII, p 98.

¹⁰ In reality, Islam is opposed to the infiltration of Western influence in its culture and religion and therefore is sometimes regarded as being incompatible with modernity. Vivekananda did not recognize this.

Umma. Vivekananda proclaimed that *shraddha* is existent in Hindus but it is latent due only to years of servility. To him, *shraddha* protected India against invaders for centuries before the Mughal invasion.

However, Vivekananda's assessment of Hinduism was inexcusably flawed. The Hindu religion, as we know it, came into existence only after the Aryan invasion of India. Where then was this *shraddha* which would defend the indigenous Indian territory when the Aryans came? Although Vivekananda demanded a return to the time when this intrinsic courage permeated the essence of every Hindu, it is a mythological invention. Conversely, *Vedanta*, as a new religion, has the capacity to be systematically conducted to incorporate all of the desirable features; hence the need to emulate Islam. In emulating, Vivekananda hoped that a new religion will be formed - Vivekananda's version of *Vedanta* - amalgamating of the mind of *Vedanta* and the body of Islam.

The grave danger for Vivekananda in producing a new religion is the risk of creating further divisions within Hinduism because invariably, such a construction would be incorporated into the "magnanimous fold"¹² of Hinduism. Tolerance on this universal scale could easily create another split in loyalties. It also has the potential for devaluating the supposedly advantageous aspects of Hinduism, as Dumont¹³ describes indeed happened to Hinduism and Islam due to their coexistence in India:

Hindus and Muslims form two distinct societies from the point of view of ultimate values. Moreover, these societies are, and to a greater extent were, associated with one another, interacting through this association. Therefore, such

¹¹ What may be classed as non-rational because it is not instrumentally rational (*Zweckrational*) may yet be expressively rational (*Wertrational*) - Hollis M., *The Cunning of Reason*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1987, p174.

¹² It will be illustrated later that the doctrine of universal tolerance which Hinduism preaches is fundamentally flawed and is a peculiarly Hindu concept.

¹³ Dumont, op. cit.

association by definition escapes the domain of values and the relatively simple sociological descriptions based on them: we are faced with a reunion of men divided into two groups, who devalorize each other's values and who are nevertheless associated.¹⁴

Dumont continues by saying that if Islam had posed an alternative, the dichotomy could have been avoided, but no such suggestion was forthcoming. For example, Islam could have posed an alternative to the caste system, instead, Dumont states, many Muslims in India adhere to its regulations and even more startlingly, within some Islamic communities in India, there are castes. As a result, each religion and sect in India has something of the Hindu. This is precisely the danger for *Vedanta*: It could "devalorize" the Hindu society. It provides an alternative to the weakness and the division in, and corruption of Hinduism, but many (if not most) of its ideas are fundamentally Hindu. The danger is especially acute for two reasons: the new religious ideology can in the first place easily adopt some of the liabilities of Hinduism; secondly, by posing alternatives, some aspects of Hinduism would be regarded as disadvantages in need of alteration. Quintessentially, the amalgamation of aspects of Hinduism and Islam, to Vivekananda, is Hinduism in its pure, unadulterated form - and it is this which could prove to be its downfall. It does not pose a sufficiently clear alternative to the established practices. Vivekananda's *Vedanta* is at heart Hinduism without caste. Its double-edged nature stems from the fact that while it is advantageous for those who are exploited because of caste, it is a disadvantage for those for whom caste is beneficial as a system of kinship. It is not easy to separate those for whom caste is a system of kinship and those for whom it is a system of exploitation because caste generally affects each individual in both ways. One cannot divide the society by caste into those who are disadvantaged and those

¹⁴ Ibid., p 211.

who are advantaged. Another flaw in Vivekananda's argument is thus disclosed. The agent of change is the downtrodden class. Those of the lower castes also enjoy the fraternity of caste, possibly to a greater degree than the higher castes. The strength and intense faith incorporated in Vivekananda's *Vedanta* may well devalorize the pacifistic universal tolerance practised by Hinduism; through emphasizing expansion and patriotism as inherent components of *Vedanta*, the peacefulness of Hinduism could be brought into question. Additionally, because a protagonist of Vivekananda's version of *Vedanta* will have some of the Mohammedan, but not all, Islam, too, runs the risk of being devalued. There will be 'conflict of ambiguity'. 'Conflict of ambiguity' means that in some respects, for example, ideologically, the *Vedantist* and the Muslim could not be distinguished (the 'ambiguity'). At other times, however, when the *Vedantist* is practising a peculiarly Hindu trait, the difference would be plain. Thus, the same Mohammedan who has mentally invited this *Vedantist* into his religious community will thenceforth actively exclude him/her (the 'conflict'). There are two possible results: Islamic values can be strengthened as a defence or, contradistinctively, they can be eroded. However, there is no possibility of the former's happening to Hinduism because *Vedanta* is, in theory, the purification of Hinduism; the similarity is too great to differentiate between the values.

In terms of the Islamic situation, it must be questioned whether Vivekananda in fact saw as desirable the erosion of Islamic values. This would mean that the ambivalence of his relationship revolves around the fact that Islam has welcomed converts from Hinduism, either by the sword or through egalitarianism.¹⁵ Again, his opinion on this was ambivalent. He blamed Islam for its proselytizing, yet he could not but admire the egalitarianism and fraternity. The Mohammedan conquest

¹⁵ At times, Vivekananda blamed the use of the sword for conversion to Islam, for example, *S.V.C.W.*, VI. VIII, p 330; and at other times, he was insistent that it is the equality and fraternity of Islam, for example, *S.V.C.W.*, Vol. I, p483.

came as salvation to the down-trodden.¹⁶ While Vivekananda disagreed with forceful conversion, to make *Vedanta* strong, he wanted the world to be conquered by Indian thought.¹⁷ Ultimately, he dissented from conversion but he admitted that the failing of Hinduism is that they do not proselytize. It is furthermore, the exploitation of the Hindus by other Hindus and the adulteration of Hinduism which have encouraged Hindus to leave the Hindu fold.¹⁸

To illustrate more lucidly Vivekananda's method, I shall quote a passage from his *Collected Works*: if there had been no "Kabir, Nanak and Chaitanya in the Mohammedan period, and the establishment of the Brahma Samaj and the Arya Samaj in our own day, then by this time, the Mohammedans and the Christians would have far outnumbered the Hindus of the present day in India."¹⁹ These are all examples of social reformers with aspirations of revitalizing or purifying Hinduism. Although Vivekananda collocated them in one category, there is an important distinction between them: Kabir and Nanak attempted to purify Hinduism through equality, a sure sign of salvation for a discriminatory religion. As a result, Sikhism was created although it can be debated whether Sikhism is a part of Hinduism or a religion in its own right. The *Bhakti* movement attempted to create equality by mixing Islam and Hinduism and it was only in the nineteenth century that a clarification was so desperately sought. It is noteworthy that Kabir and Nanak preached equality. It could be argued from an analytical viewpoint that Sikhism is the amalgamation of Islam and Hinduism. Furthermore, although the aim of the Arya Samaj and Brahma Samaj was similar to that of Kabir and Nanak, the method was very different. Equality for the former two groups was selective in that in practice, only the members of the groups were equal. Despite the equality of Hinduism as being a concept integral to these groups, it was never explicitly

¹⁶ *S.V.C.W.*, Vol. III, P294.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p276

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, Vol. VII, p330.

practised. The main thrust of these two groups was militancy. It was the re-conquering of Hinduism.

It seems strange to link the Brahma Samaj, Arya Samaj, Kabir and Nanak in the same category when their methods were so obviously different. However, the sense of peculiarity vanishes when one considers Vivekananda's intentions. He was trying to simultaneously reevaluate and revitalize the equality supposedly implicit in Hinduism. An important question underlying this whole hypothesis has not yet been answered. My interpretation of Vivekananda's intentions is that he intended to produce a new religion instead of reorganizing, adding to and subtracting from the existent Hindu religion. Why is this necessarily so, especially when the possibility of devalorizing Hinduism so high? The obvious answer is facility. It is easier to create another religion than clumsily to prod at Hinduism. Secondly, facility can suffice as a reason for creating a unified religion instead of attempting to unify a religion already permeated by inequality. Additionally, it could be precisely Vivekananda's programme that a created unified religion would devalorize the already weak Hinduism. *Vedanta* will then increase its appeal, fulfilling another criterion, that of strengthening the unity of *Vedanta*. To strengthen Hinduism would probably result in unifying a "few thousand graduates who do not make a nation, a few rich men who do not make a nation."²⁰ In short, it is easier for *Vedanta* to be a 'Dynamic Religion'. At this stage of analysis, this appears logical. It is important to acknowledge that as a religion, Vivekananda's *Vedanta* could devalorize Hinduism. On the other hand, his intention was the regeneration of Hinduism and devalorizing it would be contrary to this aim. Later chapters will thus examine Vivekananda's *Vedanta* as a religio-politik, of which devotion to Hinduism is a necessary prerequisite. It is premature to elucidate on this now. I am attempting

¹⁹ Ibid., Vol. IV, p463

²⁰ Ibid., Vol. VIII, p330.

to ascertain Vivekananda's opinion of Islam as a religion *qua* Hinduism and *Vedanta* as a religion.

The benefits which Islam can confer upon Hinduism will be addressed; and to examine fully Vivekananda's relationship with Islam, the converse must also be examined, namely Vivekananda's hostility towards Islam, and its effect on Hinduism; there follows a theoretical comparison of the religions. In examining these, the predominant questions in Vivekananda's way of thinking are established. He wondered why Islam has not experienced the 'Westernization' that Hinduism has, whereby many Hindus give up their cultural and traditional values in favour of Western ideals without considering the implications, whether these are applicable to India, and more importantly, without assessing their merit. Islam has not undergone the rigorous interrogation from Christianity. Besides the obvious reason of proximity in chronology and geography of the births of these two religions and that, to a great extent, they acknowledge the same historical facts, Vivekananda questioned why Islam has resisted scrutiny by other religions.²¹ Is this because of the stringent monotheistic emphasis on Truth, as in Islam, precisely that which is lacking in Hinduism? Is it because even Hindus are confused as to how to define Hinduism and therefore this confusion is much more intense for the Westerner? Hinduism is so volatile because the difficulty in defining itself is manifested in a lack of pride and faith that Hindus feel and display for their tradition/culture/religion. Vivekananda was very confused over this issue because he preached that ultimately all religions are identical in essence. Although pride in a religion is usually pride in the essence of religion, in reality, Muslims seem to have more pride in their religion than do Hindus in Hinduism. Muslims are more ready to defend their religion than Hindus are, theirs and hence one is

²¹ Theoretically, Islam and Christianity should have more grounds for antagonism. While one sees Christ as the foundation of Christianity and as the Son of God, the other denies it. Mohammedanism is based on a prophet and regards Christianity as being based on a prophet.

weak, the other strong; one is unified, the other, not. Vivekananda's confusion was even more intense because this unwillingness to defend Hinduism actually derived from a very noble sentiment: that nothing is completely right or wrong and that religion is man-made. Therefore, no religion is completely true and thus should be subject to criticism in order to progress. The peripherals of religion are, to Vivekananda, due to differences in situation, many of which are archaic and need to be changed. Ultimately, faith is an ability to separate the religion from the culture, the social institutions and traditions. This has been distorted but in essence the unwillingness of the Hindu to defend Hinduism is in fact a commendable willingness to listen to other sincere opinions in order to improve aspects of Hinduism. The Hindu listens intently to suggestions of how to ameliorate social institutions, and cultural and traditional aspects of Hinduism.

In his aim of reunifying Hinduism in India 9 and eventually of conquering the world with Indian thought), Vivekananda stumbled upon an equation in which Islam and Hinduism are engulfed by *Vedanta*: 'The body of Islam and the mind of *Vedanta*'. This gives us a further clue to his relationship with Islam. What is it from the 'body of Islam' that he wanted? What does it incorporate? More importantly, why did he only want the 'body of Islam'? Surely the mind is the substance of any religion. When it is viewed in this manner, one starts to question Vivekananda's admiration for Islam and whether he desired only strength - from whichever religion it may emanate. This again poses another question: why it is specifically Islam that is linked to strength? Christianity had been enslaving India during Vivekananda's lifetime and has done so for a considerable time, yet Vivekananda instinctively linked Islam with strength and admired only the strength of Islam and not the actual mind, whatever the mind of Islam may assume. He admired other aspects of Christianity besides its 'conquering power'. Furthermore, when the strength is utilized against Hinduism,

Vivekananda dissented against it, but as a potential power, it must be incorporated into *Vedanta*. The ambivalence runs deeper: one aspect of what Vivekananda admired Islam for is the strength and unity of the Islamic community, the *Umma*. He saw this as the 'body' as opposed to the 'mind'. Thus, in *Vedanta*, peculiarly Hindu ideas and the Hindu lure must be used to coax people into producing the Islamic style body, *Umma*.

Vivekananda had a 'love-hate' relationship with Islam. Even this was not straightforward ('The body of Islam and the mind of *Vedanta*'). When talking about a 'mind', infinite connotations and implications arise. Whatever thoughts are associated with a mind are inevitably derived from that mind. The mind is the core of all its implications, whereas when one mentions a 'body', the only connotations are its material presence. Although a body, even of a human can induce feelings of anger, love, fear and so on in another, it is not the ontological presence of the body, but rather the effect of it on another's mind. Moreover, the body is a changing phenomenon. Hence, any emotions induced by this body can change. The same body, or even the same part of a body which induced fear in another, can now possibly evoke sentiments of love. This is exactly the case with Vivekananda. When he mentioned the body of Islam, he meant two things: the manifestation of the volition of the mind in the temporal realm; and secondly, how this temporal manifestation is viewed by others outside that religion. It is particularly those material manifestations which Vivekananda abhorred at times and admired at others, depending on whom it was directed against and how the same quality can be utilized by other religions, namely, *Vedanta* or Hinduism. For example, the same conquering power criticized by Vivekananda for invading and weakening Hinduism, he admired as a method of reawakening Hinduism in the world.

Now some Mohammedans have been the crudest in this respect and the most sectarian. Their

watchword is: "There is one God, and Mohammed is His Prophet." Everything beyond that is not only bad, but must be destroyed forthwith; at a moment's notice, every man or woman who does not actually believe in that must be killed; everything that does not belong to this worship must immediately be broken; every book that teaches anything else must be burnt. From the Pacific to the Atlantic for five hundred years blood ran all over the world. That is Mohammedanism!²²

During the Mughal Rule in India, it was this stringent monotheism and emphasis on the truth of Islam (and thus proselytizing) which converted many Hindus 'by the sword'. It is in direct contradistinction to the notion of 'universal tolerance' preached by Vivekananda and so steadfastly held. The foundation of it is that, because nothing in this world has an inherent value, there is no worldly truth. Personal gods are simply an expression of the subjectivity of reality. It matters little whether a man worships that which is falsity in the eyes of another, neither has ontological worth. Vivekananda did not dissent against the 'mind' of the former doctrine. The essence of proselytization lies in complete faith in this ultimate, objective truth; additionally, it is wanting others also to realize the truth so that they can be saved. It is basically a philanthropic and humanitarian sentiment. The difference between the two doctrines is found in the fact that 'universal tolerance' presupposes that Good has no connection whatsoever with worldly values and hence truth and falsity cannot be described theistically.²³ Conversely, with Islam, God creator of man and the world and is intimately linked with it; God's morals should be enacted by men on earth.²⁴ Human morality is therefore but a glimpse, a fraction, of divine morality. This is practised more vigorously than 'universal tolerance', obviously, because of the

²² S.V.C.W., Vol. IV, p126

²³ Kramrisch, *The Presence of Siva* starts this book with a story of a father fornicating with his daughter. Kramrisch eventually explains why this is not abhorrent: because we cannot impose our human morals on God and that the human version of the father-daughter relationship is very different from that of the Gods. The former exists between two separate ontological entities and the latter, God is everything.

connection with God and yet paradoxically it is less rational than a doctrine preaching the subjectivity of life.

Vivekananda's animosity grew because the motivation behind Islamic conversion, in his mind, is blind faith. If a Mohammedan were ordered to kill a man for his religion, he would do so without hesitation. Faith and rationality are not reconciled. Vivekananda disliked the irrational faith of a Mohammedan and yet he criticized the overabundance of rationality intrinsic in Westernism in the sense that rationality blindly disputes any religious notions - and Western influence was rife in India. He repeatedly emphasized that religion is realization and not rational knowledge.²⁵ In this case, where did he stand in this context of the faith in Islam? The problem is that despite acknowledging the power of faith and that religion is not predominantly rational, Vivekananda nevertheless disagreed with the faith of the Mohammedan. He regarded the doctrine of proselytization as a central notion of the ideology of Islam. One cannot be Muslim if one does not believe in conversion, proselytization, *jihad*, and Allah as the only God. In this terms, this is the 'mind' of Islam, not the body. It is an attempt dialectically to correlate rationality and faith not by rationalizing faith, but by de-factualizing rationality. Ironically, if Vivekananda were to have regarded this as the 'body of Islam' and only as an attempt to materialize faith and collective salvation, he would not have been so pernicious towards it. To him, the essentials of all religions are identical; only the peripherals, the 'bodies', differ. To attempt a dialectical relationship of rationality and faith was to defile the 'essential' of religion because what such a relationship would do was to change religion from realization to rationality: to a Muslim it is rational that Allah is the only God because the *Qu'ran* says so, and not because he realizes it. "Once the fundamental commandments are clearly grasped,

²⁴ See Shaikh, F., *Community and Consensus in Islam. Muslim Representation in Colonial India, 1860-1947*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1989.

²⁵A discussion on faith in *Vedanta* as well as religion being realization is afforded later.

there will be little difficulty in discovering the key that would help to unravel that which at first sight might appear to demand explanation or to need adjustment.”²⁶

“There was only blessing and love in the religion of Christ; but as soon as crudeness crept in, it was degraded into something not much better than the religion of The Prophet of Arabia.”²⁷ Vivekananda mentioned crudeness, normally associated with a mental state and not a physical object. The mind of Christianity has been corrupted in that same way. The outcome is that the religion practises conversion through brutal means.²⁸

“Mohammedans talk of universal brotherhood, but what comes out of that in reality? Why, anybody who is not a Mohammedan will not be admitted into the brotherhood.”²⁹ Again, it is unclear as to whether the egalitarianism of Islam is an aspect of the ‘mind’ or the ‘body’. Vivekananda regarded it as the ‘body’ because he saw it as a doctrine and practice not directly related to God. In Vivekananda’s own mind he distinguished peripherals of religion, translated as body; these being secondary concepts, institutions, practices and also those which have been cultivated over years. The essence was in the ‘mind’. This distinction a Muslim cannot draw. In this way Vivekananda regarded the egalitarianism of Islam as the ‘body’. His ideal religion is an amalgamation of this body and the mind of Hinduism. The key to understanding the vicissitudes of Vivekananda lies in the context. The key to understanding his capriciousness, would be to see it not as such but rather as protectiveness of Hinduism. His bitterness is due to the fact that many Hindus have converted or have been converted to Islam.

Vivekananda omitted the mind of Islam from his ideal religion. It is difficult to establish when something relates to the ‘mind’ and when to the ‘body’. To the Muslim, egalitarianism is essential to Islam because

²⁶ *The Qu’ran*, translated by Mohammed Zafrulla Khan, Curzon Press, London, 1970.

²⁷ *S.V.C.W.*, Vol. II, P353.

²⁸ Vivekananda criticized Islam for being brutal.

all Allah's children are equal and moreover one should enact Allah's morality on earth. There is no distinction between the theory and practice of Islam. One cannot believe only in proselytization; one must act on this belief. Hinduism, on the other hand, excused the individual who sincerely believes in a principle but does not practise it. Besides Hinduism's ability to differentiate between religion and culture, between theory and practice, here was another reason for Vivekananda's distinction. Conversion through force or persuasion is direct: thus, it is the body of Islam. The body affects something physically and directly. Vivekananda acknowledged that Hindus drove other Hindus away and Islam had something to entice them - this is indirect conversion and those aspects which entice, were seen to be pertaining to the mind. The paradox in this situation is that Vivekananda wanted to adopt the 'body of Islam' when it contained aspects of the 'mind' that enticed Hindus away. If those could be manifested in Hinduism, Hindus would not look towards Islam.

In Vivekananda's terms, the aspect of the 'mind' of Islam with which he fundamentally dissented was unaccommodating monotheism, in direct contradistinction to universal tolerance, which his ideal religion incorporated. Both agree that there is only one God but monotheistic religions preach the existence of only one manifestation. Ideally, Universal Tolerance as a Hindu notion accepts many manifestations. As a universal concept it is not religious because it accepts monotheism and polytheism or even atheism as different ideas of religion. However, the very monotheism gives Islam the bonding strength, the empathy, the fraternity and the equality. This is very well illustrated in a story recounted by M. Mujeeb in his book *The Indian Muslims*:

When the Shaikh asks why, when he sees a woman drawing water from a well when the river was so close, she answers that the water of Jumma river

²⁹ S.V.C.W., Vol II., p380.

makes one hungry and her husband could not afford to feed the family. The Shaikh heard this and tears came into his eyes (on returning to the Khanqah) he said (to his murid, Iqbal, who managed the affairs of the Khanqah) Lala,³⁰ in our Ghiyathpur there is a woman in the house of a faqir who does not drink water of the Jumma for fear of becoming hungry soon. 'Ask her how much will suffice her for the day. That much should be sent to her each month.' She was asked and the calculation made. The Shaikh sent the (required) amount himself...

Once there was a fire in Ghiyathpur. It was the height of the hot season. The shaikh stood in the sun barefooted with his taqiyah (cap) on his head till the fire subsided. He sent for (his servant) Khwajah Iqbal and said, 'Go and count the houses (destroyed in the fire), then take two silver tankas, two portions of (zallah) food, and one caraffe (suba)³¹ of cold water for each house.'³² (Brackets original)

Vivekananda not only acknowledged this but praised it. When addressing an American audience he pointed out that their Christianity is in reality discriminatory; but even if an American Indian converts to Islam, the Sultan of Turkey will dine with him; if he has brains, no office is closed to him, and the advantages of conversion are boundless.³³

In a translation of the *Qu'ran*, Mohammed Zafrulla Khan³⁴ offers a preliminary understanding of Islam. From this I shall draw specific examples of the 'mind of Islam' with specific reference to Vivekananda's intentions for Hinduism. Under the heading 'Interpretation of the Quran', Khan states:

³⁰ Mujeeb M., *The Indian Muslims*, George Allen and Unwin Ltd., London, Second Impression, 1969. Mujeeb's footnote: "A term of address. It means comparable, a chief servant, a major domo etc. It would be best translated as 'brother.'"

³¹ Ibid., Mujeeb's footnote: "What is most probably meant here is the seralu, a pot of baked clay, generally with a longish neck in which water is kept cold in the summer."

³² Ibid, pp 141-2.

³³ *S.V.C.W.*, Vol. II, p 371.

³⁴ Khan, op. cit.

Permission to fight is granted to those against whom war is made, because they have been wronged...

But fight them not in the proximity of the Sacred Mosque unless they fight you therein. Should they fight you even there, then fight them.³⁵

In stark contrast, killing a *Brahmin* is the greatest sin in Hinduism.

With hindsight, we can see Vivekananda as one of the Hindu revivalists who tried to eliminate the Western-imposed idea of the Hindus as passive, placid and peace-loving humans. One of his main concerns was not only to convince the rest of the world but to dissuade Hindus of the characterization that they are of a non-martial religion. It is that fraternity, equality and non-conformity quoted in the passage above which Vivekananda was trying to inculcate in Hindus. Being pedantic, one can say that those are aspects of the 'mind' of Islam. Simplistically, Vivekananda termed aspects relating to action as 'body' and to thought as 'mind'. Whatever corresponds to action is associated with the body regardless of whether it is an integral component to the essence of Islam. The incorporation of this in Hinduism was to be the birth of Vivekananda's *Vedanta*, for *Vedanta* can only result from strong Hinduism.

Ironically, the physical aspects of Hinduism deal with non-action through self-discipline: celibacy, abstinence and so on. Islam, on the other hand, preaches action, strength, fighting and other aspects conducive to a strong physique. The actual Islamic scripture deals with protecting its religion in the world. Vivekananda was curious as to why many Eastern religions have unsuccessfully endured Western impact and corrosion while Islam, on the other hand, has not only endured but retaliated in the sense that it has grown stronger and its following has increased; it has conquered but never been conquered. Islam has never been a slave but solely a religion, whereas Hinduism has not only been a slave religion but even within its religion, Hindus are making slaves of fellow Hindus. One cannot be master and slave at the same time yet Hinduism has always been so. Vivekananda blamed

³⁵ Ibid., p 22.

Mohammedans for being masters and thus making of Hindus slaves. His method for regeneration was to make clear that Hindus were not slaves; they did not have to give up their freedom and renounce life, which they had done because of Mohammedan tyranny; rather, they should combat inertia and thus combat any attempt at enslavement. Hindus must be their own masters. There is another reason why Vivekananda was intent that Hindus should not be slaves: slaves cannot be spiritually free because it involves mental and physical freedom to examine oneself.

Islam has always escaped being tyrannized³⁶ because in the relationship of tyrant and tyrannized, it has always been the tyrant. Zealous activity rather than inertia is a feature of Islamic political or even, for that matter, religious action. There is a dynamic relationship between visions of the ideal Muslim life and the life Muslims lead³⁷ and because of this, Muslims, in Vivekananda's eyes, are always energetically striving to reach this ideal state called *shari'a*. *Shari'a* can be translated as the totality of the *Qu'ran*. It is the inner core without which *umma* would be shattered dust.³⁸ *Shari'a* must be understood in order for a non-Muslim to comprehend the vision of the Good Life held by Muslims. The distinction between the moral and the political is obscured in the Good Life and more so in *shari'a*. Moral and political are two sides of the same coin, in Islam: there can be no morality without power, Islam professes. The strength of Islamic faith induces many Muslims to believe that the purpose of all human action is to be moral, to be conducive to *shari'a*, and hence to be political. Authority is an integral aspect of Islam. Authority is necessary to create a situation conducive to the realization of morality. Religion is not individual and because this is so, faith must be manifested to the collective Islamic whole in order to prove that one is religious. Silent

³⁶ A point which is debated later.

³⁷ Shaikh, op. cit., p 2.

prayer has no place in Islam. Rahman, in his book *Islam*,³⁹ states that 'it is acts of the heart as well as overt acts'. The ultimate goal of Islam is to teach obedience to God. The consequences of this are "they assume that society is a venue that exists not so much to realise individual human wants to pursue most actively service to God."⁴⁰

Umma is the most necessary component of worldly unity through which obedience to God can be served. *Umma* is undoubtedly the basis of all social and political action in Islam. The strength of Islam is derived from the religious order. Mohammed Iqbal says that a rejection of the social order which derives from a religious notion will eventually and inevitably lead to a rejection of the religious order. This factor is extremely important in understanding *umma*. It is an attempt to join the social, political and religious activities together, to reconcile power and morality; to re-evaluate the relationship between knowledge, rationality and faith; and to destroy the dichotomous relationship between faith and rationality. Ironically, because Muslim society is not an end in itself, Islam offers salvation in this world. The ultimate aim is to enact God's Law on Earth and each Muslim who diligently attempts to work at this utopia is content and hence feels saved. With each successful step he is closer to salvation. The power of religion is the promise of salvation. Islam offers salvation in this world through *umma*. Additionally, Islam "had sought to reunite power and morality by instituting a social order that was for both fundamentally power-orientated as well as religious."⁴¹ Power was a guarantee for solidarity. solidarity was the foundation of *umma*, the path to God and to the institution of God's Law on Earth.

Umma was the embodiment of unity and equality which gave birth to the notion of a 'religion-nation'. It was precisely this which

³⁸ Mohammed Iqbal, *The Mysteries of Selflessness* (Rumuz-i-Bekhudi) translated by Nicholson R.A., p 37, J. Murray, 1953, cited in Shaikh, op. cit.

³⁹ Quoted in Shaikh, *ibid.*

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p 12.

Vivekananda longed to produce for Vedanta. The question arises once more as to from where the concept of *umma* was derived. It comes from the traditional Muslim way of thinking that has no ontological conception of man as an isolated reality; that regards activity conducive to communalism as beneficial, while disunified activity and disunity are seen as barbaric. Islamic notions of individual equality and freedom⁴² derive from the individual's communal existence. Individual freedom never occupied a dominant place in Muslim political action.⁴³ This is where Hinduism differs. The unity it preaches is ontological. *Advaita* is a fine example of quintessential, ontological interdependence; but the concept of community is lacking. Sayid Qutb states that the importance of power stemmed incontrovertibly from the mandate handed over to the Muslim community, of the 'role of the leadership of humanity'.⁴⁴ Consequently, Vivekananda attempted to induce the same intensity of emotion as that generated by *Umma* by claiming responsibility of spiritual leader as the world for Hinduism.

Communal life and individual responsibility appear to be diametrically opposed concepts. Ironically, Hinduism possessed the concept of *karma* which should ideally reconcile such concepts, but it had become corrupted and could not act as that bridge. In contrast, years after Vivekananda, Gandhi's method of communal atonement (through fasting) can be seen as corruption of the notion of *karma* because it did not transfer individual responsibility to the collective responsibility it is the duty of every individual to enact. In comparison with the Islamic ideas of repentance and atonement, such Hindu notions of individual responsibility appear to give less responsibility to the individual and hence functions less effectively as a method for life-assertion. One individual can atone for all others

⁴¹ Ibid., p 16, citing, Abul Kalam Azad, *Al-din w-al siyasat*, in Siddiqui M. H. (ed), *Mazamin-i-al-Balagh*, p 11-36.

⁴² Comparison of Hindu and Muslim concepts of freedom and the implications are examined later.

⁴³ Shaikh, op. cit., quoting Rosenthal, *The Muslim concept of Freedom*, pp 121-2.

⁴⁴ Shaikh, *ibid.*

while the latter remain inactive. Conversely, the *Qu'ran* clearly states that all individuals must atone and repent for their own actions and no other can hold this responsibility, *shari'a*, *umma* and individual responsibility are conciliated,⁴⁵ as is elucidated in the following quotation: "He who follows the right way follows it to his own good, and he who goes astray, does it to his own loss. He who carries a responsibility cannot be relieved of it by another...Whatever misfortune befalls you is in consequence of that which you practise."⁴⁶

At first glance, the advantage of a centralized scripture is evident, but the advantages and disadvantages of this will be analyzed in due course. The important aspect is the similarity of this with Vivekananda's intentions for *Vedanta* and Hinduism. Atonement and repentance are concepts central to Islam and their guidelines are clearly set out. Conversely, the concept of *karma* in Hinduism has been variously interpreted and misconceived. There are two points to note here: firstly, that the Islamic doctrine is akin to the intentions of Vivekananda; secondly, the lucidity of Islam envied by Vivekananda. His envy is clearly detected in the undertones when he compared Islam and Hinduism.

Diversity is beneficial in the context of tolerance and disunity, while Hinduism is, in practice, discriminating and weak. Hinduism has suffered under centuries of corrosion; Islam has strengthened and combated centuries of persecution. Vivekananda wanted a 'Dynamic Religion' unlike contemporary Hinduism but similar to Mohammedanism: "In India, lectures and teaching cannot do any good. What we want is dynamic religion."⁴⁷

There are three points to note: lectures and teaching presuppose that the teacher or lecturer has greater knowledge than the audience. In an Islamic mosque, there is an altar upon which the *Qu'ran* sits and

⁴⁵ And individual benefit as *karma* supposedly preaches.

⁴⁶ Khan, op. cit., 'Atonement and Repentance', p 15.

⁴⁷ S.V.C.W., Vol. VIII, p 407.

there are believers who all pray together. The difference between these two is brought to light in the third point: Dynamic religion requires equality. It appears unnecessary to question whether egalitarianism in Islam is associated with 'body' or with 'mind'. "Mohammedanism comes as a message for the masses. The first message was equality. There is one religion - love. No more question of race, color, anything else".⁴⁸

Vivekananda clearly stated that as soon as a man becomes a Mohammedan, the whole of Islam receives him with open arms as a brother.⁴⁹ This correlates to the quintessential religion in Vivekananda's theories. However, in reality there are divisions within Islam.⁵⁰ Hinduism cherishes the quintessence of equality but in practice there is a hierarchical abyss between the *Brahmin* and the *Shudra*.

Despite the animosity of Islam towards atheists and apostates, the dominating idea running through Islam is that Allah is the true god and Islam is the true religion. How this is actually observed in practice is that a person who does not acknowledge Allah as the Divine Authority or who has deviated from Islamic ideals is not immediately considered as a non-believer, an atheist or an apostate. Rather, it is seen as a temporary aberration because Islam is the only true religion. In Hinduism, by contrast, a believer can be made an outcast for the slightest mistake, even a minor error in social behaviour or in religious ritual. The distinction between social and religious practice is hard to draw, and in some cases, in practice, it does not even exist. Becoming an outcast for social reasons is difficult to justify. For all purposes, social outcasting is paramount to religious outcasting. A man would be seen as non-Hindu for eating beef, which Vivekananda emphatically noted was a social and circumstantial

⁴⁸ Ibid., Vol. I, p483.

⁴⁹ Ibid., Vol. II, p 371.

regulation. The social and religious spheres are so inextricably intertwined that the debate as to whether Hinduism is a religion or rather a tradition has still not been resolved.

Such a circumstance is possible only because in Hinduism there is a semi-divine arbitrator, the *Brahmin*. The *Brahmins* decide what is and what is not acceptable. Equality is impossible while these mediators between God and man are part of the infrastructure and superstructure. by contrast, the direct relationship between God and Man cannot be interfered with in Islam.⁵¹ The role of a class as a medium between divinity and imperfection may seem consequential rather than central to any such relationship, yet the place of the mediator is undoubtedly relevant. The state occupied by the *Brahmin* is in between divinity (God) and imperfection (man). Hereditary promotion to quasi-perfection elevates his ontological status to semi-divinity; and higher ontological place is given to this human in relation to other humans, which necessarily has grave consequences for equality.

Vivekananda persistently chided Hindus for being weak. "The sign of life is strength and growth. The sign of death is weakness. Whatever is weak, avoid! It is death...There is only salvation for the brave...Awake, arise, and stop not till the goal is reached."⁵² It appears to be very similar to Shaikh's explanation⁵³ of the rationale behind the necessity for power in Islam, namely, that power consolidates unity; disunity is barbarism. Vivekananda's opinion of Islam appears to contradict this hypothesis. He emphasized that the unity of Islam manifests itself in barbarity. Vivekananda stated that the Islamic is intolerant because in reality its fraternity is manifested as hatred towards all those who are not Muslim. Vivekananda deemed it

⁵⁰ Dumont writes about the caste system among Muslims in India in *Homo Hierarchicus* and there are opposing sects within Islam such as the *Sunni* and *Shia* sects.

⁵¹ In reality in Islam, there are semi-divine arbiters who interpret the *Hadis*, which are traditions or interpretations of Mohammed's sayings.

⁵² *S.V.C.W.*, Vol. I, pp 479-80

barbaric because he regarded universal tolerance as modern. At the same time, he desired that Hinduism (or *Vedanta*) embrace this aspect of Islam. The apparent contradiction is partially reconciled when one considers Vivekananda's programme of 'spiritual conquering'. However, it is this conquering power of Islam, derived from unity (impossible without equality), which Vivekananda begged Hindus to emulate.

The dynamic 'staying power' of Islam staggered Vivekananda. Such a power was a result not of individual conviction but the combination of all individual convictions. The sheer organization of Islam makes this possible. Delivering a speech to an audience in Madras, Vivekananda said that Christian missionaries came to India and abused Indians for their irrationality and attempted to convert them to 'rationality'. However, these missionaries dared not attempt similar conversion with Islam.⁵⁴ The question ultimately being asked is why Vivekananda related strength with Islam and not with the Christian religion (or as he saw it, religion-nation) that was conquering Hindu Indians. As is evident from his speech in Madras, he perceived that Christianity never attacked Islam as a religion, not because of the proximity in their respective beliefs but because Christianity was intimidated in the face of a fierce religion-nation. Furthermore, this idea of a 'religion-nation' came from 'patriotism through expansion'. This is where patriotism is distinguished from a nationalistic sentiment. Patriotism pertains to pride in nation or religion-nation yet without emphasizing the assumption that one's nation is better than all others. Expansion, on the other hand, pertains to the belief that Islam is the only real, true religion. Additionally, patriotism strengthens expansion and *vice versa*. This is cumulatively strengthened because in a religious vein, Vivekananda believed that

⁵³ Shaikh, op. cit.

⁵⁴ S.V.C.W., Vol. VIII, pp 211-2

'truth is strengthening'.⁵⁵ It is not relevant whether it is actually true or simply that the person believes it to be so. "[T]he first sign of the revival of national life is expansion."⁵⁶ The problem is that in India there is no national feeling; caste is as a division of patriotism.

Despite the hypothesis that Islam is the only true religion or even because of it, Islam is none the less highly accommodating. It could be because of the desire to convert others to the one faith, their faith, that Islamics accommodate progress. Vivekananda said that Christianity denounces scientists like Darwin, while Islam encourages and invites them:

What support has Christianity ever lent to the spread of civilisation, either spiritual or secular? What reward did the Christian religion offer to the European Pandit who sought to prove for the first time that the Earth is a revolving planet? What scientist has ever been hailed with approval and enthusiasm by the Christian church? Can the literature of the Christian flock consistently meet the requirements of legal jurisprudence, civil or criminal, or the acts and trade policies? Even now the "Church" does not sanction the diffusion of profane literature. Is it possible still, for a man who has penetrated deep into modern learning and science to be an absolutely sincere Christian? In the New Testament there is no covert or overt praise of any arts or sciences. But there is scarcely any science or branch of art that is not sanctioned or held up for encouragement, directly or indirectly, in the Koran, or in the many passages of the Hadis, the traditional sayings of Mohammed. The greatest thinkers of Europe - Voltaire, Darwin, Buchner, Flammarion, Victor Hugo, and a host of others like them - are in the present time denounced by Christianity and are victims of the vituperative tongues of the orthodox community. On the other hand, Islam regards such people to be believers in the existence of God, but only wanting in faith in the Prophet.⁵⁷

⁵⁵ Ibid., Vol. III, p 225.

⁵⁶ Ibid., p272.

⁵⁷ Ibid., Vol. v. p532.

For Christianity, knowledge is in direct contradistinction to faith, whereas in Islam, there is a great attempt to reconcile the two. It may be said that this has been attempted by de factualizing rationality. A Muslim's faith in religious practices are not reinforced by rationality, but rather because 'the *Qu'ran* says so'. Faith and rationality must be reconciled for the religion, and especially for the religion-nation, to survive. This fits neatly into many ideas inherent in Islam: the lack of mediators between God and Man; the fact that the power of Islam is dependent on rationality (disunity in barbarism), and that science, power, knowledge, rationality and faith are all proven and accentuated in the *umma*. That Islam is the only true religion permits such facets as science, power and knowledge to be included in *umma*.

Faith is what makes the whole body of Islam strong. It is the basis, the unity, the whole foundation of strength, of *umma*, of the conquering power. Faith is the wheel and faith is the cogs. "Faith, faith, faith in ourselves, faith, faith in God-this is the secret of greatness...and still [having] have no faith in yourselves, there is no salvation for you...Have faith in yourselves, *and stand up on that faith and be strong: that is what we need.*"⁵⁸ (Italics mine). Vivekananda blamed the fact that three hundred and thirty million Indians have been ruled by a handful of foreigners on the lack of faith; he blamed the lack of patriotism on the lack of faith; and the division of Hinduism on the lack of faith. The Islamic 'nation' is based on faith. Faith is the basis of patriotism and expansion.

It would seem that Vivekananda exercised little caution when he coined the phrase 'the body of Islam and the mind of *Vedanta*'. As can be seen, the distinction between the 'mind' and the 'body' is circumstantial and even then at times debatable. One reason for Vivekananda to draw a distinction, besides for clarity, is to maintain

⁵⁸ Ibid., Vol. III, p190.

the pride of Hinduism. The 'mind' is the only prestige that has remained for Hinduism. Whether this pride has been induced by Western appraisal, or from within Hinduism itself, the 'mind' has always been respected. The 'body' of Hinduism, on the other hand, has never gained any status. It can be replaced by the 'body' of Islam; the 'mind' certainly cannot. It is my opinion that the reason for Vivekananda's producing this phrase is not from the perspective of Islam's 'body' but rather from that of Hinduism's pride. Vivekananda omitted to contemplate that Indian Muslims could be discontent with only a body that is Islamic. Furthermore, Vivekananda always mentioned spiritual regeneration. This was specifically aimed at the Hindu, and not the Muslim psyche. Given Vivekananda's limited perspective, he is very Hindu in his thinking, and not necessarily universal.

Having criticized the Muslims for their blind faith, he encouraged *sannyasins*, the ideal Hindu, to discard all rationality. This injunction must, however, be taken figuratively because obviously he did not want them to become irrational in all senses.

"If your superior orders you to throw yourself into a river and catch a crocodile, you must first obey and then reason with him."⁵⁹ Here is found ultimate faith. Patriotism will come through spiritual expansion. It is another basis on which Vivekananda can distinguish the 'body' from the 'mind'. The 'body' is related in Vivekananda's view, and in relation to Islam, to drawing blood through the doctrine of conversion. He associated physical imagery with the whole of Islam. The 'mind' of *Vedanta* arrests any blood being spilt, because of the quintessential tolerance of *Vedanta*. Patriotism of the Hindu-*Vedantic* religion-nation still comes through expansion, but expansion comes from infiltration; spiritual infiltration. India, Hindu India, can spread ideas of religion and spirituality. This view of expansion is borrowed

⁵⁹ Ibid., p440.

from Islam, and when it is absorbed by Hinduism: "Up India, and conquer the world with your spirituality."⁶⁰

Peace and tolerance, in Vivekananda's mind, is the Hindu and *Vedantic* way. The world is waiting for this grand idea of universal tolerance.⁶¹ "In spite of their hatred, in spite of their brutality, in spite of their cruelty, in spite of their tyranny, and in spite of their vile language they are given to uttering, we will and must go on building churches for the Christians, mosques for the Mohammedans until we conquer through love."⁶² Through this method, the *Vedantist* can keep his independence. In fact, the identity of a Hindu is dependent on his keeping his independence⁶³ (one could say that this too is a form of restriction). In Vivekananda's view, the Hindu individual has an identity apart from his religion; the Muslim has lost his independence to his religion. He has no say in the running of his life. If he practises any Hindu rituals, he is no longer a Muslim. Individuality is a product of independence. For the Hindu nation, it has been lost,⁶⁴ but will be regained with strength. (Equality must be established first, then strength and individuality will come naturally.) *Vedanta* makes it possible to combine individuality with the new *Vedantic* equivalent of *umma*.

Dynamism will come when the weaknesses are eliminated from Hinduism or else adapted into strengths. Teaching and lectures are not what is needed.⁶⁵ Action will make a dynamic religion. Dynamism is muscles of iron, nerves of steel and faith. Physical weakness is the cause of at least one-third of India's miseries.⁶⁶

That is the state in which we are hopelessly disorganized mobs, immensely selfish, fighting each

⁶⁰ Ibid., p277.

⁶¹ Ibid., p187.

⁶² Ibid., p188.

⁶³ Ibid., p210.

⁶⁴ Ibid., Vol. VI, p255.

⁶⁵ Ibid., Vol. VIII, p407.

⁶⁶ Ibid., Vol. II, p241.

other for centuries as to whether a certain mark is to be put on our forehead this way or that way, writing volumes and volumes upon such momentous questions as to whether the look of a man spoils my food or not! This we have been doing for the past few centuries. We cannot expect anything high from a race whose whole brain energy has been occupied in such wonderfully beautiful problems and researches.⁶⁷

Any division of patriotism must be thrown out; a unified community must be created. The backbone of Hinduism, like that of Islam, must be strong. Understanding of the *Gita* will be better through strength.⁶⁸ Equality is an imperative criterion. The semi-divinity of the priestly class must be destroyed.

“It is to be noted that Christianity cannot stand without Christ, Mohammedanism without Mohammed, Buddhism without Buddha, but Hinduism stands independent of any man.”⁶⁹ A central authority, and a central scripture are the basic notions comprising the unity of Islam and Christianity. Vivekananda mentioned that Hinduism does not need a central *persona* with an optimistic tone; surely this seems ironic. The lack of a central *persona* is conducive to diversity and a loss of faith, whether paradoxically or obviously. Philosophy can be taken, accepted or rejected. Certain aspects can be used and others discarded in the forcing of a predetermined conclusion. A person can preach Hinduism without reading any of the *Vedas*, the *Upanishads* or the *Bhagavad Gita* and no other Hindus protest. With so many differing conclusions in Hinduism, how can there be any unity?

On the other hand, Vivekananda praised a central scripture: “[Those religions] which were founded on a book still stand. Why could not the Christians convert the Jews? Why could they not make the Persians Christians? Why could they not convert the Mohammedans?”⁷⁰ A central scripture can arrest any aberration, diversion or deviation. A central book is

⁶⁷ Ibid., Vol. III, p242.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Ibid., Vol. V, p207.

conducive to a centralized organization - which constitutes an institutionalized religion. A religion centred around an authoritative scripture is characterized by a centralized organization: a central source from which power emanates embodies an institution and an institutionalized religion. In many religions, this is the strength. On the other hand, implementing a central authority into the Hindu religion may have the converse effect: power may diminish because the central authority will necessarily set regulations for the religion. For an established religion such as Hinduism, this will, in practice, categorize the adherents into Hindus and non-Hindus, decreasing the number of 'pure' Hindus and thence diminishing the strength of Hinduism emasculating it still further. Precisely because the Hindu religion is diversified, its strength derives from its sheer mass. The establishment of a central authority is counter-productive in terms of Vivekananda's idea that the Indian nation should regain its lost *shraddha*. *Shraddha* incorporates initiative, individual responsibility and faith, among other factors. A central authority stops individuals from deciding on and interpreting the scriptures personally, from taking initiative, from using their own intelligence and having the faith to do so. Conversely, even though a centralized structure arrests diversity (which is one of the reasons that there is no Hindu identity), diversity none the less links Hindus with peoples of other religions (this is how Hinduism can engulf aspects of Islam). A Hindu can identify himself with Hinduism as much as he can identify himself with Christianity or Islam or Judaism. It is, however, Islam which is closest in geographical proximity to Hinduism; Hinduism may more easily be linked with Islam and moreover, may engulf it.

It can be recalled that Vivekananda inserted a central scripture in Hinduism: "The same is the case with the Hindu religion, with its scripture, the Vedas, the oldest in the world."⁷¹ Vivekananda attempted to create an impression of an infallible universal truth through antiquity and strength 'staying power'. Vivekananda's perception of the relative antiquity of Hinduism is, furthermore, shown to be faulted. He did not realize that 'staying

⁷⁰ Ibid., Vol. VIII, p 217.

power' is ambivalent. An aspect need not be good to exist, to be old or to resist corrosion.

CONCLUSION

Vivekananda's attitude to Islam was very confusing because he had both a straightforward admiration for and aversion to aspects of the religion. On the other hand, he admired aspects of Hinduism and if he did not recognize similar aspects in Islam, he criticized such an omission. As a general rule, he admired elements of Islam which correlated to its manifest existence and the ability to maintain an unchallenged independent identity. He regarded it more as a religious-nation than a religion. Initially, he was envious of Islam's egalitarianism and unity which were visible in *umma*. *Umma* aids in the nurturing of a sense of religious patriotism, strength in unity, equality and fraternity. It also overcomes national boundaries and creates an overarching, international sense of solidarity between Muslims. Furthermore *umma* is constituted only because of the strong and intense religious ideology which permeates into the Islamic community because of the existence of a centralized and systematic pervading authority. Authority is integral to Islam and is received without opposition. All of this is only possible because of, and is in fact a product of, the unshakeable faith Muslims have in Islam and Islamic institutions. It was this foundation sentiment and its consequential constructs that Vivekananda wanted Hinduism to embrace.

As a result of their faith, Muslims defend their religion vociferously. They are possessive and protective of their religion and religionists and are intolerant of any intrusion. These facets are reinforced by the fact that Islam is an active religion. One must manifest one's faith, enact God's morality on earth and practise equality and fraternity. Islam is characterized by zealous

⁷¹ Ibid., Vol. III, p 445.

activity and life-assertion. Islamic ideas of atonement and repentance incorporate great degrees of individual action and responsibility. All of this was endorsed by enviable discipline, organization and systematic authority. These aspects made Islam compatible with modernity, yet this compatibility was not such that Islam embraced Western atheist rationality, and anti-religious secularism, for instance. Rather, Islam maintained its identity as a religion and religion apart, one not engulfed by modernity but that co-existed with modernity. Vivekananda wanted this compatibility for Hinduism. He wanted a religion-nation that co-existed harmoniously with modernity and yet maintained its essentially religious identity.

Vivekananda also disagreed with many aspects of Islam. Fear of the wrath of God was conducive in many instances to obedience. God was seen to have a volition that intruded into any aspect of an individual's life. As a result, a Muslim's faith has no relation to modern rationality and is fanatic in its traditionalism. Part of Islam's maintaining its own identity in the face of modernity is an extreme and irrational clinging on to tradition. This is manifest in a Muslim's *penchant* for identifying himself as a Muslim in opposition to other religions, Islam's hatred for atheists, apostates and polytheists. In reality, Vivekananda said Islam's fraternity is manifest in the Islamic belief that anyone who is not a Muslim is an unbeliever and thus an unworthy being. Vivekananda dissented against this. The possessiveness, intolerance and unaccommodating monotheism of Islam was double-edged. Vivekananda saw these as fanatic because of Islam's inability to discriminate between 'essence' and 'peripherals'.

Vivekananda was also averse to the fact that in Islam, an individual has no ontological status as an isolated reality. The quality in Islam is a product of having a communal identity as a Muslim in a Muslim community. A Muslim is not equal as a human, or even in relation to other humans, but rather equal as a Muslim in relation to other Muslims in *umma*, the Muslim universal community. A Muslim's freedom and identity is also the same. An individual is not really free as a being, but only when he co-exists with other Muslims.

This is illustrative of a lack of respect for the individual. A Muslim has no identity as an ontological being and hence the individual is discouraged from gaining initiative, or having faith in himself as a human as opposed to solely as a Muslim. His identity is only a religious identity and exists only in religion. Vivekananda was opposed to this because of his unwavering faith in people. Furthermore, he was concerned at the lack of faith Hinduism was showing to Hindus and he was determined to instil stronger faith in Hinduism. "Think of the good Mohammed did to the world, and think of the great evil that has been done through his fanaticism!"⁷² The quotation supplies the answer to Vivekananda's own distinction between the mind and the body of Islam. He saw the mind of Islam as infatuated by fanaticism. Surely it is the body to which he was referring since it is the body which acts. However, he specifically mentioned 'Mohammedanism' as opposed to 'Islam'. Thus, if he regarded Mohammed as fanatical, the mind of his religion is already inculcated with fanatic ideas. It is Mohammed's own fanaticism. In addition to this, when a religion is institutionalized and unified, the mind (the central core of the theory of the religion that is the central authority) interprets the teachings of, in this case, Mohammed in its own manner. The believers then carry out these interpretations, which may indeed bear little relation to the original intentions.

The body Vivekananda wanted to emulate is that of the life-asserting principles of Mohammedanism and especially Mohammedan strength. These principles, when interpreted or transcribed into another context, can however no longer be called Mohammedanism. If unity is the matter at hand - an integral aspect of Mohammedanism - when embraced by Hinduism, it then becomes Hindu unity and has no correlation to Islam. This changing of context makes it imperative for Vivekananda to have categorized these principles as the 'body'. The mind of any religion cannot be transcribed into another religion or context. To reiterate: to categorize this as the 'body' also increases the pride of a Hindu in Hinduism. It is not necessarily a fundamental

⁷² Ibid., Vol. I, p 184.

transformation. The life-blood, the essence of Hinduism, is still intact. This does not have to be changed.

This leads neatly onto another reason why Vivekananda still maintained that the mind of *Vedanta* is beneficent. If the concepts within Islam are mirrored, they can be re-evaluated; aspects that are disadvantageous can be excluded without incoherence in terms of the tradition into which it is incorporated. Concepts that are advantageous can be emphasized. An example is the idea of tolerance: on the one hand, tolerance is founded on a vociferous faith in one's tradition. On the other, it is socially detrimental and non-humanitarian. The Mohammedan shouts exclusively, Allah is the only one.⁷³ Vivekananda claimed that in *Vedanta*, there would be no dissension if his son were a Buddhist, his wife a Christian and himself a Mohammedan. This is a fundamentally flawed hypothesis, presupposing that they are all foremostly *Vedantists*, full of the sentiment of universal tolerance. Furthermore, if one were a Mohammedan or a Christian, one would not be a *Vedantist*. With hindsight we can look on an example to illustrate this. Gandhi once said to Jinnah that he was not only a Hindu but also a Buddhist, a Mohammedan, a Christian, and so on. Jinnah, in response to this, replied that only a Hindu would say that. The fact is that the principles of monotheism are in opposition to this Hindu idea of universal tolerance. We may thus conclude that universal tolerance is not, contrary to its name, universal nor is it universally accepted as benevolent. To a monotheist, one truth is benevolent. The concept of 'universal tolerance' is a peculiarly Hindu idea. Furthermore, it is intrinsically flawed because one cannot be a Hindu or *Vedantist* and a Muslim since the central belief of Islam is that Allah is the only God and only manifestation. A Hindu preaching universal tolerance will never proclaim that Allah is the only God. Conversely there is in Hinduism a fundamental division between religion and religiously informed or religiously inspired customs, traditions and institutions. The division has indisputably been exploited. Even from those reformers looking from a Hindu viewpoint such as Vivekananda, there is a

⁷³ Ibid., p 254.

fundamental division. They discerned a difference between notions such as *Atman* is that an inseparable element of the indivisible *Brahman* and seemingly religious notions such as food regulations. Even less extreme, they differentiated the 'essence' of religion from that which is practised in the name of religion. Although what composes the 'essence' is subjective, there is a widespread consensus. Such a secular kind of division allows the Hindu, without any contradiction, to have both intense and sincere faith in something in his own mind and no necessity to manifest it. This is very different from Islam where, because religion is not individual, one must manifest one's faith to other Muslims. Hence follows Vivekananda's categorization of Islam as an active religion. If this were to be translated to Hinduism, there is an added advantage that because Hinduism allows criticism and change, if the manifestation of that faith is either irrational, deleterious or not beneficial, the mass of Hindus can easily voice their contentions in the hope of change. It also serves to unify Hindus because one's identity as a Hindu is confirmed by manifesting that faith - this is a step closer to the recognition by all Hindus of their shared identity and recognition of all practices of Hinduism as belonging to one religion, Hinduism. It is an acknowledgement that Hinduism is one religion.

There must be the recognition of one religion throughout the length and breadth of this land. What do I mean by one religion? Not in the sense as one religion as held among the Christians, or the Mohammedans, or the Buddhists. We know that our religion has certain common grounds, common to all our sects, however varying their conclusions may be, however different their claims may be. So there are certain common grounds; and within their limitation this religion of ours admits of a marvellous variation, and infinite amount of liberty to think and live our own lives.⁷⁴

Vivekananda wanted the mind of *Vedanta* for this reason, but why did he consider Islam? It is when a Muslim falls, the rest of the brotherhood try

⁷⁴ Ibid., Vol. III p 287.

to raise him up again. Even though he must repent and atone himself,⁷⁵ the rest of the Mohammedans realize that if one falls, the whole religion may fall. This is especially so in Islam because of the relationship between power, morality, unity, politics and action - *umma* and *shari'a*. In Christianity, there is no such relationship. A failure makes weakness surface. Thus it is the responsibility of all Muslims to atone individually and collectively. Furthermore, because of the fraternity and egalitarianism, there is a strong feeling of empathy on which the strength of Islam depends. If the external world sees a failure in Islam, the latter cannot profess that it is the true religion. It cannot carry the burden and the torch of all humanity.⁷⁶ The claim that Allah is kind to all his disciples will otherwise be brought into disrepute. The fallen Muslim is also helped because it is Man, every Muslim man, who has to enact Allah's kindness on earth. Allah's Law on Earth is synonymous with kindness to all Mohammedans. All this is conducive to a Dynamic Religion. Belief in Islam as the only true religion produces pride and faith. Hinduism accommodates many truths and no pride. The fallen Hindu has been pushed by another Hindu. The master of the Hindu slave is another Hindu.

Islam is also not only a religion; but also a distinct Islamic culture. Even though religion is primary and such qualities as *umma* are initially religious, they are also cultural. It is culture which withstands shocks.⁷⁷ Islam has therefore withstood generations of battle, of corrosion, of erosion and of outright attack. A very important question arises at this point: Why should one embrace *Vedanta* when Islam is dynamic and the reason for *Vedanta*, namely universal tolerance, is flawed? Even if this Hindu concept were not flawed, Vivekananda gave no reason why one should embrace *Vedanta* as opposed to converting to Islam or Christianity. That same person could be a contented monotheist. The strong enticement in Vivekananda's mind is that he has combined all the advantages of all religions and then included universal tolerance. Two points should be made: the first is that he is aiming at the

⁷⁵ Khan M.Z., op. cit., p 15.

⁷⁶ Shaikh, op. cit.: Islam believes that it is the responsibility of all humanity.

⁷⁷ S.V.C.W., Vol. III, p 291.

Hindu psyche; the second is that inherent in the theory of universal tolerance is the idea that a person will be equally happy in any religion. He even wrote: "The Lord has declared to the Hindu in His incarnation as Krishna, 'I am in every religion as the thread through a string of pearls,'"78 He strongly believed that *Vedanta* was the true religion on which all other religions were based and paradoxically this is from where the idea of universal tolerance derived. Does *Vedanta* not preach that all religions are aspects of a universal, indivisible truth? If the truth is indivisible, all religions are not parts, but they all embrace the same truth, wholly. Again, why should one follow *Vedanta*?

Vivekananda looked at this from one perspective only; that he was trying to dissuade people from converting away from Hinduism, and he is also trying to entice them into *Vedanta*. Hence, he took only a subjective view and consequently never considered this from the perspective of the people. He thus never gave them a convincing disincentive not to convert. Vivekananda even based his concept of a religion-nation on the fact that not only India but other nations would embrace *Vedanta*. Consequently, in contemporary India, the Hindu nationalist Party, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), has used Vivekananda's name to back their policies, towards an India founded on one religious ideology. His name is most frequently invoked when advocating that Hinduism should be more organized and should build its physical strength.

Most Neo-*Vedantists*, when comparing Islam and Hinduism, frequently use sexual terminology to connote the difference between the two. Hinduism is always depicted as feminine; the religion which has been raped. Vivekananda, for example, called Hinduism a religion of women and eunuchs. Gandhi talked about Hinduism as the coward and Islam as the bully. Islam, on the other hand, is always depicted as masculine; Hinduism as emasculated. Vivekananda was attempting to renew Hinduism with the masculine aspects which it has either lost or never had. Masculine traits are assets such as courage, strength, discipline and organization. Faith is incorporated but this is

⁷⁸ Ibid., Vol. I, p 18.

not peculiarly masculine.⁷⁹ Vivekananda's ultimate conviction is in Hinduism to emulate, as he saw them, the strengthening aspects of Islam. The most pragmatic programme set up specifically for this intention was the Ramakrishna *Vedanta* Mission. Strength, courage, discipline and organization were to be embodied in this movement. The intention was to create a sound mind in a sound body for each of the members with health and physical condition corresponding to discipline and courage. These traits would exclude any fanaticism. All this was conducive to what, in Islam, Vivekananda saw as faith (which incorporates strength, loyalty, courage and organization - without fanaticism).

How can Vivekananda be seen as anti-Muslim if at first glance, it appears that he wanted to imitate so many aspects of Islam which he admired? The crux is that Vivekananda's definition of Islamic faith does not include discipline. Of course, he regarded Muslims as extremely disciplined - who pray five times a day (the *Shias*), who do not conceptualize God in anthropomorphic form (this latter argument is more characteristic of the early Neo-*Vedantists* such as Ram Mohan Roy) and who would fight fearlessly for their faith. All the positive aspects of Islam become negative when fanaticism is exhibited in. Vivekananda was a strong critic of fanaticism and thus his Ramakrishna *Vedanta* Mission practices discipline to arrest any fanaticism from eroding courage, faith and organization for instance. To return to the question posed at the beginning of the paragraph: Vivekananda can be seen as anti-Muslim precisely because he regarded the practice of Islam as fanatic.

On the other hand, many defend Vivekananda as essentially pro-Muslim.⁸⁰ These interpretations hinge on untenable assumptions. There are many instances in which Vivekananda has promoted both of these views, and then refuted each of them respectively. He has actually aimed, through a method of engulfing all religions and combining them in strength, for a

⁷⁹ Vivekananda's admired and praised the courage of Padmini.

⁸⁰ For example, the stance taken by Raychaudhuri T., 'Swami Vivekananda : his unread messages', Lecture given at the University of Hull, on the occasion of the annual Caparo lecture, 7th May, 1993.

'religion-nation', very similar to that of Islam which overrides geographical boundaries. '*Umma*' is a means to that end.

Vivekananda had no trouble pursuing this line of thought, dividing Islam in the manner he did without detecting any ambivalence and without any reservation. There is no complexity from Vivekananda's point of view because he did not examine the essence of Islam and he was ultimately concerned with the pride of Hinduism. A Muslim, however, would have difficulty in understanding his distinctions. Furthermore, the polytheism of Hinduism allows one to dissect and separate the embodiment of Krishna from his proclamations in the *Bhagavad Gita*, for example.

Since it has been proven that there is no effective meaning in Vivekananda's distinction, to conclude I shall examine some essential religious concepts common to all religions and then contrast the different interpretations afforded by Hinduism and by Islam. This will make obvious two points: that Vivekananda's task is more difficult than he anticipated if he wanted to absorb Islam; and that it is a necessity that Vivekananda confine himself to the superficial (that is, most readily perceptible) aspects of Islam, in other words the 'body'.

"Religion is freedom"⁸¹ But what is freedom? Islamic and Hindu concepts of freedom are completely different. For the Hindu, it is obedience to *dharma*. Ultimately, this is obedience to the cosmic order, or *Brahman*. However, the possibility of fulfilling this in temporal terms is obedience to oneself. *Dharma* is individual and thus so is freedom; it is peculiar to each, different for everyone. For Islam, there is no understanding of individual freedom because there is no comprehension of separate ontological existence.⁸² Freedom is obedience to God. When God's Law lives on Earth, everyone is free; benevolence and justice reign.

Even the notions of good and bad are contrasting. *Advaita* in particular preaches that they are both degrees of the same substance because the Universe is one, but perceived differently. Islam, on the other hand, treats

⁸¹ S.V.C.W., Vol I, p 337.

them as opposing, separate the antagonistic. This may seem irrelevant to Vivekananda's task; but when one analyses justification Islam uses to persuade Muslims of the need for strength and unity, it becomes entirely relevant. For example, one justification is the necessity to fight against bad. Even though Vivekananda maintained that the mind of *Vedanta* (the justification) will be predominant, one questions whether the same amount and intensity of strength can be produced with this *Vedantic* justification.

The false and the real 'I' are also issues. This is a typically Hindu distinction. Vedanta, like Islam, does not make this distinction.⁸³ In Islam, God's Law and Man's Earth are compatible. Islam and *Vedanta* maintain that the same 'I' which lives on Earth also goes to God.⁸⁴ Vivekananda's understanding of *Advaita* elucidates this: "As soon as I begin to feel that I am separate from this universe then first comes fear and then comes misery."⁸⁵ It appears that when Vivekananda mentioned the distinct 'I's, he was addressing another question, that of the ego and the non-ego; the conscious, the subconscious and the superconscious. Again, with Islam and *Advaita*, these all belong to the same being. The difference emerges with the material implications. In terms of politics, Islam promulgates that society is not an end in itself but a means to enact God's Law. Hinduism's conception of *Maya* (originally meaning the creative power of the Gods⁸⁶) means that one is bound in life and there is a routine which one should follow in the material world to better the *Atman*; the *Atman* is the essence of being in the material world; it can be seen as the *material soul*. The material soul has no standing in Islam.

To summarize Vivekananda's questioning of Islam: he asked what it was in Islam that has made it strive. In Hinduism, the *Brahmins* corrupt the social structure: in Islam, there is no mediator between God and Man. How is it then that cooperation is predominant in Islam and conflict is only with other nations, other religions and other religion-nations? Could it be because the

⁸² Shaikh, op. cit.

⁸³ *Maya* is given another meaning. See quotation attached to footnote 86.

⁸⁴ God is a complex idea in *Advaita*, but generally the notion of the soul rising to God can be attributed to *Advaita* as well as to the rest of Hinduism.

⁸⁵ S.V.C.W., Vol I, p 364.

goal of Islam is to be governed by Islamic Law and to have an Islamic nation? Thus, conflict within Islam is rendered non-existent in aiding the attainment of this goal and because for all Muslims, there is one predetermined ultimate goal. Why can Hinduism not accomplish the same? Islam is spiritual, unlike the West, but there is still strength in Islam. Is it the community; and if it is, what comprises this community? Vivekananda saw the Islamic reality, and his ultimate, underlying question is 'why is this not the case with Hinduism? Can it be?'

⁸⁶ Kramrisch, *op. cit.*

CHAPTER III

VIVEKANANDA'S ATTITUDE TO CHRISTIANITY

A peculiar relationship had developed between Indians and Christianity. Many were sceptical of white men who came and preached against the evils of polytheism, and against a religion which Hindus dearly cherished. On the other hand, many Hindus were tempted by the apparent religious unity and the senses of equality, fraternity, social conscience, mercy and justice which Christianity preached and practised. However, many who admired those qualities categorically rejected its outlook on life, its philosophy and the claim that Jesus Christ was the only-begotten Son of God. They were torn between the Hindu religion and Christianity. On the one side they felt robbed of dignity; and on the other, robbed of divinity. Many Hindu reformers adopted Christianity and aspects of it yet unconditionally refuted notions such as monotheism; while others took on monotheism and yet embraced traditional Hindu notions of caste.

Indian reformers saw the regeneration of India to a greater or lesser degree in the separation of religion and rationality; or at the other end of the spectrum, with rationalized religion. They took the Hindu religio-philosophical foundation and built upon this a philosophy drawing from the Western Christian culture and creating a strict relationship between rationality and faith. The central watchwords of modernist theories were equality, humanism, spirituality, philosophical faith and knowledge towards salvation.

Christian principles of social consciousness, fraternity and egalitarianism informed philosophies emergent from the Hindu Renaissance. Some rejected the scientific idea of evolution, opting for a

more Indian notion: ideas are not solely a product of society and change. Some change is a product of social conditioning but the majority of ideas, or at least their source, is the common heritage of mankind. For social purposes, man was conceived to be product of the ultimate being (manifest life) and this conception was joined to the Christian-liberal attitude that a measure of a good society is found in how much freedom it allows its members. According to this scheme, humanism is not incompatible with a materialist philosophy,¹ but provides a secular and rational sanction to morality.² Deterministic understandings of *karma* were seen to be obstacles to freedom and ones which only rationality could destroy. Quintessentially, man should be a self-sufficient moral entity.³ The essence and importance of Christianity, to Hindu reformers, lay in its moral message: Christ as the archetype of moral man and its popularization of man as a moral entity.

Furthermore, rationality constitutes morality: whereas rationality caters to the whole of the population, religion caters to the individual who then aspires to an individual and eschatological attempt at Providence; rationality, on the other hand, proves why one should love his/her neighbour. In terms of morality as a whole, Christianity, whether erroneously or not, made evident to Hindus, that man can be fully moral without being subordinated to a superhuman power and a divine order. Christianity made clear that temporal activity was compatible with a firm faith in God and religion, and moreover, they were mutually inclusive. *Ergo*, national regeneration must be founded on religion and culture; a new

¹ Thomas M.M., *The Secular Ideologies of India*, The Christian Institute for the Study of Religion and Society, Bangalore, Madras, 1976, P171. Henceforth, *S.I.*

² *Ibid.*, P176.

³ *Ibid.*

superstructure on a traditional infrastructure. Vivekananda amalgamated spirituality and social service. There is a strong relation between morality and salvation in Christianity. The emphasis on ethics decreases the importance of metaphysics, making religion more accessible to everyone. On the other hand, the Indian *penchant* for separating Christ from Christianity is useful in distinguishing what is ethical and what is not in a religion. The nature of God is in man's happiness; and the fulfilment of life is moral. The close relationship between religion and social practices was regarded as the reason behind the exploitative hierarchy in India. Secularism, associated with Christianity and rationalism, was thus seen as the solution to the exploitation.

Not all Christian notions were accepted: 'vicarious atonement' was invariably disregarded. Many saw it as being derived from Jewish ideas of sacrifice, inconsistent with both the rational idea of justice, in theory as well as in practice and with the idea of Christianity as a living religion. Christianity was not regarded, by many Hindu reformers as a religion proper, but as the embodiment of social philosophy through which Christ preached a system of well developed morals. M. C. Parekh argued that love as the central core of religion inevitably leads to service and sacrifice; it is precisely for this reason that the Indian tradition is faulted in readily embracing Christianity as a religion of love, while denying the idea of sacrifice and vicarious atonement. Repentance was another notion difficult to incorporate in the Hindu tradition. Repentance as a notion integrated God's mercy with His justice.

To the Hindu to talk about God's grace as a combination of mercy and justice is to degrade God in admitting that He is affected by our worldly affairs. "Punishment is simply *due* to sin; and if justice *demand*s that

punishment...then there can be no mercy on God's part in giving punishment to sinners."⁴ The justice of God is for the sinner's own welfare, as Goreh points out in the above quotation. God's mercy is distinct from justice. The former is not so concerned with the sinner's welfare. Justice may be punishment while mercy is not.

The Hindu religion understands Christianity through Hindu criteria, thus it illustrates fundamental flaws within Christianity, yet at the same time, criticisms are inauthentic if criticized from a different perspective. But it is precisely because of this weakness in the argument that Christianity is seen as helpful only in the material sphere. Ironically, many Hindu thinkers advocate Christianity as the saving grace of India. The superlative position of Hinduism in the spiritual or ultimate sphere is maintained. Christ is understood in Indian patterns of thought by, for instance, taking the traditional ideas of mystic union and pantheism and transforming them into an active unity of will and communion through obedience to God and his righteousness.⁵

Under this scheme, the doctrine of Divine Humanity is essentially Hindu. It was a common trait among the reformers that despite promulgating the equality of all religions, Hinduism occupied a special place in the 'egalitarian hierarchy'. Christianity plays the role of re-emphasizing that the Absolute is intelligible through the relative. In Hinduism, God does not have a volition and therefore does not actively serve man in the same way that Jesus Christ did. With the introduction of Christian notions of service and devotion, service becomes a duty not

⁴ Thomas M.M., *The Acknowledged Christ of the Indian Renaissance*, The Christian Institute for the Study of Religion and Society, Bangalore, C.L.S., Madras, 1970, p48. There is a brief reference saying that this is quoted from Goreh. Henceforth, A.C.

⁵ Ibid., pp62-3

solely reserved for the underclasses, but as a method of purification for everyone; and thus it becomes a 'divine' duty. The greatest role that Christianity could play was to convince the Hindu that he could express spirituality in moral and social terms.

Christ embodied the quintessential relationship between God and man - father and son - which was applicable to all of humanity. Inherent in Christ's crucifixion is the notion that the destiny of man and the will of God are inextricably interwoven. Such a notion encourages people in practical terms to give up the fanaticism stemming from the conviction that man and nature are inevitably moving towards perfection. To explain this notion, Vivekananda gave as conclusion that service to God and service to man were compatible. The advantage of a religion preaching the link between the will of God and the destiny of man lies in that the agent's initiative comes from within the person. The role of the teacher thus is not overemphasized and a relationship such as that of *Brahmin-Shudra* in contemporary India should not develop. Vivekananda explained that there are two types of teachers: one who teaches every detail of conduct and the other who teaches only that which kindles the spirit in man"⁶

To Vivekananda, Hinduism was superior to Christianity. Pantheism, to Vivekananda, was didactic; Hinduism, a spiritual challenger to materialism. On the other hand, we can see Vivekananda's approach as inconsistent and hypocritical. He could not conceive of a religion which did not pervade culture, tradition, life and symbolism. Thus, he saw the Hindu's ignorance of politics as a lack of knowledge. If the materialist culture were part of the religion, this ignorance of politics would dominate. Here, he is guilty of that which he criticized: materialism. Here,

⁶ Ibid., p97, quoting Mozoomdar, P.C., *Heartbeats*, p 91.

Vivekananda categorized as religious, rituals and actions practised in the name of religion that did not fundamentally belong to religion. The Christian crusaders justified their barbarity in this manner. Vivekananda's thought was substantially more acceptable to the reformist *and* degraded Hindu, as he categorically stated that no matter what their respective constitution, all religions were proclaimers of *Sanatana Dharma* or the Perennial Philosophy.

There is a problem of the compatibility of rationality and 'Active Love' as a doctrine. The former brings in notions of self-satisfaction and self-interest. The latter is a wholly selfless doctrine. In rational terms, the question is why should one practise 'Active Love' if one is not to benefit from it. Vivekananda combated this through the religious theory of Qualified Monism. The underlying foundation of Qualified Monism is that the world is illusionary. If this is so and only the Ultimate Reality is unquestionable, then what is the use of love? Hence, there is incompatibility between Qualified Monism and selfish interest. The highest object of the soul is to "serve that Infinite Being for ever spiritually in the activity of the Absolute Love".⁷ All men are brothers, God is the Father. "[A]nd above all [Christians] struck at the religious and spiritual roots of caste by their advocacy of radical religious reform of Hinduism."⁸ The question which immediately arises is why Vivekananda adopted as the essence of equality Christianity and not Islam which preaches the same ideals. Vivekananda's experience of Islam was dominated by Indian Muslims, who as Dumont said had "permanent psychological dispositions to

⁷ Das S., 'Rational' Mythology", being a lecture given at the Parliament of the World's Religions, Chicago, 1993, in *Back to Godhead*, January / February, 1994, Vol. 28, no.1, Palace Press International, Florida, p 25, citing Thakur, S.B., *The Bhagavat: Its Philosophy, Its Ethics and Its Theology*, p 80.

⁸ A.C., op. cit., p 262.

the extent that each Muslim... Has something of the Hindu in him”⁹ and thus, the Islamic community in India was also affected by caste distinctions and other such prejudices.

Karma is not fatalism, but a “continuity of man’s freedom and capacity.”¹⁰ *Karma*, to Vivekananda, was a positive affirmation of life. It directly corresponds to notions such as ‘personality’.¹¹ Traditional Hinduism is criticized for excluding a human factor, namely, an encouragement to cultivate personality. Personality was an extremely important factor for Vivekananda who perspicaciously discerned the close relationship between *karma* as life affirmation and personality. Concepts within Christianity such as ‘active service’ edify *karma* as a duty of the “recognition of spiritual realities”¹² through life-affirmation. Hence, the distinction between secularism and spirituality vanishes. Vivekananda emphasized that *dharma*, *artha*, and *kama* are ideally inseparable. In spiritual terms, the dictum asserts that *bhakti* and *mukti* are not opposed.

The ideals of Christianity are not seen to be responsible for the dictate that spirituality can be reached through temporal service. However, for such a notion to carry weight in the Hindu religion, it must be developed further to be compatible with Hindu notions such as polytheism. In theory, *bhakti* can be consolidated; *dharma*, *artha* and *kama* can be merged. The difficulty is in applying this formula to the many manifest practices which do not necessarily strictly follow the ideals of Hinduism. Take the idea of polytheism: the Hindu scriptures maintain that there is One Ultimate Reality although it can be discerned in various forms. This

⁹ Dumont, op. cit., p211.

¹⁰ A.C., op. cit., p 170-1.

¹¹ Ibid., p 171.

¹² Ibid.

does not contend that the workshop in various sects of these various forms, should be anathema to each other. The view of polytheism in light of the dictate of *dharma-artha-kama* and *bhakti-mukti* and 'personality' should logically follow the idea that a 'Personal God' does not constitute mere idol worship. The duty of worship also expects the worshipper actively to pursue in the world work which ameliorates the situation of man. This is not only in emulation of the Personal God but furthermore, that the Will of God maintains this end. Again, Christianity and the personality of Christ have helped in bringing Hinduism to create "synthesis between the traditional world view and the humanism of the contemporary India."¹³ In brief, worship is, then, 'materializing the Good of God's volition', requiring personality, individuality and initiative, which Christianity helps to bring to Hinduism. Vivekananda had conflicting ideas about the idea of manifesting God's Will on Earth as is evident in his attitude to Islam.

Service as worship also reconciles a fundamental difference between the Eastern and Western viewpoints and their respective conceptions of man; thus inevitably tackling the fundamental problem of the irreconcilability of Hinduism and Christianity. The theology and philosophy of Christianity should in theory not be able to inspire the Hindu who is taught not to respond to such a notion as sin; further, not to be inspired by loving service to humanity. The Hindu is supposedly single-minded in his dedication to his *dharma* and he rejects sin as fallacy and as a misconception of the relationship between Good and Evil.

Destroying the distinction between secularism and spirituality is, in effect, reinterpreting *Vedanta* in the light of modernity and Christianity -

¹³ Ibid., p172.

hence slightly changing the *Vedantic* conception of man to reconcile with the Platonic - Christian - Western and modern conception of man as a separate ontological entity whose divine duty is not to conform to the dictates of his innate position. Furthermore, his innate position is not determined by cosmic volition. As a separate ontological entity, he is granted the free will to choose his path to Evil or Good. Religion hopes to inspire his path to Good. Because he is a separate entity, he may act independently by serving mankind and still aspire to spirituality. To illustrate this point, the case of caste is a very good example. Many in India believe that one's ultimate salvation lies in conforming and obeying one's caste regulation; disobedience means, in effect, damnation. With the new conceptions of man, he could disobey and serve mankind instead, without relinquishing the chance of salvation. In cynical terms, this is a recipe for individual freedoms at the expense of the social order.

Christianity and the *persona* of Christ are assessed from this Neo-*Vedantic* viewpoint and criteria. For example, the idea of 'personality' (volition, individuality, freedom of thought) is posited into the *Vedantic* idea of *jivanmukti* (discrimination, unity (non-duality), universality and monism, and salvation): in brief, a Western conception of man who can attain a *Vedantic* conception of Utopia. Philosophically, there is still a dichotomy; they remain incompatible. However, on a practical plane, the combination of *dharma*, *artha* and *kama* is acutely beneficial and pragmatic in that the path to salvation was through temporal activity. Vivekananda was aware that mysticism and mystical experience were not paths to a world community fellowship, which is why he constantly reiterated that materialism is not always detrimental, and it can actually be beneficial.

Our talking about God and Spirit is good; but it is simply the vogue in our society to talk thus: we have learnt it parrot-like and repeat it. So we have to take ourselves where we are as materialists, and we must take the help of matter and go on slowly until we become real spiritualists, and feel ourselves spirits, understand the spirit, and find this world which we call the infinite is but a gross external form of what the world which is behind.¹⁴

Precisely because *Vedanta* and Christianity are not completely synthesized, Vivekananda did not confront the central question: 'Can *Vedantic* universalism comprehend and accommodate the essential aspects of Christianity?' The historical fact of Christ is an example but an empirical one. It is either accepted or it is not, in the light of the above question. What is greater importance is the difference between Christianity and *Vedanta* in terms of worship and 'enlightenment' in regard to the Western (and Neo-*Vedantic*) concept of man. Congregational worship is common to both. However, in the Hindu religion, the religious community consists of a collection of individuals, all engrossed in their respective positions of spiritual divinity. This corresponds to the idea of individual *karma* and individual enlightenment which is the realization of the *Brahman*. In practical terms, it is the realization of strength. In Christianity, however, recognition of the authority of the Word of God is revealed in Christ. Salvation is allowing others to work His Will within themselves. Incidentally, it seems paradoxical that this appears to be in Christianity a recipe for apathy; and Hinduism, one for action. The problem is that the Western concept of man as a separate entity means that man is not

¹⁴ S.V.C.W., Vol. IV, p 17.

ontologically linked with God. He is created in the Divine Image. The merging of the Western *Atman* and Western *Brahman* is impossible.¹⁵ In other words, the Western concept of man is philosophically irreconcilable with the Hindu idea of enlightenment. However, again it must be reiterated that Vivekananda was concerned with a practicable theory and not a philosophical synthesis.

Vivekananda was not interested in Christianity for itself but rather as a means of helping the liberation of Hinduism. Christianity was charged with the task of addressing the archaic and dogmatic aspects of Hinduism. Christianity as a different tradition demonstrated that there was another approach to issues. A difference of opinion questions the justification for any point of view. By simply introducing Christianity to Hinduism, many issues of which the Hindu was most assured were brought into question; many practices and values previously regarded as axiomatic were re-examined. This may be detrimental in some respects and not in others. Furthermore, this difference of opinion carried weight because it came from another religion and not from a simple social theory. Christianity helped to question the unassailability of Hinduism.

To reiterate, the whole idea of morality as religion, the repugnance of social distinction and prejudice is enhanced anew by Christianity. The rejection of discrimination is an integral aspect of Christianity; moreover, the fatalistic notions of *karma* and rebirth are contrary to the teachings of Christianity, yet these notions justify much exploitation in India. Christianity replaces hierarchy with equality. It also encourages the development of personality, a notion adopted by many Neo-Vedantists as

¹⁵ Even though Vivekananda and Radhakrishnan were not really concerned with philosophical Christianity, it is interesting to note that M.M.Thomas quotes Mark Sunder Rao as describing the 'I-thou-in-Me' of Christianity as similar to the *Atman-Brahman* relationship.

an important aspect for the regeneration of India. The Hindu attitude is exemplified in Vivekananda's letter to Mary Hale which read that Christianity is not regarded as a religion because of its emphasis on personality; and that paradoxically if Hinduism emphasized the same, many problems such as exploitation and life negation would not exist.¹⁶ As a whole, Christianity's greatest contribution is the idea of 'Active Love'. If Vivekananda could have converted this into a Hindu dictum, the Hindu would practise it with committed vigour and energy.

It is religiousness, forming so prominent a part of the Hindu character and called into activity by the combined influence of English education and Christian missions, which has created that spirit of religious enquiry over which I am now rejoicing.¹⁷

VIVEKANANDA'S ANALYSIS OF CHRISTIANITY

In India during the nineteenth century, many associations emerged, attempting to safeguard the Hindu religion from what they regarded as detrimental modern influences. In essence these movements were attempts to stifle any reform: any influences of modern civilization, whether it be the introduction of liberal or of egalitarian concepts. In theory, the associations' main aspiration was to uphold the spirituality of Hinduism, yet in practice, their work was characterized by a defence of orthodoxy and a reinstatement of anachronistic or traditional values. Any modern interpretation was regarded as an attack on spirituality.

¹⁶ See quotation affixed to footnote 99.

Vivekananda, on the other hand, believed that India was too obsessed with spirituality and thus rejected materialism.¹⁸ He enthused about liberty and equality; he constantly stressed that freedom would remain a theory if people had not enough food to strengthen their faculties in order to exercise this freedom. Materialism was the saving grace of India.¹⁹ He was an admirer of Westernism and materialism insofar as they would help India.

Materialism and Western non-spirituality or Western rationality placed Hindu religious practices in an objective light. They demonstrated that society, politics and economics could be separated from religion. *Ergo* many religious practices were essentially social regulations. Vivekananda believed that it was not the religion of India that was faulty, but rather the social structure and infrastructure *vis-à-vis* how the ideology affected and related to the people of that society (for instance, the caste system). To him, materialism incorporated rationality and modernity yet it could also accentuate inequality and thus reinforce discrimination. Inequality inevitably leads to further inequality. Vivekananda looked towards the West and Christianity for inspiration.

To Vivekananda, Christianity embodied the spirit of Western culture and moreover, he was primarily a religious man and therefore related to the language and ideas of religion more closely than to those of politics or economics. Secondly, aspects of what he saw as materialism were ironically

¹⁷ A.C., op. cit. p 88, quoting Day, *An antidote to Brahminism in Four lectures*.

¹⁸ Characteristic of Vivekananda's attitude is a reply given by him to a man from a society for the protection of mother cows. Vivekananda asked him whether his society had done anything for the *lakhs* of people starving in the famine. He replied in the negative and retorted that the cow 'is our mother'. To this Vivekananda replied "who else would give birth to such accompoished children?", *The Life of Swami Vivekananda II*, 'His Eastern and Western disciples', Advaita Ashrama, Calcutta, 1981, p224. Henceforth, L.S.

¹⁹ S.V.C.W., vol. IV, p368.

countered by religious and moral principles, which convinced Vivekananda that Christianity had materialism 'in check'. Thirdly, as a religion its rhetoric appealed to the Indian mind, apparently obsessed with religion and spirituality. Ironically, Vivekananda did not regard Christianity as a religion in its own right and thus, fourthly, his definition of it included Western society, Westernism and other concepts associated with equality, liberty and rationality. Lastly, he saw the influence of Christianity as a means of giving the Hindu religion (a religion commonly regarded as anachronistic and ill-fitted to the demands of a modern society and a modern mind) a modern outlook through rationality, liberty, materialism and equality. Vivekananda had two ultimate aims for Hinduism as a religion: to be accepted in the modern world and to be a dominant world religion: the modernization would lead to both, he asserted. Thus, he wanted no complete amalgamation of the two religions and cultures. A partial amalgamation would purify and redeem discrepancies in both. Vivekananda sought to indigenize many of the teachings of Christianity as filtered through *Advaita Vedanta*; then to apply this *Advaitic* model in the construction of politico-socio-religious ideals for the regeneration of India.

Vivekananda's understanding of Christianity was limited. He laid emphasis on Christ's personality and his moral message and sought to understand Christianity only in its applicability to the Indian situation (this will be discussed in greater detail later in this chapter). The main impact of Christianity revolved around three main sources: Vivekananda's notions of service which he developed after his first visit to the West. He recognized active service and the well-being of all humans as integral aspects of religion. Christianity in India he regarded as self-protectionism

of a minority religion.²⁰ In the West, service derived from liberal notions such as the equality of women, and of all humans, regardless of any distinction, charity, the idea that man is by nature a material being and there is no sin in attempting to ameliorate temporal welfare, and similar notions; his Western acquaintances before, during and after his trips to the West (including antagonistic Christian missionaries in India and antagonistic Christian preachers in the Parliament of Religions). This influence proved diapolemical. On the one hand, he was taken in and treated more than hospitably by many Christians, on his travels abroad. From these people, he encountered genuiness and a willingness to listen, to accommodate and on occasions, to convert to Hinduism. He became less sceptical of Christianity, believing in its tolerance. However, the fact that people had converted away from Christianity only reinforced his belief in the superiority of Hinduism. On the other hand, many acquaintances dismissed Hinduism as pagan and sought to reaffirm Christianity's superiority (this category of people included not only those who he met on his travels, but also missionaries and Christians whom he had previously met in India). It was these people with whom he constantly battled to prove Hinduism's and modernity. The third source of impressions was witnessing how Hinduism seemingly neglected the welfare of its religionists. Indian social practices and especially the famine in Bengal were prime examples. It is obvious that Vivekananda was disgusted by the Indian disregard for human life. Christians were more charitable; Indians ruthless in claiming 'every disaster and all suffering was a product of *karma*'. As a result, Vivekananda was impressed by Christianity's

²⁰ The change in attitude from before and after his visit to the West is very clear. After his visit, he looked upon Christianity more benevolently.

respect for humans, its ideal of man, its practicality and its inclusiveness, in comparison with Hinduism.

Vivekananda's view of Christianity was dichotomous. To him, Christianity is not a philosophical religion. It has no distinct Christian philosophy but rather takes its philosophy from Greek civilization and shares it with Western modern culture. This is very important because Vivekananda did not regard Western Society as having been based on a Christian philosophical foundation. Instead, its social philosophy grew independently *and* Christianity in turn borrowed this social philosophy. Hence, Vivekananda saw Christianity as modern, as seen in its modern value system and progressive, visible in its compatibility with modern society, also, it incorporates materialism, shown in its acceptance of temporal life and admission of it into the religion. To him, Christianity is a product of Greek thought and Greek civilization. For example, the concepts of the Virgin Mary and the Immaculate Conception are generally regarded to be a result of a (Greek) morality based on the notion that the soul should be cultivated at the expense of the body; any corporal enjoyment was God-eclipsing. Similarly, Jesus disagreed with the punishment inflicted on his body and emphasized that his soul would gain commensurately for what his body was losing. Ironically, this is a form of materialism, albeit inverted, and one which Vivekananda admired as an 'organic' definition of materialism. Overt and selfish materialism solely concerned with the temporal world is held in check by the Greco-Christian morality. In Christianity, the body is acknowledged and accommodated (certainly not neglected) but the spirit is cultivated, thus removing the stress on the manifest world. In this sense Vivekananda admired Christianity as a philosophy, hence the diapolemic view.

He was more than willing to welcome in India, any person, institution or religion which had an inclination to help India. Religion needed to be liberalized from the private domain. Vivekananda saw Christianity's role as making the secular model of society dominant. Here, the influence of religion on society insofar as it hinders progress towards modernity is decreased and consequently religion would be liberated from the private domain. In India, social regulation is regularly sanctioned by religion. However his attitude was diapolemical; on the one hand, he saw Christianity to be egalitarian, benevolent, fraternal, libertarian and inclusive; on the other, exclusive, intolerant proselytizing and parochial. Vivekananda wrote about Dr. Barrows: "The Christ-power this man intends to bring to Indians not that of the intolerant, dominant superior, with heart full of contempt for everything but its own self, but that of a brother who craves for his brother's place as a co-worker of the various powers working in India."²¹ Vivekananda saw Christianity as an embodiment of West and an instrument of the West, ignorant of other civilizations and unwelcoming of any difference, whether it be in practice or in belief. Vivekananda wrote to G.G. Narasimhachariar from Chicago, telling him that the Parliament of Religions was organized "with the intention of proving the superiority of the Christian religion."²² In Madras, Vivekananda informed his audience that Christian children are taught to call Hindus 'vile'.²³

However, these criticisms of Christianity are trivial when compared to his criticisms of Islam. Vivekananda had a hierarchy of religions in which he posited *Vedanta* at the top and contrasted all others against each

²¹ S.V.C.W., Vol. V, p 122.

²² Ibid, p 64, 11th January, 1895.

²³ Ibid., Vol. IV, p 345.

other in an attempt to discover their 'ratings'. Islam and Christianity are comparative because they are both relatively new religions; because of this, they seem to be less religions of philosophy and theology (as are the older religions), and more of negative commands enforcing a social philosophy. When Vivekananda criticized Christianity for teaching its children to hate Hindus, it must be looked at in comparison to Vivekananda saying that Muslims must kill Hindus ruthlessly. He regarded Christ and Mohammed both as messengers, yet the former he called perfect²⁴ and the latter he called fanatic.²⁵ Furthermore, he mentioned Christ regularly and Allah rarely (Allah and Christ were both Gods, to him)

In relation to Islam, he saw Christianity as tolerant and inclusive. It does not have the conquering power of Islam, he categorically stated.²⁶ This is double-edged. To Vivekananda, a religion which 'does not shed blood' is much more worthy of the name of religion than one which does. As social religions, he regarded Islam as more dogmatic. Due to the relation Vivekananda identified between Christianity and modernity (Western culture), he seemed to assume that if one were to rationalize with a Christian, the latter would change his irrational views. Islam in contrast, he saw as an emotive religion and one in which rationality played no part. He operated on both with the same tools, as it were; he criticized them from the same angle. He discerned considerable similarity between the two and compared them regularly. When analyzing Vivekananda's relationship with Christianity, it is important always to question how he would have categorized the same characteristic of emotionalism, in Islam.

²⁴ Ibid., Vol. I, p 184.

²⁵ Ibid., Vol. IV, pp 144-53.

²⁶ Ibid, Vol, V, p532.

Hinduism's inability to rectify aspects of Indian society centred around two factors: it seemed to sanction negative aspects such as the caste system; and it did not have the temporal authority to sanction a theory such as Practical *Vedanta*. In this context, Vivekananda looked towards Western civilization for inspiration. To him, Christianity was a religion of ethics and with a temporal order founded on morality and an acknowledgement of the superiority of God. Furthermore, in Christianity, there was no dichotomy between worldly action and service to God. On the contrary, he found the same argument which he put forward for Practical *Vedanta*: that service to man is a necessary prerequisite for service to God. That is not to say that Vivekananda did not find his source for this idea in Christianity. Practical *Vedanta* was the theory through which one could serve man and Hinduism, the religion for devotion to God. They were interdependent. Hinduism was a prerequisite for Practical *Vedanta*; they were not opposing factions and hence there would be no split in loyalty for the one who practised both. Vivekananda saw that Indian Christians still maintained a certain amount of devotion towards Hinduism, regarded by him as the highest and most noble aspect of Christianity. He witnessed a separation between Christianity as a religion and Western culture, yet he failed to discern or understand the separation because there is no corresponding separation between Hinduism and Indian culture. Christianity is institutionalized and exists simultaneously with a secular state and society. The Hindu could indeed make this differentiation but in reality the division has been so obscured and distorted through mutual absorption that it is not easy to discern. Ironically, Vivekananda's definition of Hinduism was somewhat secular. He vehemently denied that *varnasramadharm*a (the indivisible duty of every person to obey his *varna*

duty) had a religious justification. What he witnessed with Indian Christians was a simultaneous loyalty to Christianity as a religion and India as a nation and culture.

Vivekananda's admiration was not as superficial as it may initially seem. He analyzed the Christian notion of worldly service and admired notions of devotion, diligence, selfless and unselfish action integral to it. These characteristics comprised individuality and initiative: notions in sharp contradiction to the ideas of caste. Christianity encourages these traits as essential aspects of devotion to God. Where in Christianity people are encouraged to seek different methods of worshipping God through ethical action (it will later be argued that in actual fact Christianity advocates this only superficially), the caste system prescribed modes of action and labels them 'spiritual'. *Dharma*, *karma* and *artha* are separate in 'Living Hinduism' but indistinguishable in Christianity (and Practical *Vedanta*). They are combined to produce the idea of a duty to selfless active service to mankind in pursuit of the ultimate happiness - God. In practical terms, Practical *Vedanta* and Christianity are seen to be liberal ideologies, centred around a respect for man.

Modern Western culture acknowledges that the primary concern of religion is man. God may still be God but without man, there is no religion, hence the commitment of contemporary Christianity to the welfare of man. The *persona* of Jesus Christ is the embodiment of forgiveness, respect, toleration and sacrifice for the benefit of man. Schleiermacher, who was greatly influenced by Goethe and German Romantic thought, noted that religion is not only a theological notion. It is, he asserted, the activity of the soul being dissolved in the infinite, and true religion gave a taste of the infinite to Man - thus, religion is primarily concerned with man whether it

be his welfare or giving him a taste of the Infinite, or both. In comparison with Hinduism, it is easy to see how Vivekananda came to the conclusion that Christianity is a materialistic religion: material in the sense that it is concerned with temporal existence as well as spiritual. In its crudest form, his interpretation of materialism is symbolized in his plea for 'bread' and the belief that God is of no good unless he supplies bread: "Bread! Bread! I do not believe in a God who cannot give me bread here."²⁷ On this front, it constituted a challenge to religion that promised salvation in Heaven at the expense of the material self of the most devout follower; taking into account that man lives a material existence and his emotions and happiness are governed by material sensations. Vivekananda was averse to this 'teleological' interpretation of religions, holding that he could not advocate suffering in the name of religion. This is very important because, essentially, Vivekananda was questioning the nature of religion. Furthermore, according to the theory of reincarnation, no one reaches Heaven after one death. How can salvation be so far away and how can it justify so much suffering in the meantime? However, this is materialism in its crudest form and nowhere else does Vivekananda challenge religion in this crude manner. He did believe, though, that true religion accepts and incorporates the fact of material reality, making it part of the religion (many interpretations of Hinduism have not). Religion becomes not only a spiritual philosophy caring for the soul of men, but a social philosophy caring for the welfare of man. This is Vivekananda's greatest contribution to *Vedanta* in terms of the synthesis with Christianity.

It is an important fact that, in India, a social philosophy is more acceptable when termed in religious rhetoric. Hence, 'The Sermon on the

²⁷ Ibid., Vol. IV, p 368

Mount' has been adopted as a social dictum by many Hindu reformers. Furthermore, religion is the only medium to propagate full and total equality of man. Universal brotherhood is based on the ontological fraternity of man, as opposed social theories resting on a relationship between men which is in turn founded on social interaction. Thus religious notions of fraternity and equality are infinitely more egalitarian than any social philosophy. Moreover, even the most egalitarian social philosophies such as Communism have to accept subjectivism. Spiritualism does not: there is no spiritual subjectivity. Under the notion of spiritual fraternity, all are equal without distinction. Practical *Vedanta* is a combination of the religious philosophy of *Vedanta* and the social philosophy of Christianity; it is ideal precisely because it is an institutionalized religion and can thus be separated from society. Quintessential ideas such as fraternity and equality can be separated from such evils as gross materialism. Hinduism, on the other hand, cannot be fully divorced from Indian society and Indian social practices and may become soiled by the evil social customs such as inequality. In Vivekananda's Practical *Vedanta*, two main factions are discernible: the development of personality, fraternity and equality on the religious level and the equality of social beings, nations and religions (Universal Tolerance) on the material plane. The ideal society is one in which the situation is favourable to man's reaching his full spiritual potential and in which liberty and equality are guaranteed, thus ensuring man's temporal happiness and material growth.

Vivekananda admired the ability of Christianity to differentiate between the evils of materialism such as greed and covetousness and the benefits such as courage, amelioration of the temporal situation, ambition and such aims. Again, Vivekananda confused all of these aspects as being

products of 'materialism'. In reality, the materialism of 'greed' and that of 'courage' are two very different things. The first is selfishness, and the second, selflessness. Materialism was for Vivekananda synonymous with the compatibility of religion and politics; a concept in which he firmly believed. Christianity preaches that knowledge comes through love: religion is the quest for love and politics is the quest for knowledge. Unfortunately, Vivekananda had a tendency to look generally at a situation without fully analyzing it.

The admiration Vivekananda had for Christianity was not always straightforward. There was always an underlying benevolence which is typified perfectly in his view of monotheism: he abhorred it in Islam and looked upon it favourably in Christianity: "[B]ut think how many different explanations they have of him [Christ]. Each Church sees him in a different light, from different standpoints."²⁸

The similarity of this definition to polytheism is evident. Whereas in terms of Islam, he immediately dismissed it for its intolerance: "They say that they will kill any man who does not believe as they believe, just as the Mohammedans do."²⁹ Vivekananda witnessed grave abuses of power within Indian society and thus acknowledged that the first problem in life was power. It was ironic that he did not criticize Christianity in this respect despite the obvious abuses of power throughout history by Christian ecclesiastico - political institutions. He criticized Islam and the *Brahmins* for their abuses. This is seemingly hypocritical until one realizes that it is only Christianity which Vivekananda recognized as fully secular and institutionalized. He considered Hinduism and Islam as intricately

²⁸ Ibid., p52.

²⁹ Ibid.

linked with institutions of power, power hierarchy and the power struggle within Indian society. It is ironic that even though he confused Christianity and Western culture, he had no difficulty in disassociating Christianity from power and looked, rather, at the essence of the religion.

The materialism of Christianity³⁰ is on a fundamental level the accommodation and acceptance of the material body and its needs. In a developed form, it is a liberal concept, accepting that existence is material and the body and its wishes and desires should be nurtured, not only accommodated. Vivekananda saw that this materialism is instrumental in nurturing political, economic and social advantages for a nation. Economically, it nurtures and encourages the pursuit of wealth and a corresponding general acceptance of this pursuit, in opposition to the traditional repulsion of this non-spiritual activity. This pursuit is instrumental in ameliorating the standard of living for all people and thus promoting happiness in the nation. Socially, it nurtures a mutual respect of differing wishes and desires of individuals and leads to a communal, fraternal feeling. Politically, an economically strong and socially united country was conducive to a strong, independent, sufficient nation.

We talk foolishly against material civilisation. The grapes are sour. Even taking all that foolishness for granted, in all India there are, say, a hundred thousand really spiritual men and women. Now, for the spiritualisation of these, must three hundred millions be sunk in savagery and salvation? Why should any starve? How was it possible for the Hindus to have been conquered by Mohammedans? It was due to the Hindus' ignorance of material civilisation. Even the Mohammedans taught them to wear tailor-made

³⁰ 'Materialism' is a word that Vivekananda used to describe, on the one hand, the life-affirming attitude of Christianity, and on the other, the egocentric attitude encouraged by capitalism, for example.

clothes. Would the Hindus had learnt from the Mohammedans how to eat in a cleanly way without mixing their food with the dust of the streets! Material civilisation, nay, even luxury, is necessary to create work for the poor... India is to be raised, the poor are to be fed, education is to be spread, and the evil of priestcraft is to be removed. No priestcraft, no social tyranny! More bread, more opportunity for everybody! Our young fools organise meetings to get more power from the English. They only laugh. None deserves liberty who is not ready to give liberty. Support the English give over to you all the power. Why the powers that be then, will hold the people down, and let them not have it. Slaves want power to make slaves.³¹

Material civilization and liberalism are very closely linked: organisational ability, controlling political power, the ability to govern and most of all, the ability to succeed in the temporal world. Furthermore, this interpretation of materialism does not encourage moral degeneration, as is commonly supposed. It creates jobs and equality; psychologically, it creates a relationship of interdependence between the rich and the poor, and decrease the size of the gap between the pure and the impure.³² Hence the lower strata cannot be regarded as exploitable: materialism in this sense encourages moral treatment of others. Implicit in Vivekananda's thought is the idea that the morally complete man proves himself through social commitment. This is a highly religious sentiment and a subset of the concept of peaceful evolution:³³ one which plays an important part in his thought.

³¹ *S.V.C.W.*, Vol. V, p368

³² Cf. Dumont's classifications *op. cit.*

³³ Vivekananda was influenced by Herbert Spencer but one area in which they radically diverged is in their respective ideas of evolution: peaceful (the former); a product of survival of the fittest (the latter)

Although the Indian may be worldly and a great materialist, the Hindu religion traditionally emphasizes contemplation at the expense of and without recourse to the external world. The perfect Hindu, the *sannyasin*, is ignorant of pragmatics, power and charity. Inevitably, the lack of moral rationality can create only immorality. Hence, a *sannyasin* can easily be morally and rationally self-deceived. On the other hand, in Vivekananda's opinion, Christianity emphasizes morality, moral excellence and worldly service. In other words, the complete Christian is the moral rationalist and the complete Christian nation is one based on charity, moral politics and moral social interaction. To Vivekananda, this is why many Christians were teachers, missionaries, doctors and in such occupations and also why Christian nations were powerful. These were the very characteristics that Vivekananda wanted Indians to emulate; it led to the establishment of the Ramakrishna Mission. In contrast, the Indian state approved of the caste system before it was officially outlawed by the central government. In Christianity, there is a close relationship between power and ideology and between ideology and the welfare of the citizens. The state is safeguarded against such moral self-deception in theory, hence Vivekananda's desire to introduce moral rationality and materialism into Practical *Vedanta*. However, such characteristics were also inherent in Hinduism. In Hindu and Christian religions there have been debates whether worldly service is a religious duty. In the Hindu tradition many contended that once an individual reaches *moksha*, it is his duty to help others in the process. This is visible in Buddha's situation where as a result of his *karuna*, or compassion, he returned to help others reach salvation. Conversely, the Christian tradition has many hermits who have not attempted any amelioration of the world. There have also been Jesuits who

believed strongly in the concept of Original Sin; they held that man is essentially evil and therefore should be manipulated to be good. It could well be that Vivekananda investigated the Hindu tradition and discovered such characteristics but mistook them for Christian characteristics because he saw more Christian doctors, missionaries and teachers in India.

The thrust for equality in India is embodied in the *Bhakti* movement culminating in the eleventh century. Even now, Buddhism is more closely related with this movement than with Hinduism. To incorporate materialism as a theory into Hinduism as a religion is problematic because the religion might be regarded less as a religion promising salvation than as a social philosophy; individuals might look elsewhere for such a promise of salvation.

The *Bhakti* movement also had fundamental flaws. Firstly, there was no control over the extent to which it could be worshipped and preached. Equality substituted for God. Fanaticism was rife and unchecked. Christianity, materialism and Western Capitalism acted as limits to this fanaticism. By introducing the Christian value-system and aspects of Christianity without recognizing Jesus Christ as the only manifestation of God actually deprives fanaticism of its impetus. One could argue that because man is not subordinate to a God, his decision cannot be contradicted; thus, his values are not contradicted and they, as well as he, become fanatic. On the contrary, the risk of fanaticism is decreased dramatically because the values do not have a divine sanction. For Vivekananda, Christianity is a moral religion. To re-phrase this: the highest interpretation of Christianity is in its moral message. In itself and without Christ, the values cannot degenerate into fanaticism. "The fanatical crew in Hinduism, or Mohammedanism, or Christianity have always been almost

exclusively recruited from the worshippers on the lower plane of Bhakti.”³⁴

Another reason why Vivekananda did not regard Christianity as fanatic is because he did not see it as far removed from Hinduism. He asserted that of the principle religions of the world, Hinduism, Buddhism and some forms of Christianity freely use images.³⁵ Mohammedanism and Protestantism deny idolatry vociferously when in reality they practise another form of symbolism. Furthermore, the concept of the Child God and Mother are common to Hinduism and Christianity, both preaching the idea of perfect motherhood and the Real love of God.³⁶ Other religions are based on respect for and the fear of God. Christianity and Hinduism base themselves on the truest, most selfless emotion: Love.

In a paradoxical manner, materialism prevents religious fanaticism by giving people another ‘God’ to worship; and furthermore a God who is renewed. Hence, values in relation to this are not timeless, infallible and universal. One cannot become fanatic in believing them. Moreover, the materialist is constantly in pursuit of selfish goals and self-satisfaction, whereas the religious fanatic has a strong conviction for selflessness and, ironically, it is this selflessness that may form the basis of self-deception and fanaticism.

Religion acts as a social theory to provide social interaction with morality, a moral standard, and at best a strong moral conscience. Thomas stated that it was Ram Mohan Roy who recognized Christianity in Europe as the originator of the idea of man as a moral entity, “on the basis that ‘he possesses the soul, which is a spark of the divine light of the universal

³⁴ S.V.C.W., Vol. III, p32

³⁵ Ibid., p 96.

³⁶ Ibid. p61.

order.’”³⁷ However, Thomas goes on to say that although it was an elevating idea helping to destroy patriarchy and communalism of the medieval social order, it “implies that ‘man cannot be moral’ without subordination to a superhuman power, and a supernaturally established order.”³⁸ In monotheistic religions, because man is a subordinated being, his duty on earth is to effect God’s will which is naturally moral. In the Hindu tradition, the relationship of man’s soul and God is more liberal. The *Atman* is actually part of the *Brahman*. Man was not created in God’s image. Thence, man’s duty is individual and different from *Atman* to *Atman*. Each *dharma* is separate. Furthermore, the *Brahman* does not differentiate between moral and amoral; nor does the *Brahman* have volition. This distinction is temporal and left to man, not to Providence. There is, therefore, much scope for the Hindu to worship and emulate Jesus Christ as the archetypal man. Although this is theoretically precise, history has shown that rationality is not necessarily moral.

If Practical *Vedanta* were to be less of a social theory and more of a religion, like Hinduism, the dichotomy between reason and belief would remain. Isherwood explains that if an intellectual joins a religious group “it will be suggested to the convert, with a greater or lesser degree of politeness, that he has “sold out”, betrayed the cause of Reason, retreated in cowardice from “the realities of Life”, and so forth”³⁹ The Christian value-system, especially in the Indian context, destroys the dilemma by the admission that “what is revealed truth to a Christ is merely hypothetical truth to the vast majority of its followers; but this need not

³⁷ *S.I.*, op. cit., p179.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ Isherwood, *Vedanta for the Western World*, Vedanta press, Hollywood, 1963, p36.

prevent the followers from trusting in Christ's personal integrity and in the authenticity of his revelation,"⁴⁰

The impetus of the Christian value-system is directed towards devotion more so than the Hindu. Swami Prabhavananda asks "How can a spiritual aspirant who is hungering for the truth be satisfied with theology, with philosophy, with doctrines and creeds?"⁴¹ The installation of the Christian value-system thus gives definite answers and visible changes. The value-system rejects hierarchy and exploitation no matter what justification supports it. "Christ was not teaching any creed. He was not teaching any doctrine, but He was teaching how to know and realize God. The disciples who were sitting at His feet knew that the first thing in spiritual life is to know God while living in this life."⁴²

Christianity depends less on ritual than does Hinduism and Vivekananda admired it for this. On the one hand, ritual affects the mind and helps to create a sense of unity between worshippers. On the other, ritual influences prejudices and pride. It can therefore encourage exclusivity or encourage inclusiveness. Vivekananda, having witnessed grave abuses of religion and ritual, concluded that the risk of prejudice and exclusivity resulting from ritual was too great and moreover such prejudice inevitably has an effect on the whole nation. If rituals did increase prejudice and spirituality were measured in relation to one's philanthropy, less ritual means more spirituality.

The impetus and zeal of the Christian notion of proselytization is perfect for awakening the apathetic Hindu, Vivekananda contended. Quintessentially, proselytization consists of the wish to do good, to help

⁴⁰ Ibid., p 37.

⁴¹ Ibid., p 317.

⁴² A.C., op. cit., p 317.

others to salvation and the enormous desire, motivation and conviction with which this is carried out. The person not only has a firm, albeit too strong, conviction in the belief of the religion, but an active ability to help others; and in doing so, helping oneself. Furthermore, this zeal is not only suited to the emotionally strong, or the somatonic (see below). There is a variety of ways in which it can be manifest; all types of people can engage in them in the name of religion. It requires only a firmness of conviction. Huxley attempts to explain the notion of active *karma* alluding to Dr. Sheldon's classifications of humans, and it exactly explains the situation:

No form of hormone treatment or either therapy can change the fundamental pattern of temperament, which is a datum to be accepted and made the best of. In a word, the psycho-physical pattern is one of the expressions of karma. There are good karmas and bad karmas: but it is within the choice of the individual to make bad use of the best karma and good use of the worst. There is a measure of free-will in the system of predestination.⁴³

If we use Huxley's definition, it is not the *karma* that can be changed, but the mentality of the person to accommodate it. This is where the impetus of Hinduism is directed. The Christian proselytizing zeal accommodates all types; it does not aim to change them. It is a form of 'active love' which combines 'belief, precept and praxis'. Ironically, Christian theory implies that the contemplative is the most likely to reach salvation. What Vivekananda admired was this notion of 'active love'; yet in reality he recognized that it encouraged the courting of martyrdom and the readiness to persecute. Although Hinduism preached action (*karma*)

⁴³ Isherwood, op. cit., p95.

and the duty to act (*dharma*); and even though the *Bhagavad Gita* can be seen as a recipe for zeal, in practice Hinduism posits spirituality above zealous 'active love' in importance. Rituals to effect this spirituality far outweigh this 'active love'. Endomorphy associated with the slothful viscerotonic is endemic. Hinduism appeals to the somatotonic only in the stoicism of the ascetic.

Dr. Sheldon made it clear that the viscerotonic is preoccupied with sacrament and ritual; the cerebrotonic with devotion and meditation. It is the somatotonic who is prone to sudden conversion and discovers religion with a tremendous shock at the revelation. He then goes on to practise and preach it vociferously.⁴⁴ The Hindu religion does not accommodate in conversion the phenomenon of sudden realization. It is the somatotonic who works tirelessly for the religion. For Hinduism to be a driving force in the world, it must accommodate, if not produce, somatotonics. The institution of Practical *Vedanta*, embodied in the Ramakrishna Mission, not only seeks out the somatotonics but also attempts to train them. Each disciple should go out on the streets and preach with as much devotion and energy as if the future of India rests on his shoulders alone.

"Aggression... In a religious sense only... It is a curious thing", continued the Swami, "that the inner life is often most profoundly developed where the outer conditions are most cramping and limiting."⁴⁵ Vivekananda insisted that half of the United States can be conquered within ten years, given a number of strong and genuine men,⁴⁶ He wrote to Alasinga from the United States (1894):

⁴⁴ Ibid., p 98.

⁴⁵ *S.V.C.W.*, Vol. V, pp 225-7.

⁴⁶ Ibid., p 117

[T]he work should be in the line of preaching and serving,...Everything will come to you if you put your shoulders to the wheel...

Now, go to work!...Start with a few lay missionaries; gradually others will come who will devote their whole lives to the work... My children must be ready to jump into fire, if needed to accomplish their work. Now work, work, work...Have patience, perseverance and purity.⁴⁷

The whole nature of the work is embodied in the spiritual and devotional struggle. The ultimate goal is to serve and ameliorate the *karma* of others and one's own. It is important that this does not include vicarious atonement. Life and society are a combination and interdependence of *karmas*. Helping others is helping oneself and *vice versa*. In practical terms, to act for the amelioration of society is eventually to ameliorate the society for oneself. Salvation is collective and not individual. In Vivekananda's own words: "Karma means either service to humanity or preaching...But to serve everybody has the right, and not only so, but every one is under obligation to serve others, as long as he is serving others,"⁴⁸

One may debate whether Vivekananda adopted Christian ideas of service, active love, mutual and collective amelioration and salvation. The first two aspects are definitely from the religion proper; the last two incorporate hints of liberal theory. Huxley states that all types of men make up religion but initially:

⁴⁷ Ibid., pp 60-1.

⁴⁸ Ibid., p 301.

The religions of India are predominantly viscerotonic and cerebrotonic religions of ritual and mysticism, having little proselytizing zeal and intolerance, and setting a higher value on the contemplative life than on the active.⁴⁹

Vivekananda regarded Islam as a predominantly life-asserting, somatotonic religion and was cautious of such religions, yet he admired the somatotonic aspects of Christianity. This is because he regarded Islam as a system of orders without at its foundation the distinctive philosophy that Christianity had, albeit the latter's did not belong exclusively to Christianity. Practical *Vedanta* is primarily a philosophy which combined the cerebrotonic and viscerotonic elements of the ritualistic and mystic religion with the somatotonic zeal of proselytization and collective salvation. At times, action is regarded more highly than contemplation, yet action cannot be regarded as better than contemplation because without the latter, the goals of the former cannot be ascertained. There is, however, a great emphasis on action (social service, the fight for equality and fraternity, and preaching) precisely because Hinduism has witnessed the apathy of contemplation.

The emphasis on action is not so much a revolt against the religion itself nor against ritual, but rather against the futile aspects of both and the predominant stress that is put on them by Hindus. In themselves they can actually encourage fraternity, equality and devotion, but these stem from the extent and manner in which they are utilized. This is even more the case if they are being used to destroy equality and other uniting features admired by Vivekananda. Somatotonic action is kept in check by asserting the supremacy of spirituality. This assertion is common to

⁴⁹ Isherwood, op. cit., p99.

Hinduism and Christianity alike. Huxley notes that “now there is little organized temporal power which acknowledges even theoretically the supremacy of any kind of spiritual authority.”⁵⁰ Vivekananda incorporated the Hindu notion of spirituality which he saw as far superior to any other because he wanted the zeal of Christian service without the fanaticism of Islamic proselytization. The irony is that Vivekananda still believed despite this, that the highest form of realization is through contemplation, most appropriate for the Hindu religion.

Huxley also states that “religion is a system of relatives within an absolute frame of reference.”⁵¹ Hence, a religion proclaiming that man can only gain knowledge of God through absolutist means is incompatible with worldly living. Religion must be compatible with all walks of life. At the same time, a religion that concentrates only on the relative⁵² does not achieve the desired effect that subordination of a superhuman power does. A religion that concentrates on both is a balanced one: the relative religious institution cannot be held to be infallible; and yet the relative is the only means by which mortal man can religiously act in the temporal world. Additionally, these relative acts create a state of mind congenial to the realization of the Absolute. ‘Holy Indifference’ to the Christians is synonymous with the concept of ‘*shanti*’ (peace) for the Hindus; this state of mind is sympathetic to the realization of the Absolute, and includes

mortification of memory for the past and anxiety about the future; renunciation of petitionary prayer in favour of simple abandonment to the will of God; purification not only of the will, but also the imagination of intellect so that

⁵⁰ Ibid., p 101.

⁵¹ Ibid., p102.

⁵² For example Islam, in Vivekananda’s opinion

the consciousness of the worshipper may partake in some measure of the intense undifferentiated timelessness of that which he desires to be united with.⁵³

Religion cannot be judged solely by its fruits. Essentially, religion aims at producing a certain state of mind in its followers. To Vivekananda, a combination of Hinduism and Christianity is most suitable, combining the viscerotonia and cerebrotonia of Hinduism and the somatonia of Christianity.

In accepting the true realities of life, man *and* religion fulfil themselves. By recognizing that there are limitations to manifestation and that each person should live by relatives; yet at the same time believing in an Absolute reality so that man is in a state of constant aspiration and ambition; each man is trying through his worldly medium to aspire to a greater reality; each person, by 'moralizing' himself contributes to a moral existence. It is by denying the last that fanaticism creeps in.

Man, proud man, drest in a little brief authority -
Most ignorant of what which he's most assured,
His glassy essence - like an angry ape,
Plays such fantastic tricks before high heaven
As make angels weep.⁵⁴

By denying one side of reality, man lives in conformity or by denying the other, he is uninspired and apathetic - both are stagnant. Conformity, although at times beneficial, forces some unwillingly to burn their daughter-in-law on the pyre, or to marry off their daughter at the age of five. Stagnancy and conformity are two major hurdles identified by

⁵³ Isherwood, op. cit., p 105.

Vivekananda, to the modernization of Hinduism. Furthermore, to reiterate constantly a future state of grace forces one into complacency and as Huxley puts it "is the defeat of humanity."⁵⁵ Huxley goes on to describe the advantage of a synthesis of viscerotonia, somatotonia and cerebrotonia:

[I]f we ignore the counsels of egoism and alter-egoism, and resolutely march towards the divine East, we shall create for ourselves the possibility of receiving the grace of enlightenment and, at the same time, we shall find that existence in our physical, western home is a great deal more satisfactory than when we devoted all our attention primarily to the improvement of our human lot. In a word, things in the west will go better because, as we go towards the east, we are further from them - less attached to them, less passionately concerned about them, therefore less liable start liquidating people on account of them.⁵⁶

The reverse is also true. The Indian passionately attached to spirituality does not lift his head to see if he is killing others in order to advance his spirituality. Indifference rather than 'holy indifference' results. To take the instance of child marriage in India. The practice is utterly absurd to many, and even illegal. Vivekananda thought that the Christian state would never permit this to happen because of its humanitarian thrust and also because the Western secular (Christian) state, with its organizational ability, would be able to monitor these grave abuses of legality. The institutions in the organized state would substitute these practices with ones beneficial to the collective whole; as well as with

⁵⁴ Ibid., op. cit., pp 273-4, quoting Shakespeare.

⁵⁵ Ibid., p 275.

⁵⁶ Ibid. p276.

easily attainable benefits. Child marriage could never exist in the modern state.⁵⁷

Vivekananda asserted that the mindless spiritualism of Indians has led to a state of temporal ignorance and complete disregard for human life and well-being: Religion is meaningless if people are starving; renunciation is a vacuous concept if an individual does not have pleasures to renounce. 'True *viragya*' (dispassion) is only possible and true religion can only be known if people have food and they are fit to actively practise religion in life.⁵⁸ Vivekananda addressed the problem from the Indian viewpoint in light of the over-emphasis on spirituality; Huxley writes for a Western audience and their *penchant* for worldly pleasures. It is plain to see that they are preaching the same synthesis.

"The Europeans too have a national idea of their own...therefore they are strong...a nation is the sum total of so many individual men; will a nation live if it has utterly lost all its strength and activity?"⁵⁹ The strength of a nation is not the strength of its individuals but the unity of these strengths. Forty million Englishmen have conquered three hundred thousand million Indians.⁶⁰ Unity and organisation (and organization in order to unify) was one of the most crucial aspects which Western Culture could give to India, in Vivekananda's opinion.⁶¹ The beauty of organization is in that it structures society to make the use of ability in all fields and structures disabilities so they are not liabilities, and they do not impede success. Hence, an organized government has the power to overcome a

⁵⁷ Vivekananda's conception of the modern state and secularism revolved around politico-social institutions being based on a religious morality.

⁵⁸ *S.V.C.W.*, Vol. V, p 353.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p 444.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, Vol. III, p 299.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

disparate mass eight-and-a-half times the size of its population. Vivekananda did not praise out of hand the ability of organizations to pursue the right course of action. Tyranny of the great, the spiritual, the intellectual, the wise or in any form is heinous, to him. The use of tyranny by the wise is much more powerful than tyranny by the ignorant.⁶² He did not blindly admire organizational ability but its advantage was that, providing its intention was not heinous, it would not sacrifice "millions and millions of people to produce one spiritual giant."⁶³ Any organization, whether evil or good, requires checks and balances for its own survival. The beauty of organization is in its egalitarianism - accessibility of information and knowledge and so on. To Vivekananda, material success is wholly different from the righteousness of the aspiration. It is the job of religion and morality to provide the guidance; but then again, they are useless without the guidance being effected - hence the need for material organization. To digress: it is important to note that Vivekananda did not admire the organizational ability of Islam as much as that of Christianity. The former he regarded as already possessing the militant strength to conquer three hundred thousand million Indians, whereas with Christianity, a non-militant mass can achieve infinite power and militancy because of the ability to organize. He saw Islam as a more physically strong religion than Christianity.

For the success of the contemporary pluralist state, authority must be institutionalized. It is especially necessary for a state whose role it is to interpret and implement aspects of religion. A state, whether secular or theocratic, can be regulated through organization and institutionalization.

⁶² Isherwood, *op. cit.*, p229.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, p230.

Authority had to be somewhere and as, to quote from the Old Testament, there was no longer "Open Vision" the power of contemporary men to have the experience of God, the accounts of vision in the past had taken the place of vision in the present.⁶⁴

Belief in the axiom of the Bible declined and the Christian Theocracy was confronted with the choice either to reinforce belief by an attempt to 'sanction the spiritual life and prove the reality of God and Heaven by the records made two thousand years ago of a small series of none-too-well-witnesses events"⁶⁵ or it could subtract such moral analogies such as the Virgin Birth from religious dogma and translate them into social duties. Incidentally, G. Heard finds the derivation of the humanist tradition in Christianity in the notion of self-survival. The Churches faced the same dilemma as did Hinduism.

The Churches would not, however, have the courage, as the great Heresiarch Marcion pleaded, to throw over the "bronze age religion of the backward Semites" and cling only to the New Testament. This led to the first falling away of followers.⁶⁶

Heard goes as far to say that "heaven would become unnecessary to people who had such a good time on earth."⁶⁷ What Vivekananda advocated was a mixture of Humanism and Spirituality, because materialism is unworkable as a philosophy of life without an underlying metaphysic.⁶⁸

⁶⁴ Ibid., pp423-4.

⁶⁵ Ibid., p 424

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Ibid., pp 424-5.

⁶⁸ Ibid., p 425.

Practical *Vedanta* is orchestrated to provide a system of humanism correlating to a tenable metaphysic. Living Hinduism must transform into a religion of experience from one of authority. Organization and institutionalism which help to achieve this inclusiveness. At the same time, a measure of organization would help to maintain a degree of authority. As a religion, Hinduism is too dissipated and lacking an organizational and institutional structure. It is very interesting to note that Vivekananda asserted, in the last nineteenth century, the need for a synthesis of Hindu metaphysic and spirituality with Christian pragmatism not only for the benefit of Hinduism but also for that of Christianity. This synthesis is still being promoted:

It is here that the Christian Churches will have to learn from India...Now in order to get back on the rails and to have true faith, praxis, life and message they should not shrink from accepting the assertion of the wide and subtle metaphysic and practical psycho physiological technique which Vedanta provides.⁶⁹

Institutionalism and organization contribute greatly to reinforcing patriotism. They improve the status of the nation and thus influence pride in it, with each institution playing a small part. Furthermore, they can make use of institutions (such as caste) to disseminate sentiments of patriotism. Vivekananda openly acknowledged the strength of Christian patriotism and bewailed the lack of it in India.⁷⁰

Patriotism is the founding stone of practical religion. It binds people together without reference to spirituality - is not tangible and is readily

⁶⁹ Ibid., p 426.

⁷⁰ S.V.C.W., Vol. V, p 352.

being challenged. Patriotism is the manifestation of fraternal love and thus encourages service to one's nation. Practical *Vedanta* could not be effected without patriotism. Theoretically, there is a negative side to fraternity: it hinges on the notion that the link between people is emotion and that there is thus a separation between them. This emotion may even be pernicious. The feeling of brotherhood comes from transforming negative emotions into positive ones. However, there is always a distinction between the two people; Christianity constitutes the familial umbrella. Metaphysically, this contradicts the *Advaitic* assertion that all people are really one ontological entity, creating a much stronger link. Realization of it is a more intense emotion than that provided by the umbrella of Christianity. However, on the positive side of universal brotherhood, the separation is beneficial since material reality deems such separation inevitable and unbridgeable. There is not the dichotomy in universal brotherhood that there is in universal selfhood with reality. Theoretically, there exist in reality and in regard to this two alternatives: selfish-ness and selfless-ness. The role of universal brotherhood is to transform the former into the latter. Furthermore, the psychological effect of doing something good for *someone else* can be experienced for those who care to appreciate it. With selfless-ness, men are morally better and when men are morally better, the social order improves. They mutually reinforce each other. Social service is Vivekananda's call for a better social order. The path of Practical *Vedanta* is a call for social service even if the followers are not conscious that they are creating a better order.

“As soon as you start thinking and acting in the way I have shown you, your life will be nothing but social service.”⁷¹ The benefits of

⁷¹ Isherwood, op. cit., p7.

fraternity and selfishness combine in Vivekananda's statement: "By helping yourself, you are helping mankind. By helping mankind, you are helping yourself. That is the law of spiritual progress."⁷² Through the term 'spiritual progress' Vivekananda was referring to the theory underlying material progress. The quotation, is, in broad terms, a definition of *dharma*, thus emphasizing that each should be in pursuit of helping themselves and others. Spiritual aid and temporal aid are not mutually exclusive. Vivekananda noted in his Christio-Hindu outlook that the building of hospitals are means to the end of serving God.⁷³ Christ's first commandment was to serve and love with the whole soul; this is the perfect way to honour this.

What is interesting is that Vivekananda's admiration for materialism is more than merely superficial. He acknowledged that India needed hospitals and schools and that religion should incorporate a social philosophy (the social philosophy of Hinduism, such as the caste system, he saw as an aberration from the religion). He admired the inegalitarian aspects of materialism such as competition. Paradoxically, competition was seen to be the levelling agent for the very divided Hindu society. Furthermore, the inegalitarianism of caste is seen to be a product of non-competition. Vivekananda went so far as to welcome the inevitable inequalities of competition over and above that of the tyranny of an oligarchy. The highly visible hierarchy of competition is easily changeable, whereas that of tyranny is not.

Vivekananda's criticism of Christian social philosophy was founded on a theoretical and metaphysical basis. He saw the whole ethic of

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Ibid. p 246.

Christian social philosophy to be based on fraternity and love. Theoretically, actions can be effected because of love or because of the fear of non-love; both of these sustain a coherent society. Vivekananda accused Christianity of seeking obedience through fear of the devil. He disagreed with this method of ensuring conformity. There is a logical argument as to why one would dislike this method, such as that it contradicted *Advaitic* teaching as well as humanitarianism; furthermore, people do not obey voluntarily. In the long run there is greater chance of disobedience than of voluntary obedience. Nevertheless, I believe that Vivekananda's dislike of it was purely sentimental, given that it went against the grain of whatever he had been taught in the Hindu tradition.

Vivekananda's relationship with Christianity was primarily one of utility: as a means to the improvement, modernization and liberalization of Hinduism. To him, the utility of morality was negated if it impeded social efficiency. Social efficiency was the formula which was fundamental in the West's modernization. Social efficiency is a product of manliness and a sense of liberty and justice, both contributing to an overall energy - all of which India desperately needed.⁷⁴ All ideas of rationalism and humanism were incorporated in the *persona* of Jesus Christ, not necessarily as saviour, but "as the prototype of the new human values."⁷⁵

In many instances, the Hindu does not discern a difference between doctrinal belief and active faith and thus the importance of doctrine is exaggerated at least fourfold. It is important to note that this does not mean that there is no difference in Hinduism. There is a marked difference between doctrinal belief and active faith, as opposed to the case in

⁷⁴ Ranade, *Indian Social Reform in S.I.*, op. cit., p 17.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p25.

religions such as Islam. Furthermore, the vastness of Hinduism means that there are many concepts which stand independently and in fact contradict others. The advantage is that 'Active Love' can remain a theory in itself, without translation from Western conceptions of man, society and civilization. Even though it may contradict Hindu notions, there may not be a problem. This has great practical benefits because of the indistinguishability of active faith from doctrine: 'Active Love' translates easily into ritual even if it does contradict another fundamental notion in Hinduism.

As a check on the ideal of 'Active Love' as a ritual, rationality must be introduced as a methodological *modus operandi*. It can easily degenerate into fanaticism because of the belief that one is doing good for another. Ideals such as that of the *sannyasin* are ideals of contemplation and mental activity without recourse to the world and at the sacrifice of its material benefits. 'Active Love' as an ideology can be self-deceptive. Simply through its existence rationality can act as a lid on the inevitable power hierarchy that will materialize between those who help and those who are being helped by 'giving' strict guidelines as to what can and what cannot be permitted in the name of 'Active Love'. There is a lucid relationship between power, rationality (or irrationality, as the case may be) and morality. Hence, the *modus operandi* for 'Active Love' as social service to mankind can combat the phenomenon of self-deception in the shape of an ideology by which power, authority and hierarchy can be justified. Through this, power, authority, hierarchy and such factors must be institutionalized and thus justified. Rationality rather than knowledge must be the criterion for this ideology and for the people practising this doctrine.

Vivekananda was not deceived by the relationship between knowledge and virtue. He did not believe that an education and insight into libertarianism and Westernism would immediately transform an amoral person into a born-again Christian, so to speak. His concept of social service did not indiscriminately welcome the idea of Jesus Christ as the prototype of the ideal human; he incorporated this idea into the existing Indian value-system. For example, individuality and competition were to be the antidote to the exploitation within the caste system. However, exaggerated individuality and self-serving competition, which Vivekananda related to the Western value-system, were sharply discouraged.

Take the example of the idea of salvation in Christianity and the idea of *karma* in its fatalistic interpretation. If a person thinks that he is to be saved regardless of his action or, more realistically, regardless of his position in society, he is no less mindful of his actions and their implications. On the contrary: the sense of pessimism, fatalism and mindlessness diminishes and the person becomes more optimistic and caring; regarding himself as part of the rest of humanity, he thus takes pride in himself and in humanity. This gives approximately the same sense of teleological care as does the quintessential notion of *karma*. This humanistic approach has far reaching implications. A duty of care is afforded not only by individuals but by judicial, social, economic, political and quasi-political institutions. The underlying imperative is not a superficial revolution but a truly social and mental revolution so that the change is permanent.

The dichotomy between Hinduism and Christianity in this aspect is not doctrinal but rather in their 'rival schemes of life'.

The Hindu way of life stands for caste and exclusivism; the Christian way for catholicity and inclusiveness. The Hindu way of life culminates in mystic spiritual union with God; the Christian way is unselfish service for man. 'He saved others, himself he cannot save'.⁷⁶

Vivekananda's greatest contribution in this area was his reinterpretation of Jesus Christ and Christianity in the Hindu value-system: Christ as the archetypal man; the love of God and the love of man being of the same importance of sacrifice in terms of both; the God and man relationship interpreted as father and Son; and a strong faith in God, man and oneself; He did not accept the Christian notions of Sin and Guilt, nor could he accept the notion of Original Sin. An interesting idea is that of vicarious atonement. It is predominant in the doctrine, philosophy and even the imagery of Christianity. Vivekananda accepted it only to the extent that the fault of one person has repercussions on the rest of humanity who therefore have to work, each individual in his respective way, to correct what has been put wrong; it is the nature of the notion of *karma*. It must be noted that *karma* and vicarious atonement are completely different and irreconcilable. Vicarious atonement is retrogressive if, in the context of the regeneration of India, one's responsibility is transferred onto others and it is not each and everybody's responsibility to work individually. Furthermore, vicarious atonement is not consistent with the implications of justice in the temporal world and thus inconsistent with Vivekananda's aspirations of creating a workable

⁷⁶ *International Review of Missions* 17, p157, 1928 in *ibid*, p 81.

social philosophy for an unjust Indian social system. He was concerned with instilling a religious notion of love with its complementary implications such as service and sacrifice, without reverting to illiberal and religious complications of either tradition. In other words, he was concerned with highlighting the relationship between morality and salvation, similar in Hinduism and Christianity, with an eye to implementing in the former the practicability embodied in the latter.

“The humble Christian at the present day, who has perhaps never heard a single argument formally advanced in support of his Deity, lives almost intuitively on his Saviour as God over all blessed for evermore.”⁷⁷ This is especially true because as Thomas points out, the “self-emptying and self-sacrificing love of Jesus Christ was itself a disclosure of the nature of the divinity as Love.”⁷⁸

The introduction of Christianity into the Hindu race was the task of the Christian Mission in India. Although their task was not primarily one of reinterpreting Christianity for the Hindu mind, their task became so because the vast majority of people were ignorant even of the moral message of Jesus Christ. The Christian Mission in India had failed to instil some degree of liberal and Western ethics and to relate to Hindu sympathies, which lay in the realization of universal humanity as the ultimate destiny of man. The Christian Mission should ultimately have relayed three notions: that responsibility, sacrifice and obedience to God were interlinked; to preach the dignity of man regardless of any discrimination; and that Christ was not only for Christians. The last was the most questionable because the Christian missionaries existed in India with

⁷⁷ A. C., op. cit, p254.

⁷⁸ Ibid., p 33.

the intention of converting Hindus to Christianity. To preach that Christ was accessible to Hindus without their accepting Christianity would be a defamation of Christianity. What the Christian missionaries could and should have propagated (and what Vivekananda did preach) was that the destiny of man and the will of God were interwoven.

The intricacies not elucidated by the Christian Mission and yet clarified by Hindu reformers, were issues such as the conciliation of love and spiritual union and this union as active service. To the Christian no dichotomy exists but to the Hindu, the love incorporated in the experience of *samadhi* is cultivated knowledge, not only strength of feeling and service. There is also a difference to the Hindu between a man obeying moral laws and a person having a religious and righteous spirit which, by nature, acts morally. The Christian Mission reversed this for the newly converted. For the Hindu reformers there was a definite gradation, commencing with moral action and culminating in social and mental revolution in which each member would undergo a complete mental transformation and unquestionably act morally. Vivekananda announced that this would be the inseparability of man's destiny and God's Will. In practical terms a religious spirit honoured the gods of the temporal world. Christianity was in India, to a great extent, a supervisory experience. The Church was a school and the priests were incessantly teaching, converting and supervising. The reinterpreted Christianity of the Hindu reformers still left much to the individual prerogative.

Furthermore, rational religion is a difficult concept for anyone to grasp. Monotheism is as difficult a concept for the polytheist to digest as polytheism is for the monotheist. Belief and faith are, in themselves, irrational. Knowledge of the Unitive Ground and of Divine Reality are

apparently first-hand experiences and cannot be orally relayed. It cannot be *proven* to people who have not experienced it. Faith is diametrically opposed to proof. The Hindu is always searching for miracles to prove his faith. He is conditioned to believe that the mere sight of a *sannyasin* is proof enough. To him, his belief is renewed. Christianity based its proof on the 'rationality' of monotheism. The Christian missionaries were thus fighting a losing battle in their attempt to prove the superiority of their religion, unless they concentrated on its temporal egalitarianism. Polytheism and idolatry are not more irrational than monotheism. However, that which makes 'rational' religion more acceptable is the teleological notion that is usually attached to it, hence the success of the Hindu reformers and their advocacy of rational religion in the fight for individual autonomy and Indian independence.

The theology of the Indian Renaissance was sufficient. Christianity took on a significance as an 'umbrella' concept, incorporating the love of municipal freedom, the desire for equality and liberty in civil life and modernization - namely, as an 'instrument for renewal'. Christianity, in one sense, made Indian nationalism possible because "Indian nationalism was the fruit of Western political and cultural impact made possible by the British Raj."⁷⁹

The impetus of proselytization as displayed by Christianity was to be emulated in Indian nationalism and Renaissance. The impact of Christian liberalism is expounded in the fight against the evils of caste, authoritarianism and social injustice. For the Christian community in India, there still existed a hierarchy consisting of Christians proper and those newly converted, or Indian Christians. Christianity was still predominantly

⁷⁹ Ibid., p 249.

a religion for Europeans. As a religion it was too closely linked with the West and Western culture and values to inspire any sentiment of Indian patriotism. Unless synthesized with Hinduism, it was incompatible with the Indian cause. The main appeal of Christianity to many Hindu reformers was to demonstrate irrefutably that there was an alternative perspective on many issues and the Hindu viewpoint was not infallible. It is interesting to note that Vivekananda saw a more concrete and true synthesis of Hinduism and Islam than of Christianity and Hinduism. That is not to say that his synthesis of Islam and Hinduism was complete.

On the whole, Vivekananda did not delve deeply into the Christian tradition; nor did he need to do so, although it is true that the rationalist movement would have derived greater benefit from a detailed understanding of the distinction between Christ, Christianity and Western culture. Nevertheless, the theology of the nationalist movement was sufficient. It was also very difficult fully to synthesize both religions. There are problems such as accepting the historicity of Christ into a mythical and philosophical religion; reconciliation of two completely different concepts of man; putting Hinduism on a par with Christianity and risking a loss of pride. Vivekananda's main concerns were that although Hindus were being converted to Christianity he hoped that they would re-convert to the new synthesized ideology. He was adamant that Hinduism as a religion should not be converted. The character of Christ and Christianity should not prevail in the synthesis. It was explicit in the assertion that Hinduism should play a positive role in that synthesis and that it should help Christianity by helping to provide a better understanding of Christ. He truly believed that Hinduism was not subordinate and could help Christians to a more universal and tolerant

outlook. He also had further considerations such as whether it was useful to adopt Christ's moral message and not the historicity of his person; whether the institution of Christianity in India had a detrimental effect on Hinduism; and what view of the Hindu Renaissance was taken by the Church. Thus, he narrowed Christianity down to its utility; he used it as a materialist theory for Practical *Vedanta* and separated Christ from the essential framework of Christianity. Furthermore, he placed Hinduism at the top of the hierarchy by expounding that all religions were the same and only their specifics differed, and Hinduism was the most distinguished because of history and knowledge and wisdom. Thus, a true and complete synthesis may well be disadvantageous. Kraemer expresses this well:

[T]he Good Shepherd finds the Indian sheep tangled in a helpless longing for serenity rather than sanctity, oppressed by enchantment to the wheel of birth and

rebirth rather than the terrors of a guilty conscience. Finding them there, he gives them deliverance there.⁸⁰

There are not only definite modes of worship in Hinduism. Contemplation, struggle, action are all ways to worship. Furthermore, each stage of life, Hinduism propagates, is a step on the ladder of progression, regardless of how unpleasant it may seem at the time. Christianity, on the other hand, preaches that realization and worship are essentially peaceful. Prayer, faith, morality and devotion can all be practised without action. Although the idea of service pervades Christianity, both the monk and the person who stays at home with the family and goes to church on Sundays will reach Heaven after this death. Ironically, Christianity offers no incentive to become a missionary or a monk. Hinduism, on the other hand, proclaims that one has to work through many lives to become a *sannyasin* and only after these can one reach the stage of *Nirvana*. Christianity offers, to converts, a life of salvation, of egalitarianism and free of turmoil, regardless of relative merit. This was admired wholeheartedly by Vivekananda. All the murderers, all the unjust, the weakest and the wickedest are my Christ, he proclaimed.⁸¹

Having said this, Vivekananda emphasized the need for manliness and not to 'succumb to the temptation to convert to the easy life of Christianity'. The benefits of 'manliness' were not only in the fruition of strength, courage and determination, but to Vivekananda it was a religious duty in which religious benefits would be conferred. For example, as a lesson in humanity, Krishna said to Arjuna during the battle of

⁸⁰ Hogg A.G., *The Christian Message to the Hindu*, quoting Kraemer *Religion and the Christian Faith*, in *ibid*, p.312.

⁸¹ *L.S.*, *op. cit.*, pp 495-6.

Kurukshetra “Ill doth it befit there, Arjuna thus to yield to unmanliness,”⁸² on the other hand, it can be said that there is more courage in turning away from one’s own tradition if its practice is deleterious. This makes the case for Christianity twice as strong, which already has egalitarianism and salvation as lures, as well as the theological consent to accept converts if not actively to convert them. However, in Vivekananda’s opinion, the majority of converts were won over by the promise of the easy life that their weak characters could not reject. They switched their allegiance not because they had discovered their individualized, true path to realization and to God but because Christianity was offering them equality. Furthermore, he was angry because while the paths to realization in Hinduism were not inherently flawed, they had been manipulated into deleterious social practices, disguised as religion, and this was what was turning people away. Christianity, meanwhile, was offering them a better social status. A reformation of Hinduism was not only a necessity, but it was also catalysed by the fear of Christianity.

The notion of God as Creator would jeopardise the Hindu philosophy by bringing it into question. It did not actually need reforming, in Vivekananda’s eyes. If there were a time when there was nothing, man’s destiny and purpose would be linked to the existence of God. Taken to its logical conclusion, man should be subservient because he does not determine his surroundings, and his destiny matters only to God. Thus, his temporal existence is futile. To Vivekananda, this was an aspect of Christian dogmatism and any dogmatism in his view is detrimental.

Hinduism is in danger if Christianity is to be accepted indiscriminately, firstly, for the obvious reason that Hinduism would be

⁸² Nivedita, *The Master as I saw Him, Fourteenth Edition*, Ramakrishna Math, Calcutta, 1987, p172.

regarded as subordinate. Secondly, Hinduism preaches that the world is governed by subjectivity. Therefore, the means to realization lies with the individual. Precisely because of this subjectivity it cannot be perfectly relayed. It must be realized individually and by nature realization in its definitive sense is through inference. Truth is therefore individual and inferred. Thus, no worldly assertion can be completely true and a Christian priest cannot relay Truth. To accept Christianity's method of relaying Truth is, by Hindu standards, wrong, and moreover, to accept Christianity as unerring is, again, to question the philosophy of Hinduism.

The Indian character is obviously more accustomed to Hindu philosophy; however, Vivekananda emphasized that this did not mean that no Indian person can relate to Christianity, especially to those aspects such as 'Active Love'.

In Vivekananda's view, Hinduism is preferable in that devotion should not come from the desire for material and temporary gain. For example, Vivekananda admired the idea of *sati* because it is a display of incredulous devotion. In the West, many divorces stem from spouses' wanting better than they have. Devotion is a display of selflessness and strength of will, two integral aspects of religion. True love, the basis of Christianity, is not material or temporary. Hence, the true devotion of Hinduism should not be expended for materialism or a powerful religion.

Another reason why Vivekananda was so adamant that Christianity should not be accepted at the expense of Hinduism was because of his own pride. He felt that the Christian missionaries had added insult to injury: not only did they try to convert Hindus, they also derogated Hinduism.

Vivekananda asked:

'[I]f anybody insulted your mother what would you do?', to which this man replied 'I would fall upon him, sir, and teach him a good lesson!'

'Well said! but now if you had the same positive feeling for your own religion, the true Mother of our country, you could never bear to see any Hindu brother converted to a Christian. Nevertheless you see this occurring every day, yet you are quite indifferent. Where is your faith! Where is your patriotism! Every day Christian missionaries abuse Hinduism to your face, and yet how many amongst you would stand up to its defence? Whose blood boils with righteous indignation at the face?''⁸³

In the quintessential spirit of Universal Tolerance, Vivekananda claimed that all religions are essentially the same (and even claimed that Christ was the 'true Son of the Orient'⁸⁴). The differences lie not in the teachings, principles, spirituality or morals of each religious code, but rather in the interpretation and the style of communication. For example, when Christ said 'love thy neighbour', the moral message and its practical implications are the same as Hinduism Universal Tolerance. The words, tone and emphasis change to make it more acceptable to any particular audience. Vivekananda even went so far as to claim, supported by patchy historical facts, that Christ was actually from the Orient and travelled through what is now the Middle East and Greece to go to Nazareth.

The similarity of the two religions is in that they, as religions, address a fundamental human condition: insecurity, fear and the need for man to live by a code, whether religious or philosophical. The *need* for Christianity and *Vedanta* are scientific (that is proven) in that they fulfil this desire, ameliorating fear and insecurity. The philosophy taught by

⁸³ Ibid., p 161.

⁸⁴ S.V.C.W., Vol. IV, p144.

these religions are essentially the same. All great masters teach the same fundamentals.⁸⁵ To Vivekananda any difference was found simply in the 'peripherals'. He dismissed the statement that religions of the East concentrate on higher development and those of the West, on perfection of the social state. He retorted that there is a Real and an Apparent Self. How can it be true that Christ preached the amelioration of the Apparent Self, over and above that of the Real self? No religion would do that. According to Vivekananda, Christ preached that the Apparent Self should not be neglected.

All religions teach that there is something greater, something higher, than the world to which humans should aspire. If there were not, then life would not be worth living.⁸⁶ All religions, moreover, preach that this achievement is possible not only by waiting until death, but that there are practical steps to be taken in this life that can help attain a higher stage in character through complete control of the modifications of mind; St. Paul spoke of the same ambition when he said "Be ye transformed by the renewal of your own mind."⁸⁷ It is axiomatic that "one must seek first the kingdom of God."⁸⁸ How can they be religious otherwise? The difference in method pertains simply to the difference in character of the audience. The theories are the same. Cooperative theories of evolution are common to all religions; may be because of this, religions are seen to be non-scientific. Scientific theories of evolution readily acknowledge and in some cases actually base themselves (as does the Marxist theory) on conflict. One main

⁸⁵ Ibid., Vol. V, p 193.

⁸⁶ Isherwood, op. cit., p175.

⁸⁷ Ibid., p 176.

⁸⁸ Ibid., p 105.

recurring theme running through all religions is that to save one soul is the greatest deed that any individual could perform.

Even though methods vary between religions, there is, again, a common thread running through all methods preached by all religions. Vivekananda taught all to serve man as God; and that serving man was in effect, serving God. The theocratic notion underlying this is that to save one soul is to save God. In Christ's words: "For inasmuch as ye have done it unto the last of my brethren, ye have done it unto me."⁸⁹ The building of hospitals in the name of charity is normally associated with Christian charity and usually run by nuns and priests who have devoted the whole of their lives to God. On the other hand, Vivekananda read the same practice as a means to salvation in the *Vedantic* axiom '*Tat tvam Asi*' which to Vivekananda can also be translated into 'love thy neighbour' (as thou love thyself). *Vedanta* stated in spiritual rhetoric that we are all one being; thus loving your neighbour is loving yourself. Loving an *Atman* is loving the *Brahman*. The law of spiritual progress, Vivekananda proclaimed, is that by helping yourself, you are helping others and *vice versa*. Christ taught the same in his saying that no one could love themselves or their neighbour properly until they loved God properly. Love of one's neighbour is controlled and inspired, fed and restrained, energized and directed by our love of God.⁹⁰ '*Tat tvam Asi*' as interpreted by Vivekananda meant that 'Oneself is God'. Isherwood maintains that Christ was anxious to simplify the path to salvation for man and reduced the Hebrew Ten Commandments to two: to love God unlimitedly and to love our neighbour as ourself. These are not interchangeable because

⁸⁹ Ibid., p 246.

⁹⁰ Ibid., p 61.

unless we begin by knowing and loving God, we cannot love ourself or our neighbour.⁹¹

Christianity and *Vedanta* both stipulate that it is only man's temporal ignorance that makes him believe that he is a material being,⁹² and not God in essence. Indian philosophy asserts that apparent imperfection is due to ignorance; and Christian Theologians assert "the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehendeth is not."⁹³ Huxley reiterates this belief by interpreting Shakespeare as reflecting precisely this.⁹⁴

The ideal of non-violence exists in all religion. One could reply that caste, which may be exploitation, is part of the Hindu religion (*varna*) and has led to innumerable acts of violence against people. Vivekananda would retort that the hierarchy existent in India is *jati* and secondly, it is a social practice that wrongly seeks its justification in religion. Thirdly and most importantly, this violence is not religion, but 'irreligion'. This is problematic because in an attempt to release religion from the blame of caste, Vivekananda stumbled onto another criticism. By stating that caste is not a religious institution is also to claim that religion has no place in such violence. However, this is also an admission that religion is easily manipulated, is unable to govern society and, moreover, has a very great possibility of being manipulated into violence. Another could say that proselytization is violence in the name of religion. Vivekananda would respond to this by stating firstly, that he does not believe in forceful conversion, let alone conversion. Secondly, the ideal of non-violence refers

⁹¹ Ibid., p 61.

⁹² Ibid., p 47-8.

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Ibid., pp 209-11, 'On a Sentence from Shakespeare'.

to the concept of irrational violence. Religion cannot condemn a man who kills another in a desperate attempt to save thousands.⁹⁵ Similarly, even though Vivekananda vehemently disagreed with proselytization, in theory it is not mindless violence. Above, I have mentioned that while the intention behind proselytization is honourable, the act may not be so.

The ideal of non-violence pervades religion. The *Bhagavad Gita*, which may be seen as advocating violence and war, is commonly regarded as rejecting it. A debate on this will not now be entered into so suffice it to say that the *Gita* is commonly regarded as such. In Christianity the symbolism is pervasive, as is mentioned before: the image of Christ on the Cross, himself dying so that he would put an end to the suffering and the violence in the world; the cross as a symbol of the broken ego; the fact that the death of one man moved so many people is a triumph for non-violence; significance that there is absurdity in inflicting death; martyrdom is another rite denouncing violence. The fact that one would die to prevent violence is another principle and practice hard to comprehend especially when it is carried out by a man instead of a Christ with a divine constitution. In many cases, it may mean to sacrifice oneself so as not to succumb to violence. Non-violence as a principle and as symbolism pervades religion in all forms. No religion escapes this, not even the militaristic religion which honours its dead for dying for a noble cause.

Sanatana Dharma is the belief that all religions are essentially and spiritually the same. In Western philosophical terms, the term for *Sanatana Dharma* is *Philosophia Perennis*. All religions intend the spiritual freedom of man and the law of spiritual progress and enlightenment.

⁹⁵ See Chapter I, footnote 102.

Huxley⁹⁶ asserts that mystic and spiritual men of all religions have the same experience. Isherwood notes that what the Hindus call *samadhi*, the Christians call *mystic union*.⁹⁷ In another instance, Shankara describes precisely what Eckhart refers to as 'holy indifference'.⁹⁸ Spiritual truths and enlightenment cannot be experienced vicariously. The result of enlightenment, *mystic union* or *samadhi* is the destruction of the subject-object relationship. Such an experience has been described by the members of all religions. Furthermore, spiritual truth cannot be traced to its source. The statement that Christ is the only one to possess the truth is presumptuous. Spiritual truth is the property of every person who cares to seek it. Both *Vedanta* and Christianity proclaim this; moreover, it is the same spiritual truth. This is the main belief of *Sanatana Dharma*.

Despite professing such a belief, Vivekananda regarded *Vedanta* as essentially superior in spirituality, in its ideal spirituality, its accommodating and inclusive character as well as in the practical implications.⁹⁹ Christianity is too preoccupied with time and history and thus does not concentrate enough on the spiritual and 'eternal' aspects of life. As a consequence it does not teach the people to achieve the "innate capacity for Reality and Eternity"¹⁰⁰ on which *Vedanta* specifically concentrates. The first principle is detachment. Contemplation is the means to detachment. Mystics of all religions acquiesce that contemplation is the means to discovering truth.¹⁰¹ *Vedanta* holds a tradition of contemplation and by contrast, Christianity is a religion of ignorance. The first aim of

⁹⁶ *The Perennial Philosophy*, op. cit.

⁹⁷ Isherwood, 'Introduction', op. cit., p9.

⁹⁸ See quotation attached to footnote 53.

⁹⁹ Nivedita, *The Master as I saw Him*, op. cit., p 266, quoted from a letter to Mary Hale about Dr. Barrows.

¹⁰⁰ Isherwood, op. cit., p 112.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, p101.

detachment (through contemplation) is to release oneself from the limitation to self and attributes of creatures which constitute evil. The second, from the “cosmic limitations imposed upon creatures by the act of creation, namely separateness, individuality and time.”¹⁰² Pantanjali offers manifest methods for reaching this stage, whereas Christianity beholds the concept of death as epitomizing salvation.

The ideal state propagated by *Vedanta* is translated into practical methods. The integration of personality, a stage in the realization of the destruction of the subject-object relationship and eventually *samadhi*, is achieved through discipline: moderation in all sensory gratifications as well as detachment from them. By contrast, Christianity is viewed by many *Vedantists* as the beef-eating, wine-drinking religion of indulgence (in modern terms, Rabelaisian) in which discipline and moderation are jettisoned in favour of a temporary sensation of satisfaction.

The theory of *Vedanta* is itself far superior to Christianity in the eyes of Vivekananda. The Christian *Logos*, for example, is not regarded as the material cause of the universe; God, according to Christianity, is only an efficient cause. It was incarnate only in Christ, whereas the *Sphota* for the Hindus was incarnate in every sentient being and is more helpful in the advance towards perfection. Each of these beings can directly realize God through the power of the *Sphota*.¹⁰³ In practical terms, *Vedanta* does not need a moral code. It aims at the perfection of spirit; the morally complete man naturally acts ethically and selflessly.

Christian theology asserts that the soul had its beginning in the world. Thus the Christian *Logos* cannot be linked to the soul without

¹⁰² Ibid., p 113.

¹⁰³ Ibid., p 152.

theoretical disjunction. *Vedanta* proclaims that the soul is an emanation of the Eternal Being, and had no more beginning than God Himself.¹⁰⁴ The Christian concept of soul has less substance than that of the *Vedantic*. As a consequence, man is less stimulated to aspire to perfection; the practice of spirituality evaporates under the theoretical aspect of Christianity. Vivekananda concluded that although Christianity seeks spirituality, it never fully realizes it. There is a theoretical incoherence in Christianity and thus Vivekananda stigmatized it as an incomplete imitation of *Vedanta*.

Vedanta is also infinitely more accommodating than Christianity. As a result of the lack of proper spirituality, Christianity does not follow the guidelines of the *Philosophia Perennis*. The problem with Vivekananda's vision of religions is that he looked at them with the idea and the belief that they should be conditioned in terms of 'universal tolerance', the highest ideal. There is no reason whatsoever why Christianity should follow the guidelines of the Perennial Philosophy. However, Vivekananda treated these guidelines as criteria for the test of a true religion. In his eyes, therefore, Christianity fails.

In Vivekananda's quest for liberalism in which he drew on the Christian religion for inspiration, he discerned a marked inconsistency in its philosophy. In practice, the religion may seem liberal and modern, yet in theory, it cannot accommodate the variety of and in life. The problem lies in the fact that there is no measure of free will in its system of predestination (salvation is granted only in Heaven).¹⁰⁵ In the Hindu religion there exists a system of free will. The concept of predestination is directly linked to ontology. Ontologically speaking, Christianity preaches

¹⁰⁴ S.V.C.W., vol. IV., p223.

¹⁰⁵ See quotation attached to footnote 43.

salvation only after the event of death. In Dr. Sheldon's classifications, Christianity does not cater to the somatonic because there is no salvation through work: ethical work does not in fact bring divine salvation despite a whole life in solitude for the cerebrotonic, salvation only comes in death, not loneliness; nor does it cater to the viscerotonic despite his love of his neighbour, his universal tolerance and his faith in God.

This fault of the religion, that is its lack of comprehensiveness, spills over into its practice. Although Christianity preaches that one should attain the Kingdom of God within, it fails to teach a method for this. The Hindu religion gives detailed lessons of *yoga*, action, prayer, state of mind and even breathing. Pantanjali's *Yoga Sutra* is designed to help attain the kingdom of Heaven within. Christianity preaches that the kingdom of Heaven is within and then leaves it to the individual's interpretation and discretion of how to attain it. In meditation, for example, a high level of concentration is required. The Hindu religion advocates that this concentration must be maintained through eating, drinking, waking and sleeping, and it must be renewed with every breath taken; this method is applicable to any human whether saint or sinner. By contrast, Christianity only preaches 'passive annihilation' which is complete devotion to God during prayer,¹⁰⁶ thus leaving it to the individual's discretion as to whether, during the intervals, to be selfish, pernicious and egotistical. Explicit lessons to fend off distraction are absent in Christianity. Of course there is the other side of the coin; the Christian would retort without hesitation that God does not care for *yoga*, breathing, abstinence from alcohol and so on, which are simply peculiar to Hinduism.

¹⁰⁶ Isherwood, op. cit., pp 130-1.

The dilemma of allegiance gives rise to an aspect of the above problem. Every religious individual encounters the dichotomy between concentrating on temporal behaviour and devotion to God. In Hinduism, this dilemma is somewhat less acute because it preaches that all action pertains to spirituality and God (the law of spiritual progress states that all action is a lesson in the classroom of *karma*), whereas in Christianity, the dilemma is exaggerated. It constitutes a conflict between allegiances to the temporal world and to the spiritual world.

The fact that the Hindu religion confines the foundation of temporal actions to the spiritual sphere is also beneficial to the practice of the religion. Spiritual phrases such as '*Tat tvam Asi*' are tied intricately to manifest actions.

We have to heal ourselves before we can think of healing others - let alone whole nations. Otherwise we are simply operating with septic instruments. The patient might recover of himself if only we left him alone, but, if we try our surgery on him and our knives are infected, he must die of poisoning.¹⁰⁷

The advantage of approach finds its current parallel on any aeroplane flight, where a flight attendant straightforwardly informs the passengers that in the event of an emergency, if one is travelling with a child, a passenger should 'first see to oneself and then to the child'. In cases where the subject is a nation, Heard illustrates that the spiritual axiom constitutes a self-validating and self-critical nation "that is why the so-called Theocracies and Benevolent Tyrannies have been so much more hated

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., p59.

than easy going laissez-faire democracies and republics.”¹⁰⁸ His inference is that the former operates with septic instruments. They are not self-analytical, thus the nation deteriorates. In *Vedanta*, the link between spirituality and manifestation entails that as a theory, it regulates itself in response to external criticisms. Politically speaking, *Vedanta* is more accommodating than its Western brethren, Christianity.

CRITIQUE OF CHRISTIANITY

For Vivekananda’s purposes, Christianity was by no means flawless. The belief that religion is not merely the word of God revealed to humans, and is rather a recipe for salvation including psychological, psychophysiological as well as physical amelioration, is typically Hindu. Precisely because of this, it is a firm belief that no religion is faultless. Neither Christianity nor Hinduism is free from criticism. In Vivekananda’s eyes, Christianity is more vulnerable to criticism because of its incompatibility with the Hindu character, and in many ways its incompatibility with the Indian or Hindu cause. Vivekananda discerned that although much of the fault of Christianity is found in its practice or, rather, in misinterpretation of its ideology, there is still a doctrinal problem. However, his criticism is mostly limited to the inherent hypocrisy

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

due to the misinterpretation, and the tenuous connection between its doctrine and its restricted role in the Indian cause.

The first and one of the main reasons Vivekananda was averse to the universalization of Christianity was because of its restricted scope. To him it was a very parochial religion which had a natural bent towards people of Western origin or those educated in the Western vein. It did not embrace people of varied orientation. For example, even though Christ's message was very universal, his *persona* was not. His message is calculated to raise man's moral understanding of mankind and nature whereas ideas of communion through consumption of the body and blood of Christ are derivative of the Jewish sacrificial system in existence at the time of Christ. Even the idea of God as Father is universal but the fact that God is not referred to by any name stems from the Jewish philosophical understanding of the synonymy of the sound and the being of God: in other words, that uttering the name of God has as its corollary, His manifestation; simply, the Word *is* God. This belief is also part of the Hindu philosophical system but at the same time it is not comprehensible to all, hence the existence of polytheism.

The idea that a whole religion is founded upon one person and the philosophy he propounded has a cultural limitation. Although no one can doubt that much of Christ's message is moral and can be adapted to every society in every age, it is also true that much of his philosophy was addressed to problems existing at that time within that particular society. "No religion built upon a person can be taken up as a type by all races of mankind."¹⁰⁹ This is why Vivekananda regarded Christianity as a faction of *Vedanta*: another sect which worships yet another manifestation of the

¹⁰⁹ S.V.C.W., Vol. III, p 250.

Divine Reality, dealing with the specific situation and problem. This is also why he called it a patchy imitation of *Vedanta*;¹¹⁰ because as a sect, it attempts to prove that it is the only rightful religion. In Vivekananda's own mind, he justified the presumption that Christianity is only a sect by the fact that Christianity cannot exist as a religion without Christ as the foundation,¹¹¹ hence the fact that Christ's existence is paramount to Christians. They are infatuated with the historical fact and are preoccupied with the inference of time.¹¹²

Vivekananda pondered whether there would be salvation for the would-be Christian if Christ did not exist, no matter how morally they acted and 'atheistically-pious' they were. To him, it was a ridiculous suggestion to say that there would be no salvation. Conversely, Vivekananda took non-historicity to be a test of truth. Non-historicity is a symbol of philosophy, adaptation, non-parochiality, rationality and universality, and it is perennial.

Vivekananda suggested a rationalization of Christianity. It should, he promulgated, be preached separately from the *persona* of Christ. Christians would hereafter stop discriminating against those religionists who do not acknowledge Christ as Saviour. Christians will be more tolerant and their dissent will be limited to issues with which they sincerely disagree after having rationalized each issue separately. This promotes rationality, individuality and mental discourse or intellectualism. Christianity as it is now paradoxically discourages individuality. The 'new' Christian does not need to be over-empathetic; he will simply blindly dismiss any suggestion

¹¹⁰ Ibid., p 275.

¹¹¹ Ibid., Vol. V, p 207.

¹¹² Ibid., Vol. III, p 333.

that Christ is not the only Saviour, or any corresponding notion, because his religion urges him faithfully to do so.

Another point of contention for Vivekananda was the notion that Christianity is a religion of love and of emotion, which is why Christians can be reactionary and fanatic in their dismissal of other religions. "Emotions many times drag us down to the level of animals. Emotions have more connection with the senses than with the faculty of reason."¹¹³ A person discovering the Divine Reality and Christ, in Christian philosophy, therefore knows how to love in its truest sense. The logical deduction is that a non-Christian will never know. This is Vivekananda is an untenable suggestion. Religion is an amalgamation of philosophy, psychology and psycho-physiology and therefore is rational; discovery of the Divine Reality is 'realization', neither rational nor emotional. Thus, an atheist can practise the rational element but even a pious person may not have discovered the Divine Reality. Faith should not simply be emotional; if so, it is no true faith. When emotions are considered to be its realization, religion can easily degenerate into fanaticism. Love can be realization in religion (as satirized in the phrase 'I've seen the Light!'). Only when 'Love' in its religious character is seen as an emotion may it become intolerant. Hence, Vivekananda's criticism of Christianity is not that it is intrinsically intolerant as a religion of love, but rather that love as an emotion when it is the driving force of religion is intolerant.

In this sense *Vedanta* is superior (as far as religions can be superior to one another: yet, a distinction that did not disturb Vivekananda) because the connection between the religionists is a sense of universal selfhood. In the fraternity of Christianity, one is always separated from

¹¹³ Ibid., Vol. VI, pp 7-8.

others. Emotion distinguishes subject from object. As an ontological link for religion, it is not comprehensive. In universal selfhood, realization plays a greater role. One cannot realize for another unless 'the other is oneself'.

On the positive side of Christian fraternity, there is a link created between people of the Christian family, yet at the same time there is a sense of individuality. In the material world, this is beneficial because material reality makes it impossible for two or more physical entities to combine. Thus, an individual believing in himself as a separate entity can easily relate to temporal reality, hence the compatibility of Christianity and modernity. "What we want is practical religion...The Christian idea of practical religion is in doing good works - worldly utility."¹¹⁴ This is the sense in which Vivekananda saw Christian perfection; in its promulgation of love within the world and hence an acceptance of the drunkard, the prostitute and the man visiting the prostitute.¹¹⁵

The practice of Christianity also have a selfish and covetous streak. Christianity's prosperity, Vivekananda said, is based on 'standing on the neck' of another. The underlying idea of such actions is that the Christian is helping the heathen; in reality, it is performed for the converter's own conscience and to satisfy his animalistic ego, thus exemplifying dominance.¹¹⁶ Vivekananda was furious that Christians were constantly attempting to turn Hindus away from their own tradition by offering them false promises of equality rather than religion; and especially because those newly converted would now look down upon Hindus with disdain. It is true that Vivekananda acknowledged many times that much of the blame should be put on the practice of Hinduism itself but he never could

¹¹⁴ Ibid., p 101.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., p 109.

¹¹⁶ Isherwood, op. cit., p 239.

forgive the indoctrination. It was Vivekananda's firm belief that as a fellow religion, Christianity should send missionaries to instil knowledge into the Hindus, not convert them and fill their hearts with hatred.

The Christ-power that thus man intends to bring to India is not the intolerant, dominant superior, with heart full of contempt for everything but its own self, but that of a brother who craves for a brother's place as a co-worker of the various powers still working in India.¹¹⁷

Proselytization to Vivekananda was hypocrisy because Christ taught that one should welcome every good man to the family of God¹¹⁸ and to have "no enemy, bless them that curse you" but "[t]he Europeans never took the word of Jesus Christ seriously."¹¹⁹

One of the most damning criticisms of Christianity pronounced by Vivekananda was that the teachings of Christ have been gravely misunderstood and that living Christianity is a perversion of what Christianity ultimately should be. Misinterpretations of Christ's message are both intentional and unintentional; yet in practical Christianity, the division between these is difficult to discern. Vivekananda's encompassing accusation is that, ultimately, Europeans did not take Christ seriously: his message was primarily one of tolerance, patience, accommodation and morality. Even though Christ had attempted to safeguard his teachings against misinterpretation, Christian theologians and Christian analysts wrongfully interpreted them.

Christian priests insist that Christ is the only Truth and that this knowledge is infallible because they have had direct experience of it, yet

¹¹⁷ S.V.C.W., Vol. V, p 122.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., p 293.

in many cases they say this solely for the purpose of converting the 'heathen'. Moreover, it

is the duty of anyone who has had such an experience "to explain diligently to others - provided always that two conditions are fulfilled. First, he must not imagine that he can do more than indirectly hint at the nature of intuitively known reality; he must take care not be deceived into believing that he has a system of doctrine which *is* the truth, or which completely expresses the truth. Secondly, he must speak in the right spirit and for the right reasons - with a mind at perfect rest and in order that the truth may be known and glorified."¹²⁰

Huxley goes on to say that there is a grave possibility that he will 'entice the blind and fill the world with entangling briars' which is precisely what, in Vivekananda's view, they have indeed accomplished. To him, the Christian theologian has not, unlike the Hindu theologian, tried hard enough to clarify the problems and the apparent contradictions of spirituality. Hindu science incorporates psychophysical amelioration as well as advocating morality, as does 'Essential Christianity'. However, Christian science is so parochial that the layman, already confined within a limited vocabulary of spirituality, is ignorant that some issues actually exist, hence the misinterpretation of Christianity.

Christian science explains the power of Christ by making reference to his powers of healing. The power of Christ, Vivekananda propounded lies in his spirituality:

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ Isherwood, op. cit., p 282.

The great strength of Christ is not in His miracles or His healing. Any fool could do those things. Fools can heal others, devils can heal others...The other is the spiritual power of Christ...His saying, "Blessed are the pure in heart", that lives today...The power of purity; it is a definite power. So in worshipping Christ, in praying to Him, we must always remember what we are seeking. Not these foolish things of miraculous display, but the wonderful things of the Spirit, which make man free.¹²¹

Real Christianity is not like the power-wielding, proselytizing, materialistic Practical Christianity which is blatant today. To Vivekananda, if Christ were alive, he would never have promulgated that man was a fallen sinner. Why would Christ ever undermine those whom he was trying to save? These "frothy sayings of the Christian sects"¹²² are fraught with selfish intentions. (Despite this, the 'real' Christian still has faith in himself.¹²³) In spending the energy proving that Christ was a historical personality and therefore that his message is a substantial Truth, damning those who do not believe this, Christians forget that Christ's message was one of morality, propagating tolerance, patience and accommodation, Vivekananda proclaimed. Beauty is another example: rather than regarding it as God-eclipsing because one's attention is diverted, Christianity should find God in that beauty, as does Hinduism, he asserted. To him, a characteristic of Christianity was to derogate what causes problems and immediately preach that all Christians should avoid it, if not destroy it. Hinduism, on the other hand, philosophically battles with it, in order eventually to accommodate it. Even the love-making of Radha and

¹²¹ S.V.C.W., Vol. IV, pp32-3.

¹²² Ibid., Vol. III, p 190.

¹²³ Ibid., p191.

Krishna is beautiful.¹²⁴ "God then, is manifest in the relationship which makes things beautiful."¹²⁵

Analogously, aesthetic and intellectual ugliness arise when one part in a whole is excessive or deficient. Order is marred, meaning distorted and, for the right, the divine relation between things and thoughts, there is substituted a wrong relation - a relationship that manifests symbolically, not the immanent and transcendent source of all beauty, but that chaotic disorderliness which characterizes creatures when they try to live independently of God.¹²⁶

The discrepancy Vivekananda discerned was between Essential Christianity and Practical Christianity. Having witnessed the conversion of many Hindus to Christianity, and in view of the Hindu opinion of conversion, he regarded the Practical Christianity as selfish, inauthentic and covetous. Essential Christianity is unselfish and follows the character and message of Christ. To him, Practical Christianity is less 'truthful'.

There is a fundamental contradiction in Vivekananda's detestation of proselytization; it acts on the belief that one's religion is the only true one. The notion of a superior religion fundamentally contradicts the natures of the Perennial Philosophy and *Sanatana Dharma*. Paradoxically, Vivekananda was unrelenting in his protestations that *Vedanta* is the ultimate religion. Furthermore, if Truth is 'nobody's property' then Vivekananda should not have objected to the conversion of Hindus to Christianity. His answer is not the same as Gandhi's, which was that if all

¹²⁴ Kakar S., 'Erotic Fantasy: the secret passion of Radha and Krishna', in Contributions to Indian Sociology, vol. 19, no. 1, January-June 1985.

¹²⁵ Isherwood., op. cit, p 164.

¹²⁶ Ibid., p 165.

religions prophesied the truth, one should not need to change from one's indigenous and cultural religion. Isherwood maintains that the essential difference between Christianity and Hinduism is that Christianity teaches that each human soul had its beginning at the birth in this world whereas Hinduism asserts that the soul is the "emancipation of Eternal Being, and had no more beginning than God Himself."¹²⁷

The problem with Practical Christianity is that it lacks spirituality. Any religion which concentrates mainly on the temporal world could be seen as a charity. There is a high possibility of charity degenerating into materialistic patriotism especially when its members are fervent in this ulterior and teleological goal, in which the ends justify the means. The idiom "The Kingdom of God is within" has become a 'folk tale' to many Christians; their fervour is wasted in looking for God externally in such acts as proselytization (that is, believing that to act for God will eventually bring man closer to Him). The overemphasis on the material world is exemplified by the protagonists, including Marshman, who attempted to revive the spirituality of Christianity. M. C. Parekh concluded that morality should be secondary to religion, and religiosity and spirituality should be primary.¹²⁸ Christianity reverses this equation, in Vivekananda's view. Morality is a natural product of religiosity and salvation, not *vice versa*. Christianity is too restricted to this world. Hence Christianity's fight is simply against other religions. "To fight exclusively with the self serves only to enhance the selfhood."¹²⁹

Theoretically, Hinduism acknowledges the fact that man is limited in his temporal being and therefore God's Kingdom cannot come to man on

¹²⁷ Ibid., p184.

¹²⁸ A. C., op. cit., pp 30-2 and 263-6.

¹²⁹ Isherwood, op. cit., p 305.

earth. "The Kingdom of God can come only to the extent to which the kingdom of the natural man has been made to go."¹³⁰ Christianity attempts to bring God's Kingdom to Earth by using morality as a weapon to conjure a state of temporal happiness and perfection for all. This assumes that God's kingdom is simply a moral state of temporal happiness which ultimately is a derogation of God and His Kingdom. Foremost Christianity has fought to assert its superiority in a fight against other religions. As a result Christianity has become, in Vivekananda's opinion, a selfish religion, fighting for its own selfhood, dominance and superiority; or as it regards it, for its own survival.

One of Vivekananda's main criticisms of Christianity was that the notion and practice of fraternal love which is integral to Christianity, is, in reality, practised between only fellow Christians (as has been elucidated above).

For the theocratic mystics of both East and West, it is axiomatic that one must "seek first the kingdom of God" (the timeless kingdom of an eternal God) "and his righteousness" (the righteousness of eternity over and above the righteousness of life in time); and that, only if one does this, is there any prospect of 'all the rest being added'.

In the less true forms of genuine religions and still more, in the pseudo-religions of Nationalism, Fascism, Communism and the like, the position is completely reversed. For here the fundamental commandment and its accompanying promise are "seek ye first all the rest, and the kingdom of God and his righteousness shall be added to you."¹³¹

¹³⁰ Ibid.

¹³¹ Ibid., pp 105-6.

The latter is what Christianity has become with its emphasis on the results of conversion. The impetus of proselytization is sincere, and belongs to Essential Christianity. The intention of bringing people away from such nefarious practices such as child marriage is commendable, or feeding the hunger of the spiritual aspirant. Because of its nature, it has become exploited, corrupted and covetous.

It is obvious why Vivekananda discerned the dichotomy between Essential Christianity and Practical Christianity. Christ did not teach any creed or doctrine but Practical Christianity advocates both; what it should have propagated but did not was the importance for everyone to try and know God while living in this world.

According to Vivekananda, the ultimate goal of any religion is freedom. The whole point of religion was to give and ensure freedom for humans. Salvation in Heaven was another term for freedom, albeit non-temporal. "And so all are marching towards freedom. We are all journeying towards freedom."¹³² Liberty of thought and action were integral to the survival of man, the race and the nation.¹³³ However, Vivekananda recognized that mere social, economic and material freedom are steps to spiritual freedom (which requires *Lebensraum*), but in themselves cannot assure it.¹³⁴

The core of Vivekananda's philosophy was that if man had freedom and was not constrained by emphatic demands and commandments, he would naturally choose the most facile and so to speak, happy way of life, which is a path to morality and religion. Vivekananda was firmly

¹³² Lecture on *Maya* and Freedom, quoted in *L.S.*, op. cit., pp126-7.

¹³³ Ibid., originally 'Letters of Swami Vivekananda', 1965, p 63.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

convinced that if the evil practices associated with Hinduism were banished, rivalry of Hindus *qua* Hindus were obliterated and man were given more freedom, he would inevitably have more faith and confidence in religion. Christianity, on the other hand, ensures obeisance through fear of the wrath of God. Instead of creating a congenial relationship between man and God, it is perennially clouded by the presence of a time-demanding, obedience-commanding, lightening-striking authority. This is the first error of Christianity. The second, of which this is a product, is that it has failed to take account of human psychology and advocate dogmatic methods of worship and salvation. The third mistake is that due to the attitude that these two have created within the Christian - firstly, that they should help everyone who is not subject to this wrath for fear of their lives; and secondly, that anyone who does not fear this arbitrary wrath must surely be a product of the devil - has led to a policy of intolerance.¹³⁵ The third error, according to Heard, has more relevance to the Christianity Vivekananda criticized. In his words, the first error consisted of

[t]aking cosmology from the rudimentary Hebrew world-view it tied itself to crude Apocalypticism. By the sixth century Parousial expectations, long discouraged by the church, were given an *ad hoc* moral substitute by the invention of the doctrine of Purgatory. This doctrine, leading to ecclesiastical corruption, was repudiated by the Reformation. Henceforth, Protestantism would have no world-view, unless it returned to the Apocalypticism by becoming Fundamentalist.¹³⁶

¹³⁵ Isherwood, *op. cit.*, p54.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, p 53.

Heard's implication is that the *Vedantic* world view is infinitely more vast and does not contradict science. The *Vedantic* does not perceive a dichotomy between the temporal world view and religion. Essentially, the only active means to salvation which Christianity advocates is prayer.¹³⁷ Proselytization and ethics were later developments in attempts to create an appeal to somatotonics and to ameliorate life on earth for the religionists participating in prayer for seventy-five per cent of each living day. Furthermore, the advocacy of petitionary prayer, and only this, as the sole praxis of Christianity is very restricted and arbitrary. Christianity makes the relationship between experiment and religion impossible.

Heard goes on to say that *Vedanta* has a *Weltanschauung* which actually counsels against 'impatience and rashness' and a psychology which encourages experiment and diversity "how men may test truth and, further may change their characters and their consciousness,"¹³⁸ As a result, *Vedanta* disproves the necessity for intolerance by a scientific case for tolerance. In Heard's view, *Vedanta* is a perennial religion because it acknowledges that although man's habits are changed by coercion, man's character is not; and the changing of character is the whole purpose of religion. Also, *Vedanta* acknowledges subjectivity and variety in humans and that men of equal intelligence may well have different methods of devotion, each suitable to their respective conditions and characters.

Christianity possesses a one-sided view which not only explains a major reason for its intolerance but also, according to Nietzsche, will bring down its morality. Although Vivekananda would not have gone so far in his accusation, he certainly would have imagined the end of Christianity as

¹³⁷ And as we have seen this is flawed as praxis.

¹³⁸ Isherwood., op. cit., p53.

an intolerant religion and therefore its need to change out of necessity. According to Nietzsche, even Christ had a one-sided view of reality. He preached against the practices of the Jews and although some practices may not have been nefarious, in their own right the Jews were of good intention. Instead of digging into their source, Jesus simply derogated their practices and offered an alternative. Nietzsche concluded that Christian morality, itself, is based on discrimination and Christian notions of truth are tainted by a distorted and uninformed world-view¹³⁹ that derogates one in order to upgrade the other.

Following from this rejection of Jewish and contemporary society, Christianity has created a religion of morbidity and degeneracy instead of creating a complete philosophy which would uplift Christians, Nietzsche asserted. It is a denial of society, of anything dominant or authoritative. Christianity is an agglomeration of denial, resent, jealousy and obsession with sin and death. Hence, it stands in opposition to every spiritual and philosophical movement and resents the masterful.¹⁴⁰ In the same way, Vivekananda detected bitterness in the Christian *Weltanschauung* which emanates not from nihilism but from an opposition to anything that boasts or promotes perfection. In contrast to Buddhism, Christianity does not have an absolute philosophy upholding it; it does not appreciate what it cannot have, and what it cannot have it preaches against. Thus, Buddhism in contrast to Christianity, is characterized by, in Nietzsche's words, "gratitude toward all that lies behind, and also for what is lacking: bitterness and disillusionment, rancour; finally a lofty spiritual love,"¹⁴¹

¹³⁹ Kaufmann W. *Existentialism from Dostoevsky to Sartre*, Meridan, New York, 1989, p 131.

¹⁴⁰ Nietzsche F., *Will to Power*, Vintage Books, New York, 1968, p 154.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*

Christianity is a product of a negative *Weltanschauung*, actively engaged in nihilistic and justifying suffering, by 'avenging themselves upon life itself'. Christianity does not strive towards the perfection of man but rather the improvement of the life man is living. The incorporation of sin and guilt into Christianity's conception of man means that man cannot become perfect, although this becomes a possibility only through death.

Christian morality and charity is a product of the guilt and the fear of sin. "the few who really give money in the Christian lands often do so through priestcraft and the fear of hell,"¹⁴² Vivekananda's view of Christianity was ambivalent. He admired it as a religion of love, yet, he also saw it as a religion of fear. Fear took two forms: in a religion of love, people are coerced into becoming religious because of the fear of non-love; also, there is always the presence of Hell and the fear of the Wrath of God. In Hinduism, 'Hell' is a personal sentiment; thus non-love and Hell are synonymous. However, in Christianity, 'Hell' is supposedly an entity in itself which is not even synonymous with the Wrath of God, although these are linked. One can experience the Wrath of God without encountering 'Hell'. Furthermore, the Wrath of God is not only a metaphysical threat but also a temporal one. Vivekananda wholeheartedly disagreed with the non-rationalistic threat of the Devil and of God to induce a sense of morality. "These fruits of human disobedience are commonly regarded as the expression of God's anger."¹⁴³ Incidentally, Huxley 'reflects on the [Christian] Lord's Prayer', in which he replies that there is a discrepancy between the threat of the Devil in practical Christianity and the quintessential expression of the existence in Christian prayer. In the

¹⁴² S.V.C.W., Vol. V, p 44.

¹⁴³ Isherwood, op. cit., p 299.

prayer, Heaven and Hell are expressed as states of mind, Heaven being a superior mode of consciousness.¹⁴⁴ Heaven is not a reward, and Hell is not reprimand. Apart from God's Wrath, Christianity preaches that there is no way out of the guild-ridden suffering of simple, temporal existence. The system of predestination for Christianity is its otherworldly salvation; but there is no system of ontological free-will in suffering humanity. In a way, Christianity encourages worldly living and at the same time, its promise of salvation in the future only encourages a fatalistic materialism and apocalypticism.¹⁴⁵ Christianity has become, it appeared to Vivekananda, a 'humanistic pseudo-religion'. Christians are assured that their personal salvation is to happen in the present reality, the eternal present. But whereas believers in the approaching end of the world seldom find it necessary to coerce or slaughter those who do not agree with them, coercion and slaughter have formed an essential part of the programme put forward by the crusader for the humanistic pseudo religions.¹⁴⁶ The golden age of peace and prosperity, for the proselytizer, is promised at the end of the religious revolution. However, there is a contradiction in that the revolution does not predominantly attempt to change one's character, which is inconsistent with the claim that God's Kingdom is within.

In Vivekananda's view, this problem derives from the fact that Christianity does not manifestly acknowledge that Good cannot exist without Evil; a fundamental assumption in Hinduism. Hence, the incessant Christian fight is for the destruction of Evil. The problem is that 'Evil' takes many forms and what form it does take is a subjective judgement. On a personal level, an internal battle for Good to prevail is beneficial but it

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., p 301.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., p 108.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

must be realised that “just by being a good person, by living an ethical life, by trying to be selfless in your service, you cannot reach the transcendental Reality.”¹⁴⁷ On too many occasions, though, the battle is not internal and is exacerbated by external forces, too.

Vivekananda asserted that Christianity, with its dogmatic rituals, notions of worship and salvation, does not take account of subjectivity. Christians have no choice as to which method is best suited to their characters. ‘Experiment’ is looked down upon in Christianity. The reason for this is perhaps because it was initially a minority religion; but now as a religion catering to such a large number of people, it is still too parochial. There is no temporal recipe for perfection. An ethical existence is not salvation. Salvation is reserved for death and Heaven. Morality seems like a secondary option, but still does not fully compensate as, to reiterate, it does not lead to the Transcendent Reality. In Hinduism, ideally “You can think of God, you can love God, you can fix your heart absorbingly on God, and at the same time live in the world, attend your duties in the world.”¹⁴⁸ This is the meaning of *dharma*. Ironically, though, Vivekananda actually admired Christianity for ‘its life in the world’ and service in the name of God. Theoretically, it seems it should be reversed. Christianity urges liberation as a goal to be achieved; *Vedanta* preaches that liberation is one’s very nature. In the *Vedanta*, God is tangible (in Sanskrit, Hari, the name of God, means ‘he who steals the hearts of mankind’); in Christianity God is not.

Because neither God nor salvation is tangible, Christianity includes the idea of vicarious atonement. God must ontologically atone for others

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., p 422.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., p 69.

because man cannot *ontologically* atone for himself and there is hence little free will in this Christian system of predestination; “There is the grace of the Guru, there is the grace of God, there is the grace of his devotees; but for the lack of one grace, man ruins himself.” “And what is this grace? It is the grace of your own mind. Unless you have the grace of your own mind, you cannot have the divine grace.”¹⁴⁹ A Christian, therefore, cannot have God’s Grace on earth because he does not have his own.

Furthermore, in Christianity, the idea of vicarious atonement is exaggerated and exists between men. In Catholicism a priest takes one’s responsibility into his own hands. The idea in that confession the priest can atone for another’s sins is untenable to Vivekananda.

[Y]ou can help, really. What can we do for each other? You are growing up in your own life, I am growing in my own. It is possible that I can give you a push in your life, knowing that in the long run, all roads lead to Rome.¹⁵⁰

Duty is individual and respect for others and their duty comes in acknowledging this. In Christianity one can neglect to do one’s duty and another can take the responsibility. A false obedience, devotion and sense of safety which cannot be beneficial to any man, is stimulated.

THE INAPPROPRIATENESS OF CHRISTIANITY FOR THE HINDU CAUSE

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

The materialistic and 'of this world' aspects of Christianity have been admired by Vivekananda as 'a living religion', and 'a contemporary philosophy'. Undoubtedly, though, there is a detrimental side to materialism for which Vivekananda also criticized Christianity. Materialism in this sense is a very parochial and biased out-look on life, easily satisfied by material gains (nominally relevant in the larger arena of the well-being and happiness of man), always searching for a reward and debasing life to utilitarian classifications. Materialism is the embodiment of selfishness. Vivekananda wanted a living religion without the ills of materialism.

The materialist-modernist is scientifically inclined and thus labels religion as an amalgamation of superstitions and hypocrisy, reserved for the unintelligent masses who, having no ability or desire to create a 'Heaven on Earth', rely on religion for salvation; clinging to the false security because of their lack of courage to face the uncertainty of life and inability to turn this uncertainty into advantage. The other side of the coin, is that the life of the modernist becomes futile because worldly gain is the only aspiration. The materialist cannot take his riches to the grave but the religionist can take his perfected soul. Vivekananda was extremely worried by the lack of spiritual sanction or sanctity associated with materialism. "What terrible suffering is behind every deed of success."¹⁵¹

This quote relates firstly to Christ's crucifixion and, more relevantly, to Vivekananda's cause, to *karma*. The implications are multi-faceted. First

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., p 239.

¹⁵¹ Ibid., p235.

comes the purely spiritual aspect, which regards any material investment as futile. Secondly, there is the idea of life being reciprocal, an idea deriving from an aspect of *karma*. However, what is of paramount importance is that because Christianity does not propagate any concept of *karma* (and its relation to *dharma*), actions have no source other than selfish and ulterior motives. The Western materialistic understanding of life gives action absolutely no sanction other than the psychological make-up of humans. Hence, actions carry with them no sense of duty, guilt or conscience other than of the person (if the person is evil...). It is unlike Hinduism which believes that all action is accountable to a spiritual source: not only the action itself but the actor, the source of the action, and the recipient(s) of the action. It has far-reaching implications. Henceforth, it embodies the nativity of the utilitarian spirit which subordinates everything in the cause of its ambitions.

“In short earthly life is the object and sole purpose of all his struggles and actions. Even his religion is made subservient to fulfil his purpose “on earth.””¹⁵² In Vivekananda’s view, what is of utmost importance, namely ontological ‘goodness’, religion and spirituality are subordinated to actions limited to this world. For Vivekananda, although an ethical life is an important facet of religion, to restrict religion to this simple formula naturally encourages man to look for something else in life. For the utilitarian, stress is not laid upon self-control, but on ‘external decorum’. To Vivekananda, Essential Christianity does not advocate this imbalance but does not explicitly derogate it.

¹⁵² Ibid., p243

Vivekananda...said that he did not even care for his own liberation if only he could give liberation to one individual soul. Christ died on the Cross for suffering humanity.¹⁵³

The confusion for the Christian is whether he should practise philanthropy for his own salvation or for that of others, also, whether he should be interested in social, political and economic regeneration - in the world and its affairs - or whether their primary concern is with religion. Essential Christianity preaches "for inasmuch as ye have done it unto me".¹⁵⁴ However, the notion of salvation dichotomously relates to material existence and service as is mentioned above, begging the question as to why one should serve another if one can reach Heaven through prayer. Furthermore, the hard fact of material existence deems it impossible that one can actually work for another's salvation. Christianity preaches that each person has to work in his/her own right. Although one can vicariously atone for another, one person's philanthropic actions cannot be transferred to the credit of another. In short, an evil man cannot enter the Kingdom of Heaven, Judgement will reveal this. Thus, man's work for others is limited - he is ultimately working for his own salvation, which is selfish. There seems to be a contradiction. Vivekananda wanted to eradicate all selfish action from Hinduism. Christianity in this arena, was inappropriate for the religio-political cause of Hinduism which quintessentially demanded that all action be for national benefit and only through national 'salvation' did personal salvation become a possibility.

The victory of selfishness is the 'triumph of the purely human side'.

¹⁵³ Ibid., p245

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., p246

What are the consequences of this triumph of the purely human side?...the destruction of human values either by death or degradation or the perversion to the ends of politics, revolution and war. When we think presumptuously that we are or shall become in some utopian state, "men like gods", then in fact we are in mortal danger of becoming devils, capable only (however exalted our "ideals" may be, however beautifully our plans and blue-prints) of ruling our world and destroying ourselves. The triumph of humanism is the defeat of humanity.¹⁵⁵

The practice of this philanthropy becomes fanatic because it is effected in the name of religion and 'divine love'. The worldly manifestation of 'divine love' causes attachment to the religion itself. People have liquidated others in the name of 'divine love'. 'Love' in its worldly form is paradoxical. True Love knows no possession; however, in life, jealousy usually convinces a spouse that the other actually does 'love'. In the same way, a certain amount of 'possessiveness' is present in the worldly manifestation of the Christian ideal of 'divine love'. Value is put on the ability to love, more specifically, the ability to convert. When value is put on material objects, as well as conversion, the religionist practising 'Practical Christianity' is encompassed by the 'state of flux'¹⁵⁶ of the temporal world. As a result the religionist becomes a worshipper of his own creation. In other words, he becomes an incurable materialist. For Vivekananda, this is the slippery slope to the detrimental aspect of materialism which Christianity, by not explicitly guaranteeing against it, can actually advocate. "[A] fanatic worships something which is the creation of his own desire...for in fact it is

¹⁵⁵ Ibid., pp274-5

¹⁵⁶ Ibid., p290-1.

making the parts of his nature or his mind, which he least values, offer sacrifice to that which he most values.¹⁵⁷

Eventually the religionist-cum-materialist loves the material more than he loves God. Vivekananda substantiates the accusation that materialism eventually brings down morality through the following sentiment: "You cannot compare the decency of life among the poor in India with the life in the slums here. A slum means poverty, but poverty does not mean sin, indecency and vice in India."¹⁵⁸

Materialism destroys discrimination.

Many would go to church, pray with much devotion, sing with great feeling and even burst in to tears when hearing the sermons, but after coming out of church, they would have great a reaction and succumb to carnal tendencies.¹⁵⁹

CONCLUSION

Vivekananda categorically emphasized that all religions are equal. They are also essentially the same; the differences lie only in the interpretation - and hence the reason they appear unequal. Ironically, Vivekananda did grade religions hierarchically. *Advaita* or *Vedanta* is at the top of the list, with its unimpeachable characteristics such as universal tolerance. Christianity and Islam he balanced against each other in an attempt to ascertain which is the better religion - especially in the light of *Advaita*. To him, the main characteristic of Christianity is its moral code

¹⁵⁷ Ibid., p430

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., p238.

¹⁵⁹ S.V.C.W. Vol. V, p 347.

and teachings that encourage humanism. *Advaita* is, however, dauntingly superior in his eyes, because it does not simply put forward a moral code, but it aims at the perfection of the spirit. A moral code can be broken or not followed in the first instance. However, when a spirit is perfect, it is unfalteringly moral. All its actions would be moralistic. It would automatically have moral repercussions. This is just another example of why *Vedanta* is superior. It deals not only with the practical world, but is a religion proper, unlike other religions which cannot conciliate these two aspects.

Vivekananda was at fault in confusing the religion of Christianity with the whole idea of Western civilization. He bracketed Western society, culture and tradition all under the definition of Christianity. He attributed assets such as 'organization', 'political power', 'individual freedom', 'materialism', 'life assertion' and 'unity' to Christianity. For example, Christianity acknowledges the need to take care of the 'Apparent Self', in Vivekananda's terms. The 'Apparent Self' is part of the whole self, one living in the temporal world, and this fact should therefore not be ignored.

Vivekananda laid particular stress on materialism. History has proven that religion can easily revert to fanaticism. Love directed at religion may be manifest in the violent attempts to prove that a particular religion is superlative; for instance, in terms of India, the devotion of *Bhakti* can easily develop into fanaticism. One way in which fanaticism can be deterred or rendered harmless is through secularism, regarded by Vivekananda as being a derivative of materialism. Secularism is the divorce of religion from the affairs of the state as well as from the affairs of the individual such as pecuniary matters. Religion should not be seen directly to advocate the making of money. Through secularism, religion can

advocate money-making for the material welfare of man; but without secularism religion can often be seen as sanctioning exploitation. Modernity is another aspect of Christianity that Vivekananda wanted Hinduism to adopt. He picked certain aspects which he regarded as modern or compatible to modernity (such as materialism). To be modern, the Hindu religion needs materialism not only to prevent archaic fanaticism but also for a better understanding of the manifest world. Materialism as scientific *versus* superstition also rationalizes religion and prevents the 'religion *versus* reason' dilemma, so prevalent in India; yet apparently not in the modern Christian world.

Vivekananda also placed great emphasis on the personality of Jesus Christ as the epitome of the perfect being. Every individual should work with as much devotion as was exemplified by Christ. However, Vivekananda was not interested in the historicity of Christ. The fact of Christ's existence is not relevant to the eternal principles laid down by Christianity. According to Vivekananda, it mattered not whether Christ existed or not. All that matters is the teachings of Christ, for example, the selfless humanism. Love of fellow men, equality and fraternity and other such principles are indispensable to mankind; they constitute Christianity's contribution. On the other hand, Vivekananda was not completely dismissive of the historical fact of Jesus Christ; if Vivekananda were, he would be denying the fact that the will of one man changed the destiny of millions - the idea of man which, Vivekananda preached, would be saving grace of Hinduism.

Vivekananda also admired what had been accomplished in the name of Christianity and the devotional zeal with which these acts had been executed. He could not help but admire the passion Christianity has

inspired in millions. Crusaders, missionaries and simple Christians have risked their lives in the hope of persuading others to follow the 'path of the true light'. Many have given their lives instead of converting away from Christianity. He also admired the fact that in religious practices, people still adhere to the principles of fraternity and equality, unlike in the Hindu religion. Christianity seems to offer a path to salvation through worldly actions. It is a religion of life assertion - one of Vivekananda's main criticisms of the Hindu religion is that it has become a recipe for world negation.

The religion of Christianity itself has admirable traits. Even in theory it conjoins materialism (acknowledgement of Real and Apparent Selves) with 'absolutism' (values such as abstinence as exemplified by the Virgin Mary, for example, and forgiveness). Life and morality are connected dialectically. Christianity also preaches a world of a god who gives bread to the masses. It appears to acknowledge the fact that man cannot entertain spirituality if he has no bread and is starving. It does not promulgate lofty ideas of spirituality at the expense of the material well-being of man. Between people it begs that relationships consist of love, not from compulsion. It recognizes that bonds of love are stronger than the bonds of compulsion. Two of the most impressive aspects of Christianity are its universality (judging by the results, that is) as well as its modernity. Social justice, one of its main temporal aims, is still in as much demand as it always has been

Many of Vivekananda's main criticisms are not of the teachings of Christianity themselves, but of how they have been interpreted. Much of what Christianity consists of in practice is, according to him, misinterpretation. Monotheism and the corresponding proselytization, the

absolute denial of idolatry and similar factors are all seen to be misinterpretations. One of Christ's main proclamations is that man should have no enemies; if that is so, why should he purposely create them by condemning a different system of worship? According to Vivekananda, Christ would have said that all religions are true, if an individual met Christ and acknowledged His teachings and message but refused to accept Him as the Son of God, Christ would not object. Conversely, modern Christianity holds that acceptance of Christ's historicity is the defining characteristic of a Christian, not whether the individual is moral.¹⁶⁰

There is also a fundamental dilemma for Vivekananda in terms of his attitude towards materialism. Although it has the ability to arrest fanaticism in its tracks, it also has the potential to cause a lack of discrimination: another form of fanaticism. Furthermore, Christianity as a religion does not have the power to stand without the personality of Christ. Vivekananda, rightly or wrongly, saw religion as being the eternal principles embodied in a philosophy and separate from any personality or character. On these grounds, he could not regard Christianity as a religion in its own right. Even within the philosophy, Vivekananda was uncomfortable with many principles. He opposed the idea of sacrifice and the corresponding idea of vicarious atonement both of which seem to run contrary to what Vivekananda tried to change within the Hindu infrastructure: namely the concept of *karma* being otherworldly, negating life and the unchangeable in this life. He also fundamentally disagreed with the idea of sin and that man is born tainted by it. There are also in Christianity, ideas which Vivekananda could not comprehend, for example that God's mercy and justice are the same. To a Hindu this is an absurd

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., Vol. IV, pp150-1.

notion. Vivekananda could also not reconcile the fact that he regarded Christianity as a rational religion and it appears to regard beauty as God-eclipsing - a concept completely irrational in the opinion of the Hindu, brought up with stories of deities such as Krishna admiring the beauty of Radha; and passages and poems devoted to the beauty of their love-making.

It is obvious that Vivekananda could not and thus did not understand Christianity as would a Christian. He assessed it in terms of Hinduism; he laid emphasis and importance on aspects which may seem trivial to the native Christian. On the other hand, he unequivocally dismissed aspects that Christians may regard as fundamental. All in all, his admiration and criticisms closely resemble other Neo-Hindu reformers who took Christianity for what it meant to India and her regeneration. For example, the social injustice and rigid hierarchy witnessed in Hinduism has created an active admiration for a moral code based on equality and fraternity, especially one combined in a successfully communicative medium such as religion. He was unsure as to whether he admired secularism or the pervading religion in India. He admired in Indian Christians what he saw as the ability to have loyalties to both their Indian and Christian factions without damaging the root of belief. In other words, he believed that Indian Christians could be loyal to India and Christianity simultaneously. What he really observed was a split between religion and culture that did not exist within Hinduism. Christianity is institutionalized and thus the split is a result of the Indian Christian's newly-acquired ability to differentiate between religion and tradition or culture. For example, the beauty of egalitarianism can be separated from the evils of materialism. The essential goodness of religion (selflessness) is easily

soiled by the selfishness of society, when the religion concerned is not institutionalized. However, Vivekananda had an even more fundamental misunderstanding of Christianity: he could not understand the concept of Jesus Christ as being the Son of God. He regarded Christ as God Himself rather as *Kali* is an aspect of *Shiva* and he saw Christianity simply as a moral code. Vivekananda's understanding of Christianity was fundamentally flawed.

Vivekananda did not reject Christianity but attempted to redefine the core of it in the light of *Advaitic* faith. He thus attempted to make Hinduism more relevant to human issues raised in contemporary India through the impact on her of Western culture and Christianity. He saw Christianity within the framework of national regeneration. The root of evil, to him, was apparently social, thus the solutions to social evils lie in politics. Christianity as an institutionalized religion makes it easier to discern them; and Christianity as a practicable religion introduces an ethical code, thenceforth spiritualizing politics. This makes it practicable for the sacred and the secular not to be seen as separate. The new Indianized Christian moral code becomes based on the interaction of three active principles: *kama*, *artha* and *dharma*. Even if traditionally these principles had been interpreted as basic passive directives, under the new Christianization, they take on a new active meaning. Christianity as service to humanity played an positive role in translating these into active objectives. Christianity as a part of Western civilization and culture also played a significant role in the framework of Hindu regeneration. 'Love of municipal freedom, the exercise of virtues necessary for civil life, aptitudes for mechanical skill, love of science, respect for women', and all of these instruments for renewal, all feature as ideals to aspire to in the

manifesto for national regeneration. It could be said that these were Christian ideals, interpreted through Indian eyes. Another perspective could be that a reinforcement of Hinduism was obviously necessary in the light of the fear of Christianity's appeal to the downtrodden masses. Mentioned above are features which Hinduism needed to incorporate in order for it not to lose its followers to an egalitarian religion such as Christianity.

Vivekananda attempted to illustrate that Hinduism and Christianity were essentially the same, or that Christianity was another limb of *Vedanta*. To prove this would, in his eyes, make Christianity less attractive, for there would be no need to convert. Furthermore, to prove this would be to advance one step further in proving the perennial Philosophy. He claimed that this was the quintessential claim of Hinduism, acknowledged unequivocally by every Hindu, irrespective of caste, sect, gender or any other difference. By making the fact known that every Hindu acknowledges that all religions are the same is actually an acknowledgement by Hindus that the differences are due to regionality and society. Christianity's egalitarian thrust was necessary to translate this belief into the relationship of Hindus *qua* Hindus, between sects, *intra* Hinduism. In other words, tradition and practices such as caste, restrictions on intermarriage and food are social regulations and have nothing to do with religion. They are part of *neither* religion and thus cannot be of *either*. They possess no religious root and now the Hindu has explicitly admitted this fact. The admittance paves the way for easier reform of these regulations; there will be decreased opposition in the name of religion.

In place of these anachronistic social regulations, Vivekananda placed practices born out of his amalgamation of religion and social philosophy. The presence of this social philosophy will mean that the new practices will not be justified in terms of teleology. Those anachronistic practices such as caste that promised salvation eventually lose their justification. History has proven that human freedom is incompatible with a teleological order. Liberty is always sacrificed for the good of a future society. The new practices of Practical *Vedanta* will be products of a social philosophy and religion, sanctioning spirituality and humanism. It is, in effect, a marriage of Christian ideals of equality and fraternity with the Hindu notions of *karma* and atonement.

Vivekananda's relationship with Christianity was ironic. He admired characteristics such as materialism, institutionalism, strength and unity, among others, yet it is precisely some of these traits that he criticized when he referred to them in respect of Islam. The key to understanding this seeming paradox is how he saw both religions in respect of Hinduism, India and Indians. At times, he compared the Christian and Muslim religions with themselves to their detriment. He saw Islam as having converted many Hindus to Islam 'by the sword'. However, he did not regard Christianity as having the conquering power of Islam. He did not believe it to be a conquering religion (in terms of India). Christian missionaries are individuals whose influence never pervaded India. India's conversion has, in a sense, has been of a passive kind. The missionaries have also, in turn, been won over by the love of Christ and the image of Christ on the Cross, and the idea of one man's altering the destiny of millions. Christianity, to Vivekananda, won over many people with its ideals of fraternity and equality, as opposed to its threat of death. The

most important factor is that Christianity as a religion never held suzerainty over India.

This ironic relationship is characteristic of how Vivekananda looked upon Christianity with Hindu-oriented perceptions. For example, assets which Christians see as fundamental in Christianity, he readily dismissed; and yet he laid great stress on aspects to which the Christians pay little attention. Christians are taught that Christ is the only begotten Son of God and Vivekananda retorted that Christians are too possessive about their religion. He did not assess Christianity objectively; he sought to comprehend it in the patterns of Indian thought. He looked for a positive role for Christianity within the Hindu framework - that the destiny of man and the will of God are interwoven, for example. However, in the supposed synthesis, there was the worry that the character of Christianity may prevail, in certain areas. Vivekananda unintentionally safeguarded against this because he did not attempt a thorough comprehension of Christianity; he inserted aspects of humanism and social philosophy, not aspects of Christianity, into Practical *Vedanta*. It may simply be humanism worded in Western and Western-religious rhetoric. Vivekananda was infatuated by a practicable social theory based on ethics and in a way, introduced this social theory into aspects of *Vedantic* philosophy because he knew that spirituality can never really be a panacea for world fellowship. A superficial understanding of Christianity thus prevents real Christianity from ever prevailing.

Furthermore, in attempting to interpret Christ in terms of the principles of *Vedanta*, he actually removed Christ from the religious context. He minimized the emphasis on historicity and he enunciated the principles he saw to be the essence of religion. Vivekananda converted

Christ into a manifestation of the eternal spiritual principles of the *Vedanta*, or more aptly, the Perennial Philosophy. In line with Vivekananda's belief that Christ is a universal character, what he actually did was to convert Christ to Hinduism; and create another Hindu deity, Christ. He subjected the personality of Christ to rigorous scrutiny in terms of Indian religious principles and in doing so, he saw Christianity as a "religion seeking metaphysic, subordinating the task of finding an adequate philosophy to the urgent need of moral regeneration and the primacy of ethical principles with itself."¹⁶¹

In effect, Vivekananda actually stripped Christianity of any dignity it possessed. He regarded it not as a religion, but rather as a social code which could have emerged from any situation in any age, without requiring any particular personality. This is so much so that, he regarded the social code, or as he saw it, religion, to be wholly applicable to India of 1890, in India needing reform. Christianity could, in his eyes, have been born in Bengal in 1890 with no differences, if the conditions had been favourable. The impact that it has had on the world is denied its validity. He denied it a place as a dominant religion.

¹⁶¹ A.C., op. cit., p 140.

CHAPTER IV

VIVEKANANDA'S LIBERALISM

It would appear inevitable that a political movement would emerge to oppose the British injustice. Opposition to injustice takes many forms, just as injustice itself takes many forms (in Europe between the two world wars, Socialism was held to be the in opposition to Fascism; whereas in the contemporary world, democracy is seen as the opponent of authoritarianism). In the case of India, there was a necessity to battle on two fronts: the physical and the ideological. To conquer British injustice, Indians would have to succeed on both counts.

British Imperialism was the most imposing, encompassing and centralized power that India had witnessed; opposition to it would need to be structured, systematic and unified. Such opposition needed a political ideology; which India did not possess. Furthermore, India did not understand the power and practical efficacy of a political ideology as a weapon, not having had an experience of it and was not clear about how to create one. Ironically, because she was fighting against repression and because liberalism as an ideology was structured for such a fight, India took on British liberalism as a form of opposition to British imperialism. Liberalism was the logical, ideological recourse for a nation fighting against repression. However, some of its aspects were alien or unsuited to India, and hence the desperate struggle to Indianize it.

Ram Mohan Roy is regarded as the originator of what is commonly called 'Hindu revival'; but it was Vivekananda who, in the line of reformers, was the first to alter the stress of the movement by emphasizing that the force of change must come from within India. India

should not imitate the West, but draw upon her rich tradition in order to write her own future. She had failed in the writing of her past: she had allowed invasion by a “handful of foreigners”¹ because she had never been a nation.²

Vivekananda combined liberalism with Indian religious and spiritual ideas. His combination was intellectually untidy because he was not familiar with liberal doctrines. Furthermore, he intended to create a pragmatic theory and was not overly concerned with a theoretical amalgamation of traditions (hence ‘*Practical Vedanta*’). Moreover, the Raj was excluded from the mainstream of British political ideological banter and few colonialists shared the same ideals as their liberal contingents in Europe especially because they were comfortable in their position of dominance. Although many Britishers harboured a sense of racial superiority, liberal notions were to an increasing extent, permeating through the colonial administration and ‘Anglo-Indians’ (as Forster calls them in *A Passage to India*) were beginning to take on a more liberal *Weltanschauung*, even in regard to India and Indians.

Many Anglo-Indians were of the conviction that they were in India for the benefit of Indians and India: to organize and moralize India. In fact, even according to the principles of liberalism, imperialism can be justified and many justified it thus. India could be ruled with an iron fist as she would eventually reap the benefits, which would far outweigh the brutal methods. It is either ironic or logical that Indians could oppose the British only with (British) liberal notions and that these would only permit the growth of an ideology such as liberalism in India. The British could not

¹ S.V.C.W., Vol. III, p 190.

² Ibid., Vol. VIII, p 306.

oppose the growth of liberalism for fear of criticizing their own justification of imperialism. It is pertinent that the Indians needed liberalism to fight against repression and the British were using it to justify that repression. The result was that a peculiarly Indian liberalist ideology emerged; this aimed to uplift people and unite them to fight paradoxically against, liberalism, yet it is precisely the liberal argument that there is not only one version of justice and Indians were utilizing liberalism to superimpose as Indian version of justice.

Vivekananda has been heralded as the originator of what is called '*Vedantic Socialism*': a proposal for change; a branch of socialism applicable to the East and specifically to India. Many of its ideas derive from religion, or more generally from humanism. In another sense, it is the realization of religious principles and humanism in practical and political terms. This is precisely where Vivekananda notably influenced Gandhi. However, I believe that to classify Vivekananda's humanism and thought as 'socialism' is a grave misinterpretation and it will be my intention to argue against it; if it indeed needs to be categorized, it should be 'liberal'. If it were to be classified it as socialist, emphasis is misdirected. Instead of looking for concepts such as faith in man, rights of the individual, and other concepts common to liberal thought, one would look at socialist concepts, such as social service, as the mainstay of Vivekananda's thought. Social service is important but it emanates from liberal notions such as the social contract and collective salvation. Vivekananda's thought was concerned with the betterment of the Indian nation and must be viewed from this perspective. In the background one must note the Indian discourse on liberalism and its influence on him, especially J.S. Mill³ and Herbert Spencer⁴

³ For example. *S.V.C.W.*, Vol II, pp 337, 506.

“Vivekananda was influenced both by Spencer’s method - the synthetic approach of bringing into harmony diverse strands of human experience - and by his conclusion - that throughout existence there ran a continuous thread of progressive development⁵; also relevant are Rousseau’s influence in terms of radical reform, and Burke, who pointed out that history is a lesson to be learnt from. This was a stance very different from the radicals (Vivekananda calls them ‘pseudopatriots’⁶ and they are generally referred to as the Westernized Indians) of the time, who were incidentally growing in number. One must be careful not to attribute erroneously a notion to a certain thinker. Many of Vivekananda’s ideas stemmed from a liberal viewpoint but did not necessarily derive from a Western liberal thinker; two or more people can stumble upon the same idea or even train of thought because of the *Zeitgeist*. There are too many works which cite examples of Vivekananda’s concepts and then wrongly attribute them to another author simply because of their similarity and possibly because there was some connection between the two people. This is frequently committed without careful consideration of whether the connection is true or even viable.

Another aspect that must be assessed in relation to attributing Vivekananda’s thoughts to another source is that much of his thought is pragmatic. Many solutions he advocated were for a specific flaw, and are logical; thus, to attribute them to liberal thought is to give them a meaning they do not warrant and, more particularly, to take them out of context.

⁴ S.V.C.W., Vol. II, p 342.

⁵ Baumfield and Gray, ‘The Concept of Progress in the Writings of Herbert Spencer and Swami Vivekananda’, being a lecture given at the Ninth Seminar of the Sanskrit Tradition in the Modern World, University of Newcastle-upon-Tyne, 3 June 1993.

⁶ Rao, ‘Vedantic Socialism’ cites Vivekananda referring to Indians who wanted to ‘destroy history’ as ‘pseudopatriots’, in B.K. and S. Ahluwalia (eds), *Vivekananda and Indian Renaissance*, pp 73-4, Associated Publishing Company, New Delhi, 1983.

This has been a particular fault of the heavy-handed connection of Vivekananda's thought with socialism. There are reasons making this connection implausible. Pragmatism and idealism are diametrically opposed; much of Vivekananda's thought is pragmatic whereas socialism is particularly idealistic in the sense that socialism cannot be adjoined to principles that in theory do not strive towards the same goal. Socialism is teleological in that even its pragmatic policies are influenced, even guided, by the ideals of socialism. Hence, it cannot be stated with conviction that Vivekananda's ideals were always socialist: his pragmatism divorces itself from this connection. On the other hand, it is precisely an aspect of liberalism to be practicable.

Furthermore, Vivekananda's amalgamation of liberal and Indian ideas was (semi-academic because it was) practical and *ad hoc*. To amalgamate any two theoretical ideas academically, it is necessary to start from the same standpoint; from one conception of man, for example. Liberalism and Indian spirituality have completely different conceptions, just as the Western and the Eastern conceptions of man are indisputably different. Conversely to start with one conception is to deny validity to the other tradition specifically because to a large extent, the concepts within each tradition are a natural product of the respective conceptions of man. Beer, in his critique of E.M. Forster's *A Passage to India*, expounds on the difficulty of adopting a particularly Western philosophy in a country such as India. The ideological and practical traditions differ greatly and hence the need for appropriating particular Indian aspects to make it practicable. One only has to look at Forster's application of liberal-humanist ideals to India in his novel to see its failure, as so many critics reiterate, to realize

that Western values cannot simply be transferred to an Eastern setting, without alteration;

The text [A Passage to India' reveals the crisis of a liberal-humanist ideology - its impotence as a code in an embattled social situation where moderation and compromise are not possible, its inadequacy as an explanation of a universe more extensive than the environment made by human intervention, and the insufficiency of its insights into the potentialities of mind, whose experiential range exceeds ratiocination and sensory cognition.⁷

One must also be careful to appreciate that many of Vivekananda's ideas are modern and would still be considered radical and revolutionary in many contemporary Western societies. The sources of Vivekananda's Indianization of liberalism were initially set down by Ram Mohan Roy and later followed by, among others, Gandhi. The synthesis of the Indian faction with liberalism is substantiated, for example, by substituting liberalism's internationalism (regarding individuals as the ultimate and quintessential macrocosm in the sense that man is the bearer of all rights and society is merely the protector of these) with religious boundaries (where man is a part of the ideal cosmic macrocosm). His concern for the individual was not socialistic in nature; he believed not in dogmatic equality, but rather in the equality of opportunity, substantiated through religious legitimation. V.K.R.V. Rao supplements it with the comment: "[n]ot that [Vivekananda] was a believer in arithmetical equality for all human being."⁸

⁷ Beer, (ed.), *A Passage to India*, Macmillan, Basingstoke, 1985, p 32.

⁸ Rao, "Vedantic socialism' in Ahluwalia, op. cit., p 77.

Vivekananda's liberalism has a predominantly Indian root: there is a corresponding, peculiarly Indian, rationale for Western liberal concepts. Initially, this appears to be a contradiction because Western concepts have their own roots and rationale. Vivekananda, through different a thought process, reached the same conclusions and hence produced the same concepts. For example, the notion that man is the highest being in Western liberal thought is the basis of the abstract idea of 'rights'. Men (and not animals) have rights because man has dignity. Vivekananda was emphatic that man should be religiously defined rather than as an abstract individual. Man is *Atman*, and therefore *Brahman*, and therefore has dignity and rights. There is also a particularly Indian/Hindu counter-reasoning behind Vivekananda's concern: that *Brahman* is the ultimate essence and that man is the manifest personification of that essence. Thus, he, his individuality and his individual rights must be protected at all costs. Even more to the point, he must be allowed to flourish with no adverse hindrance. What this means in effect is that society is reared for the benefit of the individual (hence Vivekananda can disagree with the exploitation within the caste system yet still agree with the kinship of the system). Although the rhetoric and source are different, the ideal is the same. The same conclusion is reached, though through different means and sources.

The question arises as to whether Vivekananda can truly be called a liberal - a term directly corresponding to a societal *modus operandi* with definite concepts at its source and distinctly Western in essence. Huxley's 'Perennial Philosophy'⁹ sheds light on this question. One of Huxley's main concerns is to show more than verisimilitude between philosophers and

⁹ Huxley A., *The Perennial Philosophy*, Harper and Row, New York, 1970.

religious/spiritual seers, notwithstanding the source or perspective from where they or their ideas emanate. Obviously, as religious practices differ from religion to religion, let alone from sect to sect or area to area, these similarities are of the philosophy underlying the religions. '*Philosophia Perennis*' was a phrase coined by Leibniz; it embodies the "metaphysic that recognizes a divine Reality substantial to the world of things and lives and minds; the psychology that finds in the soul something similar to, or even identical with divine Reality; the ethic that places man's final end in the knowledge of the immanent, and transcendent Ground of all being - the thing is immemorial and universal,"¹⁰ Exponents of this philosophy come from every respective religion and are those who, believing in the Divinity and Unity of Life, ultimately regard religion as the means of propagating the notion of the ontological hegemony of humans. In many instances, they reject the rituals and practices of a religion and are regarded as radical and blasphemous within and without that religion. On closer analysis, however, it is in many cases the rituals of religion are themselves radical and these differ from one religion to another. The *Vedas* tell us of one ordered system of prescribed sacrifices for repentance; the *Qu'ran*, another. According to those who profess the Perennial Philosophy, the philosophies underlying sacrifice are exactly the same. An individual acknowledging and living by this underlying philosophy should be regarded not as an aberration, a deviant from the religion, but should be regarded as a devout follower and one who understands the fundamental source of life and religion. In this sense Vivekananda is a liberal and yet he is not; he is an 'essentialist'.

¹⁰ Ibid., Introduction, p vii.

Huxley attempts to explain the difference between canonized religion and the essential underlying philosophy, by quoting religious philosophers from both East and West implying that the rituals of religion are meaningless and, furthermore, that many men who claim to be religious and are stringent followers of the rituals may be superimposing their morals and categories up on their own idea of God, and therefore upon man. In many instances, this is taken to be the religion proper. For example, there is a Zen Buddhist sect in Japan from which the following quotation was taken:

O you disciples who aspire to the truth, if you wish to obtain an orthodox knowledge of Zen, take care not to deceive yourselves. Tolerate no obstacles, neither interior or exterior, to the soaring of your spirit. If on your way you meet Buddha, kill him! If you meet the Patriarchs, kill them! If you meet the Saints, kill them without any hesitation! That is the only way of reaching salvation.¹¹

This premise stems from the fact that Buddha is within you. Huxley reiterates the same theme in *The Perennial Philosophy*:

The holy light of faith is so pure that, compared with it, particular lights are but impurities; and even the ideas of the saints, of the Blessed Virgin, and the sight of Jesus Christ in his humanity are impediments in the way of the sight of God in his purity.¹²

¹¹ Raju P.T., *Idealistic Thought of India, Vedanta and Buddhism in the light of Western Materialism*, Johnson Reprint Corporation, New York 1973. First published by George Allen and Unwin, 1963 under the title *Idealistic Thought of India*, subtitles added later; p 304, quoting Rinzaroku, by Steinhler-Oberlin, the Buddhist Sects of Japan, pp 143-4.

¹² *The Perennial Philosophy*, op.cit., p 31; Huxley informs us that this opinion comes from J.J. Olier.

Vivekananda's statement about attaining God through football takes on a less blasphemous role in this light. Thus, Huxley makes it clear that Vivekananda is categorized as 'liberal' precisely because of his radical notions. Raju¹³ points out that anti-traditionalism is still relatively new in India in comparison to the Western world. Vivekananda is therefore classified as a 'liberal', 'radical' and a 'socialist' simultaneously.

Hinduism thrived on a collective mass of believers, all joined together; only in unison could they evoke the power eminent from religion. Again there is a difference between the quintessential religion of mantras, and that of Practical Hinduism. Religionists believed themselves to be powerless without the help of the *Brahmins*; or at least without others in the temple with whom their power could be combined. Ultimately, this was a lack of faith in oneself, which became readily more noticeable against the power of the divine *Brahmin* (as they were seen to be).

Vivekananda changed this whole situation by, in effect, creating another ideology that combined and emphasized, independently of each other, the power of the individual and of the collective mass, through concepts such as collective salvation. It could be effected only through individual action. To him, there was no divorce between the contemplative life and social service. In a country regarding groups as the only political, social, and legal entity, Vivekananda stood out as a radical in pursuit of acute individualism. This is exacerbated because salvation for the individual, according to this ideology, was 'freedom from emotions, from fear': in effect, freedom from the ritual and dogmatism of Practical Hinduism. This freedom, Vivekananda maintained, should be initiated individually. Such a statement provoked repercussions of incredulity in a

¹³ *Idealistic Thought of India.*, op. cit.

country like India, which has maintained voluntary obedience to the exploitation of the caste system through the fear inculcated in the people. Vivekananda encouraged each individual to fight the fear and to think for himself ('Freedom of thought' is a subset of 'freedom from fear'. Vivekananda's concept of salvation does not directly involve freedom *to* but this topic is not relevant here). The individual is then to get up and act on those thoughts. The emphasis is on the duty of each individual to free himself from fear, initiating the collective drive for salvation.

[Vivekananda] pleaded for individual freedom, independent thinking and development of the individual will, and asserted, 'It is more blessed, in my opinion, even to go wrong impelled by one's free will and intelligence than to be good as an automatic.' 'How can that be called society', he said, 'which is formed by an aggregate of men who are like lumps of clay, like lifeless machines, like heaped up pebbles? How can such society fare well?'¹⁴

Social and religious freedom should constitute the result for the individual and political freedom for the nation. The problem in India is that religious and social restriction (fear) are separate yet are eventually joined together to impose notions of religious impurity on social existence.¹⁵ Vivekananda attempted to emancipate man in both areas through one method. He put the social and the religious together and advocated individualism as the liberating factor: "I was terribly frightened

¹⁴ Rao, 'Vedantic Socialism', in Ahluwalia, op. cit., p 86 No reference.

¹⁵ See Dumont, *Homo Hierarchicus*, where Dumont cites examples of the leather maker and the question of whether the impurity that is associated with this trade is linked to the person or the trade; whether it is temporary or is permanent if one were to leave the trade. Plus see his section on 'Purity and Impurity'.

and thought that I was facing death, for the loss of individuality meant nothing short of that,"¹⁶

Vivekananda's idea of freedom, liberation, slavery and ontological death all revolve around the concept of 'individuality'. For example, "imitation is death", he stated; in other words, the elevation of India is possible only through people's regaining individuality. His ideal fraternity is closely linked to the liberal ideal of coexistence; to be governed is to be free¹⁷ - which again stems from an admiration for individualism. When Vivekananda is analyzed from this perspective, it can easily be seen that his ideas were influenced by socialism less than they were by liberalism. His intentions for the social service of humanity also hinge on an appreciation for and the desire to regain individuality.

In India, we have social communism, with the light of Advaita - that is, spiritual individualism - playing on and around it; in Europe, you are socially individuals, but your thought is dualistic, which is spiritual communism.¹⁸

Social individualism, taken out of context, relieves society and its members of the responsibility of any actions taken by an individual. The individual alone bears the result, injury, responsibility and happiness of the fruition of an action. Hypothetically, it appears ideal. However, it is not even remotely possible. Actions inevitably affect people, and in the majority of cases, the reason an action is performed is precisely to create

¹⁶ Sarma, 'Vivekananda and Hinduism' citing Vivekananda, (no reference) in Ahluwalia, op. cit.

¹⁷ Rao, 'Vedantic Socialism' in *ibid.*

¹⁸ 'Nivedita, (1982) in Vivekananda, *State, Society and Socialism*, Advaita Ashrama, Calcutta 1989, pp 7-8 quoting from *Complete Works of Nivedita*, Vol. I, p 144, 1982.

an effect on another. The effects beneficial or otherwise, of the action may eventually rebound on the original performer. For example, I may set a good example by putting litter in a bin: eventually, if people follow my example, my town will be clean to live in. Social individualism can be harmful in that if the actor pays no attention to the outcome of his actions, especially in consideration of others, he may be pleasing himself but harming all others in society. Vivekananda echoes this same sentiment in the context of marriage in the West.¹⁹

By contrast, in India, the basis of all social order is caste law.²⁰ Rules, customs and laws are guided by morality, laid down by religion. Religious and moral regulation guides not only the actions but also the non-action, the deliberated omissions - and the conscience which controls all of these. The purpose of a 'collective morality' such as this one is that if single action should be deliberated by either direct or indirect inference, it will result in harm to or displeasure in the rest of society. Such actions will eventually be arrested or their scope diminished by society because it is in the interest of the whole of society. Politics must, in Vivekananda's thought, advocate a collective conscience in the same way as does religion: by proclaiming that everyone belongs to the same 'family'; politics would protest that for instance, if you do not pay your taxes, you are disadvantaging your fellow man.

Social regulation can be manipulated precisely because it may not govern the whole of society. Dumont in *Homo Hierarchicus* lists restrictions peculiar to certain areas. It is not impossible to convince people within a certain district that beating an Untouchable is not a ritual of religion, but it

¹⁹ Ibid., p8.

²⁰ Ibid.

is more difficult to convince the whole of society. Furthermore, because caste order is oligarchic in character, only the top echelons of the religio-social hierarchy need to be convinced and who will accordingly put such convictions in operation. This task is made even easier because it is probably a member (or more) of this oligarchy desirous of the change. Caste law can be exploitative and dogmatic. Individual opinion, if it dissents, be it rightly or wrongly, will be considered blasphemous and reform becomes nearly impossible. Such individual opinion is overtly criticized and penalized. The beneficiaries of reform will themselves overtly criticize it because assenting to it most probably will be punished.

Reform and change, even if they are beneficial, become enemies to the people. To add to this irony, ideas intended to bring beneficial change are usually seen as 'radical' because they are in opposition to the fixed dogma in existence for many decades or even centuries. Dogma which is irrational, especially religious dogma, is still believed to be infallible; paradoxically yet specifically because of its irrationality. Faith as a ground for belief can, at times, far overwhelm direct awareness. Religion, for example, has existed for thousands of years with each person respectfully bowing his head and soul to temples, churches, synagogues and mosques without the majority of religious followers ever glimpsing anything remotely divine. They nevertheless reverently bow their heads and souls. The desire for salvation is stronger than the desire personally to witness evidence. Hence, rational reform is abandoned, the country is stagnant, its traditions ossified and its superstitions crystallized. India is more prone to stagnation because her physical vastness and scarce population density make the dissemination of ideas very difficult; and reform is contained. "It

is easier to set fire to an iceberg than to start a revolution in India.”²¹ However, Vivekananda, inspired by his knowledge of J.S. Mill and Herbert Spencer, vehemently felt the need to try. Even in the West, such philosophers were regarded as radical; in India they had much less chance of being accepted. Nevertheless, liberal ideas had permeated his mind and soul:

For the luxury of a handful of rich, we let millions of men and women remain submerged in the hell of want and abysmal depth of ignorance for if they get wealth and education, society will be upset: Who is society? The millions, or you, I and a few others of the upper classes?²²

Vivekananda's main contention was that there could not be growth without liberty. Society as well as religion should be freed of ossification. Only when man was free could he experience the pleasure of free religious thought. In India, not religion, but dogma and superstition were being practised. To Vivekananda religion, supposedly a chosen way of life, was putting chains around the ankles of every man. To him, religion could be utilized advantageously for reform. Faith could be wielded as a weapon. Faith and shared spirituality were seen as the key components of the Hindu identity; and here could lie the foundation for change.

India needed an injection of politics to revive a certain amount of individualism. To Vivekananda, politics was therefore the liberating factor for India's stagnation, as long as such individualism was kept in check by the morality of religion. Vivekananda admired the West for its individual freedom. Political liberty was the encapsulation of social, religious,

²¹ Swaminathan, 'His Ideal for Tomorrow' in Ahluwalia, op. cit., p 59.

²² Ibid., p 61.

economical and legal liberty; freedom of thought and action (obviously freedom does not permit injury to others or such like). The predominant question is then, 'how much politicization should India undergo?' Too much will transform India to Westernism, which was also not what Vivekananda wanted. The West, according to him, is devoid of religion. Vivekananda searched for a compromise between religion and politics; a theory applicable to the peculiarities of India.

In light of the material condition of India, Vivekananda argued that man must have food before liberty. Liberty directly affects the mind, but is futile without the strength of the body.²³ Man should have liberty in food and dress, in marriage - religion did no justice to the institution of marriage.²⁴ Yet if the British were to politicize India, and hand over the authority of assuming liberty, Indians would abuse this authority further to subjugate their own people instead of using that same authority to raise them. As they have been subjugated and subservient, they would use the authority to raise themselves by subjugating. 'Slaves want power to make slaves'.²⁵ Vivekananda delivered his Indian version of liberalism to counteract this and as a method to instil a collective conscience and morality after liberty. Thus, authority has been relinquished by the British. It is important to note that Vivekananda's theories were not only a means to rid India of the British, but also an ideology to live by after independence:

²³ S.V.C.W., vol. IV, p 463.

²⁴ Ibid., Vol. VI, p 318: Vivekananda criticized customs such as child marriage in Hinduism and rhetorically asked what kind of religion wants to make its followers pregnant before they reach puberty; in other words he mocked customs which he saw as irreligion, but that are commonly regarded as religion; thus asking whether it is really religion that makes these customs.

²⁵ S.V.C.W., Vol. IV, p 463.

Another truth I have realised is that altruistic service only is religion, the rest such as ceremonial observances is madness - even it is wrong to hanker after one's own salvation. Liberation is only for him who gives up everything for others; whereas others who tax their brains day and night harping on 'my salvation', 'my salvation', wander about with their true-being ruined both present and prospective.²⁶

Vivekananda combined religion and politics through the amalgamation of the political idea of liberty and the religious idea of salvation. Vivekananda's liberalism would hold it in check by providing a religious-humanitarian foundation.

Reformation in India has had a varied past. The reform of Shankara was directed towards the intelligentsia, literate in Sanskrit and well versed in philosophy. The majority of the population had no recourse to this reform, thus essentially it was no reform at all. It was ironic that Shankara's philosophy protesting the ontological equality of men was unavailable to the majority of men due to strict class laws restricting title to such 'divine' philosophy. Ramanuja and the *Bhakti* movement appealed to the emotions and was delivered in the vernacular, making it more accessible. The denial of birthright, an integral aspect of this movement, re-awoke a feeling of fraternity and communalism. Kabir, Nanak and Chaitanya were also eminent in proclaiming the equality of men.²⁷ For any reform in India to have any lasting effect, it should ideally affect most people; further, it should really require their support, individual and collective.

²⁶ Ibid. Originally Vivekananda, 'Letters, 350'.

²⁷ S.V.C.W., Vol. IV, p 463.

In India, the great task of combining social communitarianism with competition, was still checked by dogmatism. Vivekananda's liberalism was charged with this task; actually dialectically combining 'socialism' (or social communitarianism) with competition *per se*. Ideally, socialism would ensure assimilation within the community and competition would ensure that the reform is complete. Social communitarianism would keep the competition in its rightful propation.

Vivekananda was very liberal in that his main concern is the individual *per se* and part of a group. Vivekananda's liberalism as a methodology is less liberal because some of those concerns are omitted or adulterated in an attempt to accommodate them into a pragmatic political theory. For example, Vivekananda saw the lack of competition and checking of competition as being the cause of the downfall of India and her conquest by foreign races.²⁸ Competition and social communitarianism dichotomously relate, but, inevitably, an attempt to combine them dialectically into a practical theory will omit some aspects of either or both. What is important thereof is not the type of theory that is produced, but the extent of its comprehensibility by the people. In this way, Vivekananda was ingenious because he was not overly concerned about the academic amalgamation of two concepts, but rather the extent to which they could be utilized by the people. In this way, Vivekananda was utilitarian, hence his stringent emphasis on practicability (Practical *Vedanta*). A less inventive theory may be more brilliant because it can be comprehended and put into practice. Vivekananda incorporated a certain amount of materialism into this practicability, despite his recognition of its evils: "Then society has to help itself, and materialism comes to the

²⁸ Vivekananda, *State, Society and Socialism*, op. cit., p 18.

rescue.”²⁹ Vivekananda is renowned for protesting that he did not believe in a god who does not provide bread.³⁰ What is the use of spiritualism if people are starving and cannot muster the energy to walk, let alone carry out the rituals commonly associated with religion? What is the use of freedom when man has no food?

Despite the emphasis on such features as materialism, competition, spirituality and communitarianism, the most important aspect is the manner in which such features, and reform through them, is conveyed to the masses. Education was the medium and it is what Vivekananda admired most about the West. The difference between the East and the West was primarily due to education, he protested. In the latter even the poor people were educated; it was a right enjoyed by all citizens. However, in the former, it was an exclusive privilege enjoyed by the wealthy; furthermore, the education that they enjoyed was simply blind praise of anything British. Individuals emerged from their education with parochial vision, regarding anything British, or even more unthinkingly, anything Western, as enviable; and anything Eastern or Indian as in need of change. Education is the agent of change. Education narrowed the gap between lower and higher classes in the West, whereas in the East the abyss seems unbridgeable. The abyss is the reason that India has been unable to unite and act as a nation - the reason why she has been conquered by Mughals and British. Education, according to Vivekananda, is the root solution and it can make a nation. It can instil confidence and faith into people. Faith is the basis of any sort of advancement; without it, a nation is in ruins.³¹ Vivekananda failed to realize that a nation did not necessarily have a

²⁹ *S.V.C.W.*, Vol. III, p 157.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, Vol. IV, p 368.

³¹ *Ibid.*, Vol. VIII, p 306.

singular opinion. Education had been monopolized in India, as is characteristic of primitive societies:

[I]t is highly significant that, among many contemporary primitives, two thought patterns are found - an exoteric pattern for the unphilosophic many and an esoteric pattern (often monotheistic, with a belief in God not merely of power, but of goodness and wisdom) for the initiated few.³²

A false, unmeritorious and unhealthy authority is created because notwithstanding whether they have been educated or not, the higher classes are seen as 'educated'; the opposite is the case with the lower classes. The former is a very small minority and the latter, a very large majority. Vivekananda laid great emphasis on education's being brought to the masses for the salvation of India.

Strength of personality, discipline, compassion, devotion and intuitive intellect, initiative and individuality were key aspects necessary for the success of Vivekananda's liberalism and the regeneration of India. Education was for the purpose of reawakening the dormant soul force. The soul force encouraged fearlessness and the motivation to tackle problems, characteristics that would eventually regenerate India.³³ The soul force is synonymous with dynamic individualism, in practical terms. It includes the ability to rationalize without simply accepting catatonically and this was not so in India. Education was therefore not institutional but individual, aimed at the liberty of individuals. Vivekananda was hinting at liberty when he mentioned that the difference between the West and Indian was in education also meant that India had her individual

³² *The Perennial Philosophy*, op. cit., p 19.

³³ Rao, 'Vedantic Socialism' in Ahluwalia, op. cit., p 91.

educational needs. She ultimately needed to elevate the masses through education and to encourage spirituality, fraternity and modernity in political terms as well as individual. Only when this was done could India emerge from her isolation.

Vivekananda recognized that India could not develop self-criticism, without which change was impossible. The lower classes have been labouring relentlessly and silently, without reward and recognition, while the higher classes have colonized them in the same way as the British did. The higher classes are apathetic, while the lower classes are not permitted to think of luxury of apathy.³⁴ Only through mass education can this situation be ameliorated. This must become a reality, Vivekananda urged. Political education will teach individually through liberal ideas and spiritual education will teach unity through the proclamation of Essential Hinduism: "Here it may be remarked that the cult of unity on the political level is only an idolatrous ersatz for the genuine religion of unity on the personal and spiritual levels."³⁵

Vivekananda saw essential Hinduism as Practical *Vedanta* and Vivekananda's liberalism: while liberalism guarantees against excessive privilege and power, essential spiritualism counters standing temptations from privilege and power such as pride, greed, vanity and cruelty. There will be no oppression and thus no fear and envy (both negative in themselves). To have politics without spirituality is disastrous, Vivekananda protested since political unity can be utilized for nefarious means without individual morality. The problem is that Vivekananda saw a link between metaphysical unity of the individual and the political unity

³⁴ Vivekananda, *State, Society and Socialism*, op. cit., p 51.

³⁵ *The Perennial Philosophy*, op. cit., p 11.

of the nation. The latter was not feasible without the former. However, as Huxley points out, political monism; “unification under the heel of the state is salvation, and all means to such unification leads in practice to excessive privilege and power for the few and oppression for the many.”³⁶ In this context, unification under an over-arching slogan is opposed to spiritual and metaphysical unity, both of which require unconstrained mental freedom and the unimpeded cultivation of discipline (not in the face of temptation, encouraging exploitation of and separateness from others, but rather, away from it). Thus, he saw that if a society imposed more unity than its members were ready for would create a disastrous situation in which individuals would be unable to realize their metaphysical unity.³⁷

Vivekananda saw spiritual and individual unity as being entities bases which people necessarily need to recognize before they accepted diversity in political, economic and social life. In recognizing this unity, people would understand the basis of diversity without feeling threatened by its ramifications. To him, there was an essential bond linking everyone, and in recognizing this, people would permit diversity because they would recognize it merely as an imperative for living in the manifest world, rather than as an opportunity for opposition. Opposition builds barriers, which Vivekananda attempted to destroy them within India. It is only in accepting diversity that man can help his fellow man, and in doing so, help the society and humanity.³⁸

Unity can destroy nefarious power but is important only if it is realizable, practicable and universal. It must not only stimulate the

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Rolland, *The Life of Vivekananda and the Universal Gospel. (A Study of Mysticism and Action in Living India)*, Translated by Malcolm-Smith, E.F., Advaita Ashrama, Calcutta, 1988, pp 166-7.

intellect of the intelligentsia, but also ensure the devotion of the inhabitants of a village bent on mysticism. It must encourage 'patriotism as the religion of humanity'.³⁹ In being universalistic, it is internationalist. Nehru expressed this in words that might have readily come from Vivekananda:

There cannot be any progress without the whole world following in the wake, and it is becoming every day clearer that the solution of any problem can never be attained on racial or national, or narrow grounds...Every idea has to become broad till it covers the whole of this world. Every aspiration must go on increasing till it has engulfed the whole of humanity, may the whole of life, within its scope.⁴⁰

This is what Vivekananda envisaged the future of his liberal project to be. God is politicized, if need be, into a universalist patriotic unification of humanity: God as father and all humans, regardless of religion, as children.

The ideas of internationalism, universality, progress and reform and related concept such as individuality and dynamism of personality and were products of the amalgamation of religion and politics to produce a form of internally liberal, defensively militant, and externally strong patriotic religio-politic as *Realpolitik*. It was not socialistic; he himself admitted that even though he did not think socialism was a perfect system, half a loaf of bread was better than none. He never did develop the details of his acclaimed *Vedantic Socialism*,⁴¹ the outline of the transition he envisages, the institutional changes, or whether these included a strategy

³⁹ Radhakrishnan, 'The Spirit of India', in Ahluwalia, op. cit., p 3.

⁴⁰ Nehru, 'Gospel of Godly Incense', in *ibid.*, p 8.

⁴¹ Rao, 'Vedantic Socialism', in *ibid.*, p 96.

of parliamentary or revolutionary action.⁴² He campaigned for the abolition of exclusive privileges, exploitation, hypocrisy, poverty and starvation (and ignorance: *viz.* the conversation with a member of a society protecting mother cows). Vivekananda did succeed in creating the phase in which many other politico-religionists would promulgate. The unification of religion and politics in such a pragmatic manner was useful to Gandhi, amongst others. *Satyagraha* can be seen as a progression from *Vedantic* Socialism. Both Vivekananda and Gandhi would accept Blake's dictum: 'Religion is politics and politics is brotherhood.'⁴³

Why not call Vivekananda a liberal in the Indian sense, just as Nehru was a liberal without being a devout follower of religion? Most of Vivekananda's methodological concepts point to a liberal and contemporary political source and rationale (and his solutions) can easily be mistaken for Western liberalism. The answer to this lies in his strong belief and devotion to spirituality and God. The fact that he was not afraid to destroy religious rituals regarded as being inherently divine, but which he saw to be futile, may appear to have a political function. However, it is paradoxical in that his belief in the ultimate greatness of God led him to believe that God is not affected by the destruction of these man-made rituals; for man, it is unequivocally beneficial as it clears the obfuscation he has put into religion.⁴⁴ The division between Vivekananda's liberal/political notions and his religious ones must be explored. It is important not to conflate them. In determining the source from which his ideas emanate is to understand him better. In an attempt to reform India and her people he at times intelligently joined religion and politics and

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Swaminathan, 'His Ideal for Tomorrow', in *ibid.*, p 62.

⁴⁴ *S. V. C. W.*, Vol, I, p 354.

created a foundation for devotion (political ideas) normally found only in religion. This he did by translating political notions into religious, spiritual and metaphysical rhetoric. "Knowledge is a function of being. When there is a change in the being of the knower, there is a corresponding change in the nature and amount of knowing."⁴⁵

It is said that it is easier to set an iceberg alight than to start a revolution in India.⁴⁶ Vivekananda's methodology concentrated on transforming the mind of the recipient of knowledge by transforming the concept of knowledge itself as well as effecting a change in the individual. In essence, this appears to be an extremely simple statement but its true significance as an achiever of lasting change and as a method not so simply achieved is fully appreciated only when one considers the detailed implications, the vicissitudes of knowledge and the difficulties in making it practicable. By simply inculcating into the minds of people that knowledge should not be directly linked to power, he was instilling into them a sense of confidence by insisting to them that their suppressers do not have sole entitlement to that knowledge. In India the practical implications consisted of informing the masses that they were subjugated not logically because of their ignorance, but purposely for the utility of others. Whether it be the *Brahmins*, the Mughals or the British, there was always a subjugated class or classes.

The next step in Vivekananda's methodology was to reveal to the masses that India would not collapse, but on the contrary, would be in a stronger position if they would stand up for themselves and, in their own individual ways, contribute to the welfare of India. Yet each person must

⁴⁵ *The Perennial Philosophy*, op. cit., Introduction, p vii.

⁴⁶ Swaminathan, 'His Ideal for Tomorrow' in Ahluwalia, op. cit., p 59.

act as if he was carrying the responsibility of the whole of India exclusively on his shoulders. By divulging these opinions to them, a considerable transformation occurs in each person. Allegorically, when acquainting a child with the difference between 'right' and 'wrong', and that it is 'good' to do what is 'right', the child then has an idea of the better route to take even if he cannot ascertain why it is the better route. An alternate route is available to the child and he knows that it is the more approved route. The change in the knower then starts to take place.

What ultimately results from this procedure is that a certain type of person is created: ideally, a person free of fear; in this particular instance, a person free from the belief in the caste system, from the dogmatic hierarchy of the Indian situation. This freedom is essentially lack of fear of a subjugator and false superiority. There, however, is a grave ideological flaw. Vivekananda went against the liberal grain by justifying the means by the end. Certainly the goal is intrinsically liberal, but the methodology is autocratic. People are being inculcated again, but this time with liberal ideas. The substance is identical; only the stress changes. Vivekananda's social service consists of promulgating a certain method of change and the goal of aspirations. What is the difference between the propagation and indoctrination of liberal ideals and that authoritarian ideals? What is the ultimate difference between forcing people to remain subjugated or forcing the same people to rise in rebellion?

Following this argument, one encounters the problem of discerning the difference between education and indoctrination. Vivekananda's plan was to educate the masses (a very liberal ideal) so that they will rise. The choice to rise should in essence be individual. Education should act only as an informant, alerting people to the fact that they have a choice and that if

they so wish, they may make it. One can counter-argue that Vivekananda did precisely this: by advocating variety and individuality. His version of social service involved simply informing the populace of their inalienable right to choice. It must, however, be borne in mind that Vivekananda's ideology was intended for practical utility. It is only in practice that it takes on its authoritarian significance. Due to the history of repression and eventually voluntary subservience⁴⁷ in India, the caste system has flourished.⁴⁸ Although Vivekananda agreed with the kinship of *varna* but disagreed with the exploitation of the caste system,⁴⁹ it is evident that in practice, the caste system must be abolished in its entirety for the masses to be encouraged to rise the fight like men,⁵⁰ whether it be for practical or psychological purposes; and to persuade them that any grand reform would last. The only practical way that Vivekananda could have succeeded was to incite people to rise and rebel *en masse* against repression and subjugation and to destroy the caste system.

Ideologically, though, this methodology ensures against insincerity and false adherence to a mode of conduct:

Thus the Puritan may practice all the cardinal virtues - prudence, fortitude, temperance and chastity - and yet remain thoroughly bad man...sometimes to the level of active cruelty...the Puritan has fancied himself holy because he is stoically austere.⁵¹

⁴⁷ See Dumont, *Homo Hierarchicus*. Dumont categorically states that the *Shudra* and the *Brahmin* know their allotted place.

⁴⁸ Swaminathan, 'His Ideal for Tomorrow' in Ahluwalia, op. cit., p 60, states that it is necessary for the South African Parliament to pass laws to prevent Indians from residing in white areas whereas in India, an Untouchable would not even think of stepping foot in a village proper.

⁴⁹ *S.V.C.W.*, Vol. VIII, p 62.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, Vol. I, p 479.

⁵¹ *The Perennial Philosophy*, op. cit., p 98.

With education and the revelation of this knowledge, people are persuaded that unthinking subservience may not be correct; that their actions should be checked by their own assessment of what is morally right and wrong. Vivekananda was intent that each individual, having been educated, should assess, according to his particular knowledge, the merit of his orders and ensure against any interchangeability of the justification of the means and end. In other words, the goal will not always justify the means. The consequence may, especially in a country like India, be that the potentate's rule will not exist unimpeded and the country will not run so smoothly (Vivekananda's main antithesis to this is that it matters not whether a country is run smoothly or not as long as it is not run by her own people). However, individual assessment and individual decisiveness evidently lead to individual responsibility. These democratic/liberal notions precisely correspond to Vivekananda's design for an India inhabited by 'leaders'. This process was designed to create 'leaders' from 'followers' : by giving people responsibility and educating them how to use that responsibility.

It appears that Vivekananda purposely linked the notions of knowledge and individual responsibility. Although each person supposedly makes his own decisions on the respective merits of actions and orders, the idea of spiritual education and unity imply that the criteria upon which a person decides merit are not internally created. 'Spiritual education' (the connotations and nature of which are discussed later) guaranteed against the interchangeability of means and end, thus further assuring against corruption and any selfish judgement. Despite this and regardless of education, the ultimate assessment of a goal, especially when one is creating the goal oneself, is subjective. The advantage of 'spiritual

education', to Vivekananda, is that it informs the person what is morally right and morally wrong. Thus, it gives the individual further criteria upon which to judge the means and the goals of an aspiration. If a person were uninformed on this matter, his/her only criterion would be that of the coming to fruition, the practicability and implementation, of the goal. There would be no moral dimension to it. Means and end would be interchangeable. Not only is this undesirable in general, but Vivekananda vehemently dissented against this interchangeability on spiritual and religious grounds: if the end justified the means, there would be no moral dimension.

Knowledge and intellect become more conceptual and systematic as the individual progresses, and the utilitarian content is greatly increased.⁵² Practicability in this area was of great concern to Vivekananda. Given that theoretical knowledge and intellect are important, knowledge and intellect in this situation are futile if they cannot be utilized. Of course, it can be argued that knowledge has intrinsic value. To Vivekananda 'Freedom means nothing if one has no money for food'. In the same way, knowledge is of no use if a person is forbidden to use it and one is in servility. He was more concerned about 'education as salvation' which he combined with a 'spiritual' aspect, giving intelligence a practical potency and moral dimension. For example, he academically combined Shankara's bias and to a great extent an Indian bias for direct perception as the quintessential modicum for knowledge, with the liberal idea of education to produce practical implications for the intangible notion of 'intuition'. Intuition is, as has been reiterated on many occasions, Vivekananda's ideal form of knowledge dependent on 'realization' as its source; he also considered it a

⁵² Ibid., Introduction, p vii.

form of 'direct perception'. Huxley explains that in India two classes of scripture are recognized: the *Shruti* and the *Smriti*. He quotes Shankara as stating "the Shruti depends upon direct perception. The Smriti plays a part analogous to induction, since, like induction, it derives its authority from an authority other than itself."⁵³

I have already pointed out the implications of Western/liberal education as a theory and the importance of its practicability according to Vivekananda. To reiterate, the importance lies its individuality. Direct perception is important as a basis for knowledge because the 'knower' himself is accountable for the inference and implications of the knowledge and thus is conscious of a level of responsibility. One of Vivekananda's main thrusts is that only when one has confidence in himself and one's own sensory abilities - more confidence than in information acquired from another source - is direct perception the quintessential form of knowledge; otherwise lucidity is clouded by inhibitions and perceptions are false. Vivekananda, in a religious vein, stated that the five senses are constantly deceived in *maya* and thus inference, a faculty cultivated through education (or realization in metaphysical terms) is the highest form of perception and knowledge. Direct perception is then self-validating and confidence and belief in one's own responsibility is increased twofold. With the increase of confidence in subjectivity, each individual works with independent vigour for the betterment of India. Vivekananda correlated empiricism with exploitative authority and autocratic authority because it is perceived to be in opposition to (and in many cases certainly is so, especially in regard to exploitative *Brahmins* and the British) to the subjectivity of individuals. His experience of '*Brahmin-rule*' and British

⁵³ Ibid., pp ix-x.

imperialism convinced him that dogmatic rules were unjust; every situation should be judged by its own merits. Totalitarianism is opposed to intellectual variety. Thus, when the belief that 'the autocrat is not always correct' is substituted by individual confidence, we are closer to Vivekananda's liberal ideal of 'Faith in oneself and faith in fellow men'.

A central component of Vivekananda's thought is that certain ideas have no history; they are ultimate. These ideas are not empirical such as through the authority of a leader, but are, rather, universal in their humanistic and spiritual content and nature. Such notions are the foundation of any religion and should therefore be the foundation of a nation, Vivekananda asserted.⁵⁴ If these perennial ideas supply the basis of the 'new knowledge' which Vivekananda intended to inculcate, man is equipped with a moral base for his psyche. Huxley also propounds the same idea that Vivekananda used as a source many of his intentions. Huxley writes that no progress will be achieved if man does not rid himself of the notion that every idea possesses a history: certain ideas and concepts are ultimate.⁵⁵ Even though certain concepts are ultimate, each person may not yet realize their own learning towards them until their attention is focused on it or they are brought to the attention of it. Vivekananda attempted precisely this and furthermore, stressed the righteousness or non-righteousness of it. Man is good and ontologically free, he proclaimed. He combined these two ideas and the resulting notion was the basis of his religio-political ideology; an ideology which should form the superstructure and infrastructure of the Indian nation, in his opinion. Vivekananda's band of missionaries were charged with the task of

⁵⁴ This idea is explained in the 'Introduction' of Patel B., *The Sermon of the Lord*, Girnar Publications, Bombay, 1962, p 1.

⁵⁵ *The Perennial Philosophy*, op. cit., p 20.

informing the people that they are free, ontologically and morally righteous, since only with this freedom can the individual translate the good within to practise useful, overt deeds in the world. To Vivekananda, education was the medium through which these 'ultimate' ideas were disseminated and thus through which man is given a moral base for his psyche.

In practical terms it involves persuading people that certain ideas, that they may consider blasphemous or to which they may never have been exposed, are undoubtedly correct and must be followed relentlessly. There are two major problems with this. Firstly, there are no criteria to ascertain whether these ideas are universal or not. We have only a handful of men who swear that there is a 'Perennial Philosophy'; for each of these, there are a hundred to swear to the contrary. The nation must take Vivekananda's word for it, as they have taken the word of the *Brahmins* for centuries. This is rather totalitarian. Furthermore, the method of persuasion is suspect as there are no checks as to its practice and moreover, the methods through which people are convinced of concepts with which they instinctively disagree to any extent will probably turn out to be authoritarian. People will not be easily dissuaded from believing notions that they have for decades thought to be religious and held close to their soul; furthermore, to convince people that ideas which they may believe to be blasphemous are actually the ones which they must follow, will need more than a simple edict. It may involve acting on and confirming the belief that the masses are subordinate in knowledge; and then informing them of 'higher knowledge'. To convince them then to act on these new-found beliefs will necessitate further intensive persuasion. Finally, for these people to continue acting on these new beliefs, they

themselves will need to perpetuate not only the knowledge but also the reasoning underlying and the conclusions ensuing from them. In other words, they must act on this knowledge as if it were created by their own minds. This is possible only if their beliefs are evidenced by the 'self-validating certainty of direct awareness'.⁵⁶ It can thus be seen that although Vivekananda's ideals may be liberal in content, the methodology is not.

The content of this 'knowledge' and these 'beliefs' are still very vague. Obviously, the type of education needed depends on the particular situation. For example, in the early part of the twentieth century, the Bombay branch of the *Prarthana Samaj* attempted to raise the Untouchables from their situation of depression by educating them in the 'liberal Religion' - this was done through the establishment of school and education about equality, organization and the virtues of education, all as methods of elevating a nation and a people. In Vivekananda's case, a few basic premisses can be pinpointed. It is important to remember that he was not overly concerned with the possibility of progression and non-progression but the degree to which it helps men in their advancement towards a goal. Men are more likely to entertain the possibility of 'unitive knowledge' (knowledge that unites them, usually of a religious and spiritual nature) teamed with individuality after the chains of colonialism are broken, according to Vivekananda. Huxley says that "human beings are affected by the good and bad states of their minds."⁵⁷ It appeared that Vivekananda acknowledged this and attempted to implant a firm moral ground in each psyche. Furthermore, he attempted to change all 'bad states

⁵⁶ Ibid., Introduction, p xi.

⁵⁷ Ibid., p 28.

of mind' into good states. Whether consciously or unconsciously, he added religious notions into a political theory such as liberalism thenceforth giving it a positive value that had not previously existed. This must be elucidated. Spirituality is thought to be essentially good, whereas liberalism is a political concept with materialist affirmations and it can be used for moral or immoral purposes. Politics should not have an effect on an 'ontological state of mind' whereas the spirituality should. What, in effect, Vivekananda did was to place religious / spiritual ideas into convenient political spaces and thus transform a merely political notion into one which can alter a 'state of mind'. Some political concepts such as utilitarianism can be explained in religious / spiritual terms, giving them a moral justification they would not otherwise have had:

And here is the test of truth - anything that makes you weak physically, intellectually and spiritually, reject as poison; there is no life in it, it cannot be true. Truth is strengthening. Truth is purity, truth is all-knowledge; truth must be strengthening, must be enlightening, must be invigorating.⁵⁸

Vivekananda advocated education as a means out of Indian's misery and justified political, Western, liberal ideas by referring them to Indian - religious ideas :

Our Upanishads say that the cause of all misery is ignorance; and that is perfectly true when applied to every state of life, either social or spiritual. It is ignorance that makes us hate each other, it is through

⁵⁸ S.V.C.W., Vol. III, pp 224-5.

ignorance that we do not know and do not love each other.⁵⁹

The litmus test is when political ideas can be justified by religious criteria, which may be more detrimental in the long run or it may even contradict another fundamental religious idea. One obvious example is the seeming contradiction of Vivekananda's political desires for the masses to rise in rebellion against its oppressors, be they the British or the *Brahmins*; and the religious / spiritual ideal of everyone respecting their own *dharma* which, in most cases, is non-violent (a cynical interpretation could be that although *dharma* is termed in religious garb, it has an ultimately pragmatic justification). Vivekananda proclaimed that one can reach God easier through football than through the *Gita*⁶⁰ and that weakness is a reason for our hatred of our fellow men; and this hatred is irreligion. He proclaimed that the cause of the weakness is subordination by the Mughals, by the British and by the *Brahmins*. Logically, then, it would be 'religious' to help rid India of these oppressors. To what extent this contradicts the ideal of *dharma* is not an issue at the moment, but it is a point of contention.

The above argument demonstrates that at times, it is more advantageous simply to place religious ideas in convenient spaces instead of academically amalgamating the ideologies of liberalism and spirituality. In this case, Vivekananda promulgated that it is the *dharma*, the ontological duty, of everyone to rise against an oppressor. Being oppressed and religion are diametrically opposed concepts as the former hinders man from flourishing and progressing and the latter is intended precisely for

⁵⁹ Ibid., p 241.

⁶⁰ Ibid., vol. III, p 242.

that progress - thus it is religious to oust an oppressor. Justifying the means for it would, to Vivekananda, need a religious perspective. In political terms, this is can be achieved through notion such as 'majority rule', 'democracy', 'individuality', 'the greatest good for the greatest number' and even 'the unhindered progression of man'. Vivekananda gave this a religious justification and even measured the intensity of happiness (which cannot be effected in political terms and thus it is done numerically) through spiritually tautological criteria: freedom is translated as 'salvation' in religious terms, where it is undoubtedly the supreme goal and where intense happiness is experienced. Vivekananda simply then gave this a political stage. In his speeches, he implied that it was the ontological duty (*dharma*) to fight for these ideals, thus dialectically correlating rising against an oppressor with *dharma*.

Such a methodology and ideology is hardly ever questioned or criticized, given its religious justification. This is particularly so because Vivekananda claimed that the justification derived not from Hinduism but from the *Philosophia Perennis*, where there was "such a conspicuous degree of sanctity that it became impossible even for the heads of the Spanish Inquisition to condemn the tree from which such fruits had sprung."⁶¹ There is a problem in that there is a great difference between a religious methodology and a political and temporal one: "Swamiji stressed that both pleasure and pain are great teachers and that man learns as much from evil as from good."⁶² The religious methodology is wholly different in that it does not contend that one would learn from experience,

⁶¹ *The Perennial Philosophy*, op. cit., p 33.

⁶² Giri, 'His Humanism', in Ahluwalia, op. cit., p 13

but that abstinence and denial are the greatest teachers: "When the heart weeps for what it has lost, the soul laughs for what it has found."⁶³

Integral to Vivekananda's thought is the notion that the soul of the person who has denied himself that which he wanted is stronger than the soul of the individual who has not. The political and temporal method holds that experience is the best teacher and the person is stronger in the end, through pain or pleasure. The two approaches are ultimately aiming to achieve different ends: the religious, the strength of the soul; and the political, the strength of the temporal will and temporal knowledge. One can say that a strong soul is manifested in the temporal world through a strong will; yet one can argue that soul and will are completely different entities. Vivekananda saw a correlation in that they both instil a strong moral character with penetrating moral insight and moral perspicacity, itself based on certain predetermined foundation morals. He did not discern the differences, while these are of utmost importance. Vivekananda intended to insert a 'correct and useful' moral code, corresponding to an eventual change in the being of the 'knower'. Admittedly, it is not strictly liberal, but in comparison with the certain of the methods of older religions, it is very liberal. Previously, the fear of God and, moreover, fear of the Devil would be conducive to a strict moral code as a basis not only of action but also of belief. Moral insight will ensure that an individual's judgement of value-claims is sound; and a strong moral character will ensure that he is ready to act upon the findings of his insight.⁶⁴

⁶³ *The Perennial Philosophy*, op. cit., anonymous Sufi aphorism, p 106.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p 176.

Vivekananda realized that not only is altering the mental element an integral part in producing lasting reform, but also that this alteration is futile if it is not reinforced by the individual's environment. He acknowledged that people are also, to an extent, determined by their circumstances. This has two implications for him: firstly, it places limitations on reform because the physical situation is restricted as to how much it can change; and secondly, it makes it evident that if he intended reform to be successful, reform would have a part to play not only in the psyche of people, but also in the physical circumstances. In a way, the latter is more difficult because it requires physical man-power and intense devotion in order to succeed in this laborious and determined task. Determination, vigour and energy are assets not easy to accumulate especially in a case where the result of labour will not be clear until the whole process is put into motion. This approach is very liberal in that people are not seen simply as passive recipients of social conditioning; it was a two-way process in which people would simultaneously influence and be influenced by their surroundings, institutions and their environment. Vivekananda advocated mass politics because opinion is a strong agent by which man could influence and alter the setting. He made maximum use of this equation. He attempted to change the habitat in all manners. Not only would Vivekananda's Indian version of liberalism try to change the political situation and the social environment, but it also made use of its religious aspect to change both the mentality of the people and those institutions that could not be infringed on by politics or society. Religion, politics and society worked cooperatively, to mould the situation to the best advantage of Vivekananda's liberalism and reform. This is very liberal in that it does not use any coercion or force, but rather, peaceful

reform. It relies simply on the psyche of a people and its parameters, coupled with a certain degree of *Lebensraum*. Each seems to work on each other independently, yet co-operatively and simultaneously. All that is needed is the initial catalyst.

Vivekananda definitely laid greater stress on persuasion and the mental element. He strongly believed that external circumstances were determined more by the internal circumstance than *vice versa*.⁶⁵ He believed that society was there for the benefit of its members and thus it should be determined by them, rather than the other way around. He was realistic in that he recognized that each had an effect on the other and thus Vivekananda's liberalism should accommodate the reality of the situation.

Vivekananda's method is also liberal in many other ways. As a hypothetical example, to ensure that the children respect the parents, Vivekananda would not simply inform the children of the wrath of authority. He would, presumably, alert them to the benefits of respect, hoping that this knowledge would produce a change in this child so that s/he would actively attempt to improve the situation *vis-à-vis* his/her parents. Vivekananda's method is more liberal in that it is more logical. It does not immediately appeal to such emotions as fear. Furthermore, instead of alerting the child to an abstract entity peripheral to the situation, such as authority (as fear would, commanding respect and obeisance), informing the child of the notion of respect for parents directly deals with the issue at hand. It is liberal in that it is radical and yet scientific precisely because it combats the situation straightforwardly. Religions traditionally did not:

⁶⁵ Baumfiled and Gray, op. cit.

The result was that, at the end of the nineteenth century, religion and faith in God and eternal verities ceased to be the ruling ideas of modern civilization; the power of religion to influence human thinking and conduct disappeared; man lost of fear of God, and more especially the fear of the devil! Religious dogma had upheld the latter more than the former as conducive to moral control of human action and belief. But the scientific spirit shattered faith in the devil and, along with it, faith in God as well. These were treated as primitive superstitions unworthy of modern civilized man. Modern science treated religion as a dangerous error in the beginning and a harmless illusion in the end.⁶⁶

Vivekananda's methods are scientific in the sense that they are rational and have been proven to work. He explicitly stated that even religion should be tested by science.⁶⁷ His methods are not solely political but have a strongly religious character.

Vivekananda used religion and science as allegories for 'Indian and Western' or 'liberal and spiritual' or 'material and religious' or even as synonymous with 'practical liberalist religion'. Whatever names or coalition terms are used, the contents are the same. Religion, to him, in terms of the manifest world, is concerned with morality; and science is concerned with creating those conditions for the exercise of that morality. The reason both features can be combined is so that the myriad of situations, the whole spectrum of life, can be encompassed. Religion can inhabit the area which science cannot and *vice versa*, with neither usurping the position of the other. Science is concerned with the positive and manifest aspects of the world whereas religion is the science of the inner world. "Einstein said:

⁶⁶ Ranganathananda. 'His Synthesis of Religion and Science', in Ahluwalia, op. cit., p 29

⁶⁷ Ibid., pp 36-7.

Science can de-nature plutonium; but it cannot de-nature the evil in the heart of man.”⁶⁸

India, according to Vivekananda, is characterized by social communism and individual spiritualism - a recipe for peaceful cooperation. He contended that Indians are more concerned with their spiritual welfare than with their material conditions (although Vivekananda criticized Indians for subjugating other Indians for their material well-being, he is noted for repeatedly mentioning that Indians are concerned with religion and not with such worldly affairs as politics, for instance). Thus ‘freedom’ is virtually taken to be taboo. The only form of freedom considered is spiritual, or *moksha*. *Moksha* is not to be achieved in this life because by its very nature, it is otherworldly and achieved through the cessation of life. On the other hand, the West is incessantly searching for freedom in whatever form it can be had.

For Vivekananda as a religious man, the freedom achieved in this world is simply a mere fraction of that freedom which can ultimately be achieved. The West is constantly in search of material freedom, which is trivial, according to him and moreover, it leads only on to further desire which is never gratified or satisfied. Freedom as a goal, then, becomes a source of misery. In the West concepts of freedom are political, social, legal and present in other manifold areas of life. In India, however, freedom is invariably an ontological concept and is paradoxical in nature. One strives for it in this world, but it cannot be achieved in this world; rather, if one achieves it through decades or maybe centuries of persistence in this world, one then ceases to be in this world. Vivekananda is entrenched between advocating a material understanding of freedom and the

⁶⁸ Ibid., pp 29.

unattainable Indian understanding that can easily be interpreted as corporeal negation of life.

His solution was to spiritualize the Western understanding and also rationalize, or 'temporalize', the Indian understanding. He stated that even religion must endure the scrutiny and examination of science and if it does not pass the test of rationality, then it should be regarded as worthless superstition and destroyed.⁶⁹ (However, he is of the strong conviction that science will never oust religion. The more science reveals, the more our ignorance is demonstrated and thus the greater the need for religion. Science continually seeks to know and understand; it is then discovered that certain factors cannot be comprehended intellectually and thus more religion is needed) Although, in my opinion, Vivekananda did not combine academically the concept of freedom in science, religion and politics, it is interesting to note what results have emerged concerning 'freedom' from 'Vivekananda's pragmatic amalgamation of science and religion. Firstly, he stipulated that there is an initial freedom to be attained before man can even fulfil his potential, let alone achieve any 'proper freedom'. The initial freedom is political, as advocated by liberalism: the political liberty can be achieved only after each person is individually free; yet the goal of political liberty is individual freedom. Again, Vivekananda failed to discern this apparent paradox.

However, by using the above quotation in religious terminology, Vivekananda shed a different light on the question - different from the usual, political importance of manifest freedom. Religious rhetoric denied any intrinsic meaning for this achievable liberty. True, man will be more manifestly happy but he cannot 'take this freedom to the grave'. In a

⁶⁹ Ibid., p 37.

country like India whose inhabitants are primarily concerned with spiritual and ontological freedom, this bell weighs heavy on their conscience. Such religious rhetoric implies that real freedom is ontological; the rhetoric of 'scientific religion' further proves that this type of liberty has no meaning although it does have an importance: in that individual liberty, is the first step to the religious notion of salvation. Vivekananda, whether intentionally or not, astutely used the language of politics, religion and science to produce a concept of freedom. From one perspective means nothing, but from another is of utmost important: In one light there is no reason anyone should strive for it, in another there is all the reason. Ironically, the rhetoric of science encourages each to strive on, because the previous freedom attained is futile; the rhetoric of politics encourages greater liberty; and the rhetoric of religion inspires the confidence to achieve the final hurdle 'in this life' before *moksha* can be reached.

In the West, freedom is an object of love. Vivekananda wanted to remove it from its position of idol because, as is in concord with his religious understanding of life, "We can only love what we know, and we can never know completely what we do not love."⁷⁰ Although this sounds metaphysical, it has practical implications: "Love is a mode of knowledge, and when the love is sufficiently disinterested and sufficiently intense, the knowledge becomes unitive knowledge and so takes the quality of infallibility."⁷¹ If freedom can never be loved because it can never be known, then love can never take on its grandest significance. This applied not only to love of oneself but for instance to disinterested love and love

⁷⁰ *The Perennial Philosophy*, op. cit., p 81.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

for others. The latter is imperative for patriotism and charity, both of which are required if India is to regenerate herself:

Where there is no disinterested love (or more briefly, no charity) there is only biased self-love, and consequently only a partial and distorted knowledge both of the self and of the world of things, lives, mind and spirit outside the self.⁷²

Vivekananda's libertarian religion is biased towards love as a sentiment, percolating through the psyche of people. Ideally, love is to be the basis of each and every action of a person - whether it concerns himself or others. Love creates the bond of fraternity. In liberal ideology, fraternity is a result of respect, but in Vivekananda's religious politics, love usurps this position. To him respect takes on its greatest significance in the social setting, in relation to social institutional regulations. Love is a more intense sentiment and has wider significance in the religious arena. Hence, 'love' is instrumental in persuading the Indian populace to rise against the British and *Brahmins*.

Love in its disinterested form is not a fossilized notion. It governs the social setting as a whole and not only an interaction between two people. It is to be used, according to Vivekananda, as the bonding element for collective salvation because of its correlation to charity. Huxley illustrates this:

In the light of these descriptions we can understand more clearly the Bhagavad Gita's classification of paths to salvation. The path of devotion is the path naturally followed by the person in whom the viscerotonic

⁷² Ibid.

component is high. His inborn tendency to externalize the emotions he spontaneously feels in regard to persons can be disciplined and canalized, so that a merely animal gregariousness and a merely human kindness become transformed into charity - devotion to the personal God and universal will and compassion toward all sentient beings.

The path for works is for those whose extroversion is of the somatonic kind, those who in all circumstances feel the need to 'do something'. In the unregenerate somatonic this craving for action is always associated with aggressiveness, self-assertion and the lust for power. For the born Kshatriya, or warrior-ruler, the task, as Krishna explains to Arjuna, is to get rid of those fatal accompaniments to the love of action and of work without regard to the fruits of work, in a state of complete non-attachment to self. Which is, of course, like everything else, a good deal easier said than done.⁷³

Vivekananda applied to 'love' political concepts such as citizenship which create this bond and they have inherent an element of reciprocity, whereas the 'love' as a sentiment does not. One can love another without the latter's reciprocating. Vivekananda's liberalism must have the ability to be applicable to the myriad of characters; it must serve a variety of individuals so that it does not alienate a section of the population. If it were to substitute 'citizenship' for 'love' as a pragmatic, social and political bonding factor, it must incorporate an element of reciprocity. That is not to say that if Vivekananda's liberalism does not serve all types of individuals, its efficacy is nullified. The question as to how many people would need to be convinced, or feel the 'love', in order for it to be a legitimate theory is a perennial philosophical question. However, as a theory, Vivekananda's liberalism it is founded on encompassing love, charity and disinterested

⁷³ Ibid., p 152.

action that carries no obligations: all three of these take on their true significance only if they apply to the population at large. In brief, Vivekananda's liberalism should apply to the entire population and it should accommodate a myriad of characters and their respective paths to salvation, not only political ones but also scientific and religious.

Vivekananda assumed the bond of 'love' to be encompassing because of his belief in the notion of reincarnation. The belief that man is chained to the cycle of birth and rebirth directly leads on to the necessity to respect each human and his particular idiosyncrasies. Respect for that energy should accrue to equal respect for that manifest form. Thus, in practice, respect for variation proceeds directly from the notion of reincarnation. Vivekananda used this notion in an attempt to emulate the West's respect for the masses, the high culture of women (that they had a certain degree of equality of opportunity and education) and the freedom of speech, thought and action: "he saw the painful contrast between the condition of the masses in India and the condition of the masses in the West."⁷⁴ Vivekananda's liberalism as a theory aimed to give the masses organized freedom and furthermore, to organize them through such a sentiment as 'love'. Vivekananda saw the success of the West as a product of organization, in turn possible only because of the unification of the population through ideas such as citizenship and patriotism. The crux is that although Vivekananda acknowledged the importance of patriotism and organization, he did not understand the great implications of citizenship.⁷⁵ Vivekananda was too concerned with the wider view of

⁷⁴ Sarma, 'Vivekananda and Hinduism', in Ahluwalia, op cit., p 137.

⁷⁵ In a later chapter I discuss the importance of citizenship in regard to Vivekananda's thought. It is important to note that it was not that Vivekananda realized its importance but that it plays an important aspect of his thought as a political and national doctrine.

India's prosperity without, at times, considering and working out in detail the mechanisms for its achievement. Many politicians, including Nehru, saw Vivekananda was a bridge between the past of India and her present.⁷⁶ Even though Vivekananda harboured utter faith in India and her apparently glorious past, he recognized that the present India, consumed by mysticism, could never regain her past glory. But again and again he laid stress on the necessity for liberty and equality and the raising of the masses:

[L]iberty of thought and action is the only condition of life, of growth and well-being. Where it does not exist - the man, the race, the nation must go. The only hope for India is from the masses. He wanted to combine Western progress with India's spiritual background. 'Make a European society with India's religion. Become an occidental of occidentals in your spirit of equality, freedom, work and energy, and at the same time a Hindu to the very backbone in religious culture and instincts.'⁷⁷

The combination of East and West was not predominantly one of science and religion. Although these two words are frequently used in reference to Vivekananda's synthesis of Eastern characteristics and Western imports, Vivekananda primarily wanted to synthesize not those components peculiar to each, but seemingly prevalent in each. The potential of all these features existed, however, in both. For example, Swami Ranganathananda in his article 'His Synthesis of Science and Religion' states that Thomas Huxley, a collaborator of Darwin, had protested against the association of science with any fixed dogma such as

⁷⁶ Nehru, 'Gospel of Godly Incense', in Ahluwalia, op. cit., p 6

⁷⁷ Ibid., p 7.

materialism.⁷⁸ In the same way, it is a fault to associate the East solely with spirituality and the West with materialism. Aspects of both exist in all communities. Vivekananda's liberalism has the easier task not of creating a certain characteristic alien to a community and then forcing it onto the community, but of bringing out particular one that had been dormant. A train of thought was to be initiated. Organization is a prime example. According to Vivekananda, Indians possessed the skill of organization but through apathy and greed, did not utilize it. When it is introduced back into the country she will eventually, through her own ability, desires and means, organize herself. The adoption or imitation of Western mannerisms, habits and ideas will not catalyse this process. It will neither make India as powerful as the West, nor is it a short-cut to achieve this goal. "An ass in a lion's skin never makes a lion."⁷⁹

What he wanted was the India of old reasserting herself in a new age. He did not want Western influence and materialism undermining and beleaguering India. The present India, infused with futile rituals and superstitions, would succumb under the new intellectual light of scientific religion which could only be accommodated with liberty and equality. The need for these was overwhelming. If we take Thomas Huxley's statement about how science should not be dogmatized as materialistic, we can see how science and religion are not necessarily dichotomous, but can actually complement each other. In Vivekananda's own words, the dialectical relationship is to exist as follows ;

Is religion to justify itself by the discoveries of reason through which every other science justifies itself? Are

⁷⁸ Ranganathananda, 'His Synthesis of Science and Religion', in *ibid.*, p 45

⁷⁹ *S.V.C.W.*, Vol. III, p 381.

the same methods of investigation, which we apply to sciences and knowledge outside, to be applied to the science of religion? In my opinion this must be so, and I am of the opinion that the sooner it is done the better. If a religion is destroyed by such investigations, it was then all the time useless, unworthy superstition; and the sooner it goes the better. I am thoroughly convinced that its destruction would be the best thing that could happen. All that is dross will be taken off, no doubt, but the essential parts of religion will merge triumphant out of this investigation. Not only will it be made scientific - as scientific, at least, as scientific as any of the conclusions of physics or chemistry - but will have greater strength because physics or chemistry has no internal mandate to vouch for its truth, which religion has.⁸⁰

The lack of a scientific-rational explanation of religion has, especially in India, created a farcical situation in which individuals actively stop themselves from being free and equal, for fear of the wrath of God. In other parts of the world, Hindus may behave differently. For example, Swaminathan asks why in India the thought never occurs to a pariah to “attempt an incursion in the village proper when it is necessary for the South African Parliament to pass laws to restrict Indians from residing in White areas.”⁸¹

Vivekananda’s liberalism, whether seen as religious doctrine or a political theory, must be a living doctrine with concrete forms. It needs to avoid the abstract and the incomprehensibility intricate mythological. The religious component of Vivekananda’s liberalism will give it the internal

⁸⁰ Ranganathananda, ‘His synthesis of Science and Religion’, in *ibid.*, p 37.

⁸¹ Swaminathan, ‘His Ideal of Tomorrow’, in *ibid.*, p 60.

mandate while the scientific component must supply the practicability and mundane element.

The psycho-physical world of Vivekananda's liberalism will be succinctly and comprehensively covered by religion and science. In abstract terms, religion will deal with the non-observable universe hidden behind the observable in a place where science cannot venture. Science will deal with the phenomenon revealed by the senses or by the apparatus helpful to the senses. In real terms, religion or the rhetoric of religion will supply the motivation, morality and food for the psyche; and science, or the worldly rhetoric, will supply its practicability and uses. Resulting from this, in effect, is what whatever is tangibly experienced psychologically and can be translated into actions is considered 'experienced', although it may not have necessarily been so. The rhetoric of religion will make sure of this. Everything which is physically felt will also be 'experienced', obviously. Both of these can be classified under the category of 'realization'. Vivekananda ultimately wanted every action of every person to be guided not only by physical experience but also by intuition.⁸² Intuition is based on 'realization' instead of direct experience. The science of experience or the science of realization is described by Vivekananda in the following way:

Experience is the only source of knowledge. In the world, religion is the only science where there is no surety because it is not taught as a science of experience. This should not be. There is always, however, a small group of men who teach religion from experience. They are called mystics, and these mystics in every religion speak the same tongue and teach the same truth. This is the real science of religion. As mathematics in every

⁸² S.V.C.W., Vol. IV, p 58.

part of the world does not differ, so the mystics do not differ. They are similarly constituted and similarly situated. Their experience is the same.⁸³

Although Vivekananda gave no further explanation of the link between mathematics and mystics, the point about the science of religion is clear. The notion of being guided by intuition, men's making decisions on the strength of intuition, and the nation's functioning through these intuitive decisions corresponds to Vivekananda's image of an efficient, forceful, indefatigable, undefeatable nation.

Who is society? Vivekananda asked. Is it the millions or is it you, me and a few others of the upper classes, which it apparently seems to be?⁸⁴ How can society flourish as a whole if only a few control it and the rest are trapped under the shackles of authority? Of course, the nation may prosper in economic terms but Vivekananda was more concerned with prosperity *per se* - and not necessarily material prosperity. Liberty is the first condition of growth, he protested. Without liberty, no nation can have a chance of greatness. Liberty is not only a political concept, he added. The kind of liberty he had in mind is spiritual liberty which can only result if religious dogmatism be banished; radical liberty freedom of thought and speech possibly only if hatred be abandoned and fraternity take its place. Spiritual freedom necessary involves freedom of movement and thought. Without these, the individual does not have the *Lebensraum* for self-evaluation and spiritual exploration, since both require physical and mental freedom. High spirituality and the universal patriotism of the East

⁸³ Ranganathananda, 'His Synthesis of Science and Religion' in Ahluwalia, op. cit., p 37

⁸⁴ Swaminathan, 'His Ideal of Tomorrow', in bid., p 91.

combined with the energy and passion for social justice of the West, translate, roughly, into his goal.⁸⁵

One must be cautious when analyzing Vivekananda and commentaries on his thought. The English language restricts authors to using words such as 'religion' when referring to Vivekananda and his 'religious ideals'. Vivekananda used the word 'religion' in some instances but also used words such as *dharma* at other times. The latter does not properly translate in English. The word 'religion' connotes ritual, and other practices and institutions of religion. Vivekananda, on the other hand, was vehement in his emphasis that ritual is not religion. Even though it is widely accepted that he thought religion should guide the actions and morality of men, he did not mean 'religion' as is commonly imagined. He was very utilitarian in that he was not particularly concerned as to whether guidance be given through the medium of religion, morality, ideology or any other medium. He had a definite idea as to the nature of religion: intuitive knowledge and realization. Whatever name we may give to this is irrelevant. Rolland quotes Vivekananda:

It is said sometimes that religions are dying out, that spiritual ideas are dying out of the world. To me it seems as if they have just begun to grow...so long as religion was in the hands of a chosen few, or of a body of priests, it was in the temples, churches, books, dogmas, ceremonials, forms and rituals, but when we come to the real, spiritual universal concept then alone religion will become real and living; it will come in to our very nature, live in our very moment, penetrate every pore of our society, and be infinitely more a power for good than it has ever been before.⁸⁶

⁸⁵ Sarma, 'Vivekananda and Hinduism', in *ibid.*, p 144.

⁸⁶ Rolland, *op. cit.*, p 258.

Vivekananda claimed that he had no preconceived idea of God. When there is a predetermined idea, religion and the idea of God itself become dogmatized. When we regard God as the all-powerful, transcendental ruler, without regarding him at the same time as “having the power to be powerless and minuscule”, then we “run the risk of becoming entangled in a religion of rites, propitiatory sacrifices (sometimes of the most horrible nature) and legalistic observances.”⁸⁷ For example, it appears to me that blaming God for famines and disasters is attributing to God a volition which again stigmatizes the idea of God. In a way, the volition of God is a very Western concept. “God is not good, I am good.” Huxley quotes Eckhart as protesting.⁸⁸ What he means is that when humans talk or think about the goodness of God, what we are actually doing is forcing a peculiarly human definition or even idea of ‘good’ onto an utterly ‘inhuman’ idea of God. God has no category of good and bad; or at least one not comprehensible to us mere mortals. This, to me, has strong similarities with the Hindu idea of God. “He who thinks that God has any quality and is not the One, injures not God, but himself.”⁸⁹ This further goes to show that man is injuring himself by such dogmatism; further, God has no place in our mundane categories.

Vivekananda was most pragmatic in his approach. As mentioned above, it need not be religion which guides man as long as the development of the personality was completed. He was concerned about the material salvation of the Indian masses and not with mysticism. “I do not believe in a god or religion which cannot wipe the widow’s tears or

⁸⁷ *The Perennial Philosophy*, op. cit., p 23.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p30.

bring a piece of bread to the orphan's mouth.”⁹⁰ He was of the conviction that people's hunger should not be ignored simply because it was time for prayer. Many commentaries call this his humanism, or even his socialism. However, it can be claimed equally that this is a liberal notion, again derived from the strongly liberal notion that man is the highest God. It is Vivekananda's basic concern for the individual. Its place, in whatever category, whether it can be classified as all or none, is irrelevant. Vivekananda's liberalism sought to help India in all ways. Through its very theory, it aimed at remedying social injustices such as child marriage, the restriction of intermarriage between castes, the isolation of widows and 'don't touchism' as he named it; at the same time, it worked at the 'creation' of men, women and individuals as opposed to machines.⁹¹ Personality, to Vivekananda, was the highest form of reality.⁹² It is imperative and also practical that individual humans cannot abandon their material senses. Carnal love is as important as, if not more because of its direct perception than, divine love. His pragmatics accommodate this, (unlike many other religions) as well as many political theories. Even though man's end should be the unitive knowledge of divine love, Vivekananda knew that to reject ritual as a form of worship denies man of a material perception of religion. It denies man also the experience of bonding with fellow-men. One cannot say as a *sine qua non* that Vivekananda was opposed to ritual; he was opposed to regarding ritual as religion.

⁸⁹ Ibid., p 32. Quoted from 'Philo'.

⁹⁰ Aiyer, 'His message', in Ahluwalia, op. cit., p 149.

⁹¹ Rolland, op. cit., p 135.

⁹² *The Perennial Philosophy*, op. cit., p 36.

Vivekananda was inspired by the practicable humanism of Western politics. Liberalism, for instance, combined notions of peaceful coexistence with fraternity and reciprocity. He was foremostly concerned with collective salvation and practicability; personal salvation traditionally advocated by *sannyasis* played a minor role in Vivekananda's political religion. Although man had his own *dharma* and *karma*, it was inextricable linked to the *dharma* and *karma* of others. Liberal Humanism believed that man should help fellow man because the fraternal bond was imperative for the good of society and its members. Vivekananda's liberalism reached the same dictum, but simply by using such terms as *dharma* and *karma*. The conclusion is that 'Man is the highest God'.⁹³ This logically led onto love for fellow man and patriotism.⁹⁴ If this is followed to its logical end, it implies liberty and fraternity only to the extent that these do not infringe on another's liberty. Western liberalism derives this respect for others from 'individual desire': desire to see the benefit of the community and ultimately benefit to the self. Social harmony, the moral idiom of 'Love thy neighbour' and similar sentiments are all attributed to desire. Vivekananda's liberalism, on the other hand, bases these on love, compassion and unity: all religio-moral concepts.

His patriotism needed three things for its practical implementation. One was passionate love for the masses. The second was the finding of practical solution for their problems instead of reforms on paper. And the third was strength of will to overcome the obstructions to the implementation of these solution.⁹⁵

⁹³ These are not the direct words of Vivekananda. I have improvised by adding political implications to religious rhetoric.

⁹⁴ Rao, 'Vedantic Socialism', in Ahluwalia, op. cit., p 72.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

Vivekananda's pragmatism reached far beyond a simple desire to implement his policies. He adopted a liberal outlook on history, asserting that certain customs are adopted not because of their intrinsic meaning, but because of the instinct for self-preservation. Necessity and rights are forefront in an analysis of history and a prognostication of the future. It is said that one of Vivekananda's greatest contributions was his pragmatism. He urged people not to waste time contemplating what to do - rather they should go and do good. His greatest contribution, in my own opinion, in his wedding of the contemplative life and social service. This brought down to earth the esoteric world of mysticism, *Vedic* scriptures, *Brahminism* and of the *sannyasis*. It brought to the people the philosophy of *Vedanta* and made it part of the living world.

The result of making 'religion practical' is that access to religion occurs *per se* in India. The identification of religion with the social structure has given permanence and sanctity to malignant evils.⁹⁶ Popularizing religion gives every person the wherewithal to criticize and change the structure. The evils of caste and untouchability are actually a result of the lack of the ability to criticize and of a structure to treat this criticism seriously; it is hoped that this can be rectified by mass politico-religion/religio-politics. What existed before was a minority imposing their ideas on others. Freedom from this is imperative before India can progress. If each person plays a part in the 'religious politics' of the society, which in effect they are doing, the situation can be rectified. Liberty must precede progress. Essentially, liberty is more important than progress (whatever the latter may mean). In religious terms, liberty (or individuality) greatly

⁹⁶ Swaminathan, 'His Ideal for Tommorrow', in *ibid.*, p 63.

advances man's struggle to gain unitive knowledge of the Divine Ground, which is religion's main purpose. Politically, liberty must precede hegemony. Liberty is one possible method for controlling authoritarianism and the political manifestations of the lust for power. "Organized and balanced disunity is a necessary condition of liberty."⁹⁷

Vivekananda demonstrated the importance of liberty. With religion, liberty is the end; with politics, it is the means to a perfect system. The importance of liberty as means and end is doubly accentuated. Furthermore, when verbally relaying to the masses the importance of liberty, Vivekananda had recourse to hyperbole, making it appear that liberty as a means is of utmost importance, and is 'man's final end', when he was in fact referring to the means:

Learn good knowledge with all devotion from the lowest caste. Learn the way to freedom, even if it comes from a Pariah, by serving him. If a woman is a jewel, take her in marriage even if she comes from a Pariah, by serving him. If a woman is a jewel, take her in marriage even if she comes from a low family of the lowest caste.⁹⁸

Here, Vivekananda implemented ideas such as social service and the dismantling of caste and its resultant prejudice as the goal of religion (liberty is the final goal of religion) when, in actual fact, these concepts are political ends of reaching the final, supra-personal goal of freedom from human sentiments. Of course, the final end is the lifting of caste prejudice, dogmatic hierarchy and exploitation served through religious rhetoric, however, in the above address, Vivekananda was advocating a liberated

⁹⁷ *The Perennial Philosophy*, op cit. p 122.

mode of thinking; moreover, he was encouraging people to reason and think, instead of acquiescing “in the so-called popular faith, but we also know for certain that they do not think.”⁹⁹ To reiterate in Vivekananda’s own words, the final end is “Do you think, so long as one Jiva endures in bondage, you will have any liberation?”¹⁰⁰ Bondage and liberation in this sense are political *and* religious concepts. Vivekananda was referring to the bondage of life inherent in the concept of reincarnation as well as political, social and religious bondage. The necessity of physical freedom for spirituality has been elucidated previously. Vivekananda was insistent that Indians are more concerned with spiritual freedom than political freedom and hence any temporal ideology would need to incorporate religious freedom as well as political freedom, Vivekananda’s liberalism offers the solution for all of these.

It is important to assess his idea of liberty. He was not a believer in arithmetical equality. His assertion that the *Pariah* should be brought to the same level as the *Brahmin* was not an arithmetical equation,¹⁰¹ nor was his assertion that if the *Pariah* be uneducated and the *Brahmin* educated, more money should be spent on the former. He was attempting to advocate a system in which no one was exploited, regardless of their position in the hierarchy of society.

The enjoyment of advantage over another is privilege and throughout the ages, the aim of morality has been its destruction. This is the work which tends towards sameness, towards unity without destroying unity.¹⁰²

⁹⁸ Vivekananda, *Lectures from Colombo to Almora*, p 57, Advaita Ashrama, Calcutta, Third Impression, 1992.

⁹⁹ Ranganathananda, ‘His Synthesis of Science and Religion’, in Ahluwalia, op. cit. p 36.

¹⁰⁰ S.V.C.W., Vol. VII, p 235.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., Vol. III, p 193.

¹⁰² Rao, ‘Vedantic Socialism’, in Ahluwalia, op. cit., p 77.

To digress: it is interesting to note that Vivekananda's pragmatic attitude is once again patent in that he was not concerned as to what shape morality takes in guiding men toward right actions and thought. Also, he used the word 'morality' instead of the word we would expect him to use, namely, 'religion' when he was referring to a medium which supposedly guides the actions of men. Of course, it can be argued that religion, especially in India, has not remained distinct from the social structure so it would be inappropriate to use 'religion' in this instance. However, Vivekananda regularly used 'religion' when he was referring to an anti-ritual, anti-ceremonial and anti-institutional medium. Returning to the original point, Vivekananda strongly believed that each person, each male and female, had their own abilities, assets and liabilities - which should be judged according to their own standards, to whatever extent this was practicable. He believed that a person should not be readily dismissed due to his or her non-conformity to society's norms. Each had value in his / her own right. Vivekananda had a liberal approach to many aspects of life, for example, to education. Another example is his pragmatic approach to the writing of Indian history by Europeans. Although he stated that it can never be accurate and is ultimately biased, he attempted to make the best of a bad situation. He did this by admitting that at least Europeans have shown Indians how to research their own history. Now, Vivekananda emphasized it is for Indians to strike out on an independent path for themselves and to write accurate, sympathetic and soul inspiring histories of India.

Vivekananda's liberalism was an aggregate of aspects of a Western political system, an Indian religious doctrine and the adjustment of that

Western system to the Eastern situation. Liberalism, in its appeal to the masses, is rationalistic. It inspires people to rationalize why they should not injure others, but why they should 'love their neighbour'. Vivekananda's liberalism constitutes an appeal to such rationality as well as a religious yearning, which is emotional: 'First feel from the heart'.¹⁰³ The dictum 'love thy neighbour', reached through rationalization by the Western neighbour, is felt by its Indian counterpart. Each person should feel that all humans are joined together by an ontological adjunct - everyone is permeated by the *Brahman*; all *Atmans* are of the same substance. Gandhi eventually took this argument further in saying that individuals injuring one another is the same as injuring themselves. However, Vivekananda, without going so far, reached the same conclusion simply by emphasizing the spiritual bond between men. In other words, Western liberalism ensures compliance within society through rationality; Vivekananda's liberalism obtains the same results through inspiring emotion. The stronger the sentiment, the weaker the recalcitrance.

The role model in Vivekananda's liberalism is not the most charismatic leader, but is the most vivacious server. India definitely does not need any more people trying to prove their superiority through subjugating others; what she needs is whole-hearted devotion to and in serving. Vivekananda's liberalism acts as a playground to practise skills of service. The real Indian hero is the relentless server, able to cope with any situation whatsoever. Vivekananda stated that every Indian wants to command and no Indian wants to obey. Indians should first learn to

¹⁰³ Ibid., p 73.

obey.¹⁰⁴ In this context, Rolland coins the phrase “The humble, heroic life” and also quotes Vivekananda:

‘As I grow older’, he had said to Nivedita, ‘I find that I look more and more for greatness in little things...anyone will be great in great position. Even the coward will grow brave in the glare of the floodlights. The world looks on. More and more the true greatness seems to me that of the worm doing its duty silently, steadily from moment to moment and hour to hour’.¹⁰⁵

In another section, Rolland quotes Vivekananda again as saying that the greatness of a man is in his little actions; and that he is great wherever he may be, not only when thrust in a great position.¹⁰⁶

A great man is instilled with the ‘Soul Force’, the basis of the stamina with which people should serve, Vivekananda stated in his usual religious rhetoric. Vivekananda’s liberalism is designed to bring out the Soul Force in everyone. The Soul Force, in a way, is synonymous with liberation. Vivekananda saw liberation as the absence of any kind of fears. Fear silences humans, it ensures conventionality and compliance even to evils; it saps energy and it destroys greatness; ultimately fear enslaves us. What transpires is that the whole country will bow down to destruction. The country will be filled with people acting like machines, unconditionally obeying orders, shadowed by the threat or punishment. The country is saved only when men break away from this fold because “Individual courage precedes national courage.”¹⁰⁷ Liberty as a ‘means’ (as in the

¹⁰⁴ Ahluwalia S., ‘The Teacher’ in *ibid.*, p 181.

¹⁰⁵ Rolland, *op. cit.*, p 167.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, p 202.

¹⁰⁷ Murthi, ‘Freedom from Fear’, in Ahluwalia, *op. cit.*, p 171.

earlier section discussing liberty as a political concept - 'means' - and as a religious concept - 'end') is independent thinking "which alone leads ultimately to the awakening of Soul Power."¹⁰⁸ The Soul Power is life, is individuality; fear has no place in the man instilled with the Soul Force. "For fear never coexists with an understanding of the Soul Force."¹⁰⁹ The Soul Force is common between the *Brahmin* and the *Shudra*. The Soul Force does not discern inequality, only difference. Inequality is a result of man's interpretation of 'difference' as ability and non-ability.¹¹⁰

A person instilled with the Soul Force does not abhor diversity. Because of his individual thinking, he realizes that which humans call 'Truth' is simply a worldly concept; thus, diversity cannot be a divine sin. Each person has the ability to diversify. Whether he takes the opportunity is not a religious judgement. Diversity is a sin only when it corresponds to knowledge of the Divine Ground. This can occur only with union; in which case, the person would not, any longer, be in this world of imperfection. However, it is vital to note that although man is not divine, he has the potential of being so. He should be treated as if he were almost divine and not as if he was almost devil. As Rolland declares, the first principle of Ramakrishnite *Vedantism* is 'The Divinity of Man'.¹¹¹

For Vivekananda, no hierarchy which bases itself on inequalities should exist. Hierarchy in itself is not negative or exploitative. A liberal society should not permit natural differences to be treated as inequalities. A person should not, when judging another, do so by their own standards, but by the other's standards. Vivekananda was concerned that Indian

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., p 172.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., p 175.

¹¹⁰ See B eteille in his *Idea of Natural Inequality and other essays*, op. cit; he states very lucidly that nature endows us with differences and society transforms this into inequalities.

¹¹¹ Ibid., p 290.

criteria must be employed when judging Indians. To him, diversity, variety and individuality are life itself. Rolland recounts Vivekananda as stating that "The fire that burns the child, may cook a good meal for the starving man."¹¹² Relativity is of utmost importance. No claim of goodness or any other dogmatism could justify the death of thousands of innocent people. Such concepts are undeniably worldly and thus cannot be infallible.

Vivekananda was an enemy, so to speak, of organized religions. He accused them of being guilty of imposing their own predetermined ideals, canonizing these propagating their essential goodness and strictly punishing non-compliance. Such religions institutionalized Truth. Vivekananda could not understand how a central authority could determine when, where, why, how and the extent to which truth should be 'given' to the people. To him, religious truth and political truth were different entities and a central authority could not deem that politics, society and economics should be governed by the religious truth; rather, that religion should inform these three of morality. Having a 'Truth' thrust upon a people is precisely the political monist predicament suffered by totalitarian regimes. In liberal theories as well as in Vivekananda's liberalism, truth (in so far as it exists) is varied, diverse and never supreme. The only test of temporal truth is how much freedom it confers, because freedom is the only guarantee of life.

"Beware of everything that takes away your freedom."¹¹³ Freedom creates the ability to reason, rationalize and judge, all of which are opposed to automation. "I believe in reason and follow reason, having seen enough of the evils of authority, for I was born in a country where they have gone

¹¹² Rolland, op. cit., p 181, Rolland's reference: *S.V.C.W.*, Vol. II, pp 97-8.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, p 227, Rolland's reference: *S.V.C.W.*, Vol, VII, Chapter VI.

to the extreme of authority.”¹¹⁴ Vivekananda carried this thought as a guide in most matters. For example, he wanted to instil patriotism yet if people were not permitted to rationalize and reason why they should be patriotic, patriotism in itself can be a mask for exclusivism (and tempting to adhere to because of the benefits it endows). Allegiance to a country regardless of national and international policies is like devotion to the practices of a religion which may or may not be heinous.

Vivekananda's synthesis of religion, science and politics, spirituality and pragmatism, action and philosophy, actively encouraged variety. According to him, their essentials do not differ one from another. Vivekananda's liberalism, despite a large aspect of it being poised in the mysterious cult of religion, does not entrench itself behind spiritual esotericism, political essentialism or any obfuscating ideas. It is a very pragmatic theory and one open to analysis in the truly liberal vein. For example, Vivekananda had apparently been asked on many occasions why he used the old word 'God' as it appeared that he was so opposed to the dogmatism attached to the word. In using this word, was he not reinforcing precisely the mysticism he so much abhorred? Vivekananda's simple yet eloquent answer to this was that because this word had been employed and understood by many for centuries, it was the best one for the purpose at hand. It hid nothing and was already widely understood. The laborious process of creating another term and the procedure of bringing to that item equal power and recognition, was not worth the time and effort since in Vivekananda's own words, “[B]ecause all hopes, aspirations, and

¹¹⁴ Ibid., p 237, Rolland's reference: 'Practical Vedanta' III, S.V.C.W., Vol.II, pp335-6.

happiness of humanity have been centred in that word. It is impossible now to change the word.”¹¹⁵

It was evident that the principle purpose of Vivekananda's liberalism was to regenerate India from within, with such assets as strength of character and determination. These were instrumental in guaranteeing that there would be minimal foreign interference so that India could take only what she wanted from outside. Because of the need for radical reform, Vivekananda's liberalism includes an aspect usually regarded as alien to liberalism: rebellion (although certainly not full-fledged violence) and thus it requires an agent of change. The catalyst is, as well as the newly educated, a band of missionary monks dedicated to the spread of education (not propaganda). In Marxian vein, Vivekananda predicted that this would be the *Shudra* class, who have endured years of servitude. The *Shudra* who has as much of a right to life as the *Brahmin* has been so maltreated as to believe that he has none. “The hope lies in you - in the meek, the lowly, but the faithful.”¹¹⁶

In an analysis of whether this is socialist or liberal, one can argue from both camps. On the one hand it is Marxian, yet one can argue that it is logical that the oppressed class is to be the agent of change, as happened in the French Revolution. Definitely not very liberal are his stress on manliness and bravery, and his opinion concerning motivation.

Glory unto the Lord, we will succeed. Hundreds will fall into the struggle - hundreds will be ready to take it up...Faith - sympathy. Life is nothing, death is nothing...Glory unto the Lord - march on, the Lord is our

¹¹⁵ Ibid., p 261.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., p 70.

General. Do not look back and see who falls - forward -
onward!¹¹⁷

Vivekananda's ideals of manhood and bravery, intricately entangled with these ideals of motivation, frequently obscure his liberal outlook. It seems inconsistent with his emphasis on variety, diversity and individuality. This verbal outburst is vehemently charged with a totalitarian tone. His tone is possibly nothing more than a concentrated attempt to raise the energy, vigour and desire in people to salvage India. His messages and styles of delivery intelligently differ according to his audience (Rolland does not give a reference to the above quote). However, the above-mentioned passage is blatantly authoritarian in content. More to the point, though, we cannot escape the fact that he was unfaltering in his insistence on bravery and manliness; even in para-religious rhetoric, he unfailingly asserted that strength is the ultimate test of freedom and success.

'This *Atman* is not to be attained by the weak' says the *Shruti*. Both physical and mental weakness are meant here. 'The strong, the hardy' are the only fit students. What can puny, little decrepit things do?"¹¹⁸ What stronger denial of weakness can there be?

Even Vivekananda's liberalism as a practicable theory depends on this vociferous strength of character. Social service requires determined, strong-willed volunteers. It is these same volunteers who know that they are charged with a task far more glorious than social service; a task which requires unrelenting determination and strength of character. Social service is only a means of reaching this goal, to free India from the

¹¹⁷ Ibid., p 71.

¹¹⁸ S.V.C.W., vol. III, p 68.

shackles of anachronism and subservience and elevate her into modernity and liberty.

[A]nd going from village to village devote our lives to the service of the poor, and by convincing the rich men about their duties to the masses, through the force of our character and spirituality and our austere living, get

money and the means wherewith to serve the poor and distressed.¹¹⁹

The inherent danger lies in mistaking the means for the end. If the goal is freedom for all, then all members of the society are awarded equal freedom. Because freedom cannot be measured in intensity, no one individual will believe that they possess greater freedom than others; firstly, because it cannot be intensified. Secondly, no member of society will feel superior or have authority in this respect, to subordinate another (who, by the same token, will have equal authority so cannot be subordinate involuntarily) in order to increase his own freedom. Thirdly, there are no more *basic* freedom than the ones given to each human. Each individual will possess every single *basic* freedom. Additional freedoms correspond to social, political and economic rank and authority, given and taken away in relation to the position with which they correspond. They are further regarded by Vivekananda's liberalism as difference, as opposed to inequality. However, it is during the process of attaining this end, when the members of society are endowed with different types and quantities of liberty, that the danger arises. The opportunities for increasing one's own liberty becomes very obvious, and when this stage in the process is taken for the end, the desire to gain more liberty than the next man may be irresistible. As a safeguard to this, Vivekananda adopted the religious argument concerning the virtue of detachment.

Vivekananda should have contrasted the freedoms incorporated in the means and those endowed when the goal is reached. Excesses of liberty in Hinduism, or for that matter, in any other religion, are regarded as

¹¹⁹ Rolland, op. cit., p 164.

nothing less than heinous. There should be safeguards against people, especially those experiencing their first taste of complete freedom in, say, speech, from being overwhelmed by and then abusing this principle. Liberty is good, in moderation. It must be given to those ready for it, according to Vivekananda. (This is not the same as delivering 'Truth' to followers of a religion.) The whole purpose of social service is to train people to cope with liberty and then to deliver it. It should not be granted too soon even though granting liberty is a means to individuality and bravery, amongst other things. Discipline and strength of character are important in this respect and we further understand Vivekananda's vociferous insistence on them. Rolland elucidates beautifully, in the following extended quotation:

'To what a pitch of human attachment does this intoxication with boundless Liberty lead! Moreover, it is obvious that such an ideal is not only beyond most men, but that, if badly interpreted, by its very excess it may lead to indifference to one's neighbour as well as to oneself and hence to the end of all social action' He continues to say, 'Death may lose its sting, but so also does life, and then what remains is a stimulus to that doctrine of service which is so essential a part of Vivekananda's teaching and personality.'¹²⁰

"Individuality is my motto...I have no ambition beyond training individuals."¹²¹ Variety and diversity in society, or even variety and diversity as concepts applied to the world at large, is manifested in the personal sphere through individuality. Individuality is a basic premise enthused over by Vivekananda's liberalism. Each man should be a master

¹²⁰ Ibid, p 197.

¹²¹ Ibid., p 79. Rolland's reference - Autumn 1895.

of his own soul; each must learn for himself and guide himself. Each one is creator of his own destiny. The responsibility rests on his shoulders alone. Rousseau, in the beginning of *The Social Contract*, informs us that not only is it detrimental for one not to take control of their destiny, but also detrimental for one person to take charge of another: "Those who think themselves the masters of others are indeed greater slaves than they,"¹²² This is a very liberal concept as well as a very Hindu notion as expressed in terms of *dharma*: each must live their own and not another's, hence the abhorrence of vicarious atonement.

Individuality nurtures faith in oneself. True religion should regard as an atheist a man who does not believe in himself, Vivekananda asserted; individuality cannot coexist with meekness. Variety is life and faith in life is therefore faith in individuality and oneself. The notion of individuality is of paramount importance in Vivekananda's liberalism. Vivekananda was opposed to any sacrifice of individual freedoms. The means towards and the end of Vivekananda's liberalism was freedom. It is said that in the East, when social or political advancement is desired, human rights must be temporarily disregarded - Vivekananda dissented against this theory vehemently. Man was the highest God in his eyes, and it appears, according to him, that no goal is more important than the well-being of humans. This is a very liberal concept as well as a very Hindu notion as expressed in terms of *dharma*: each must live their own and not another's, hence the abhorrence of vicarious atonement.

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¹²² Rousseau J.J., *The Social Contract*, Book I, Chapter I, "The Subject of the Book", p 49, Penguin, Middlesex, 1986.

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¹²³ Rao, 'Vedantic Socialism', in Ahluwalia, op. cit., p 92.

Responsibility should be given to every one; it is not only a symbol of individuality but implemental in creating individuality. To him, responsibility when coupled with individuality was not burdensome but actually advances and enhances individuality, difference and variety. Even religious responsibility should supposedly make a Hindu a better Hindu, a Muslim a better Muslim, and so on.¹²⁴ It is interesting to note that Upadhyay created a theory which brought the concept of acceptance to an extreme; some may say more liberal than Vivekananda's, but in my eyes, it was impractical and less liberal in that he not only accepted, but attempted to synthesize all differences, thus destroying those differences. Vivekananda categorically stated that "each religion must assimilate in the spirit of the others and yet preserve its individuality and grow according to its own law of growth."¹²⁵

Vivekananda was more concerned with practical fraternity than any abstract idea of synthesis or integration. Furthermore, the idea of fraternity, for Vivekananda, is derived from his ideas of diversity, variety and individuality: "Forget not that the lower classes, the ignorant, the poor, the illiterate, the cobbler, the sweeper, are thy flesh and blood thy brothers."¹²⁶ It is interesting to note that Vivekananda's idea of individualism differed greatly from the modern Western concept. The latter conjures connotations of privacy, personal freedom and many other qualities which a person may practise away from the public eye. According to Vivekananda, any entity which was common between people therefore was not wholly individual. The *Atman* is precisely one of these notions. Furthermore, since Vivekananda was seeking to reform India, to him

¹²⁴ Sarma, 'Vivekananda and Hindum', in *ibid.*, p 136.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, p 134.

¹²⁶ Rao, 'Vedantic Socialism', quoting from 'Modern India' in *Ubodhana* (in Bengali), in *ibid.*, p 86.

individuality was a concept which was to be used to rationalize and rebel against established dogmatism and oppression for the benefit of the nation and society service: salvation was collective. Thus, it had an explicit public personality. Vivekananda, despite his incessant pleas that variety should be accommodated, did not comprehend the notion of a recluse's having individuality. Each person is, in effect, charged with the task of demonstrating their individuality.

The quintessential hero of Vivekananda's liberalism has been described above so it will be re-emphasized only by recounting a phrase to recall: "the humble, heroic life."¹²⁷ The goal of individual development, beside social development, was the goodness of man. *Vedanta* asserts the essential divinity of all individuals and Vivekananda's liberalism is designed to bring this out in the manifest spheres as well as cultivating it in the non-manifest areas. Eventually "universal love and service of man as worship of God"¹²⁸ should permeate the nation and the individual. A political theory would then not need to provide a blue-print for the institutional perfection of the society, but simply provide emotional and intellectual guidance and stimulation. This was as near to perfection as man could hope to attain in this life. It was the reawakening of the Soul Power.¹²⁹

Vivekananda's motto was: '*make me a man*'. His intention was to create for man an ideal that was indigenously Indian, yet a 'Man' is not necessarily Indian. This is one of Vivekananda's flaws. He was rebelling against the idea held by many Indians and inspired by the Western intelligentsia that the perfect man was the intellectual who spent all his

¹²⁷ Rolland, op. cit., p 167.

¹²⁸ Rao, 'Vedantic Socialism', in Ahluwalia, op. cit., p 97.

¹²⁹ Murthi, 'Freedom from Fear', in *ibid.*, p 172.

time in contemplation. Vivekananda wanted people to take action against and not simply create theories against oppression. The actual concept Vivekananda created of 'Man' was not Indian, nor was it Western, nor did it exclusively belong to any other race. He gave it an Indian, or moreover a Hindu, orientation by describing such characteristics as courage, and individuality in peculiarly Hindu rhetoric: the Soul force and, moreover, *dharma*. In essence, his idea of being a man was the ability to fight for freedom from slavery whether from the Indians or British, through characteristics such as strength, rationality and individuality. Vivekananda did not necessarily refer to the male gender - simply the ideal of humans. It is easy to resort to male rhetoric since, by connotation, female rhetoric implies weakness (the history of which is not my purpose to study) - emasculation, eunuch, femininity and so on. These terms are regularly used by Vivekananda in an attempt to portray a picture of fragility. The ideal human is the one free from fear and strong not only physically but also mentally. It is a call to attaining an identity: that man is the highest God so an identity of man is the identity of a worldly God, with endless potential. "Man' is the goal of individuality.

Vivekananda was very astute in that he described merit as difference. On one occasion, he stated that if all the road-sweepers in a village went on strike at once, the village would be in disarray.¹³⁰ On another occasion, he expressed his opinion that not every person should be a fighter or a shoe-maker, only a harmony of result.¹³¹ It is my opinion that Vivekananda would have institutionalized merit as difference in a socialist vein in an attempt to destroy intolerance and exclusivism.

¹³⁰ S.V.C.W., Vol. VII, p 246.

¹³¹ Ibid., Vol. III, p 165.

Fraternity is an important aspect of a hegemonous society, but, again, fraternity can lead to exclusivism: "Each one cries 'Universal Brotherhood! We are all equal'...And then immediately afterwards: 'Let us form a sect!' The need for exclusivism reappears at a gallop with a badly concealed fanatical passion."¹³² Exclusivism inevitably leads to hatred which, to reiterate, is the reason Vivekananda sees as constituting the downfall of India.

"Liberation cannot be achieved except by the perception of the identity of the individual spirit with the universal spirit",¹³³ Huxley quotes Shankara as professing. This combines the religious and practical conceptions of individuality and salvation and echoes Vivekananda's incessant protestations that individuality is liberty; and that it is the first stage towards ultimate liberation. Vivekananda's whole blueprint for systematic change in India hinged on the concept of individuality. Individuality must be achieved first before it can be joined to the universal spirit. Vivekananda's thought and that of other Hindu reformers were 'organic' in that the political body and the international body are analyzed in terms of the human body where if one aspect is abused, all others suffer the consequences; and each aspect relies on others to perform their respective functions. "Among the consequences of these wrong uses of the psychophysical organisms are degenerative changes in particular organs"¹³⁴ "Know this for certain, that no great work can be done by that body one limb of which is paralysed."¹³⁵

¹³² Rolland, 'His vision', in Ahluwalia, op. cit., p 110.

¹³³ *The Perennial Philosophy*, op. cit.

¹³⁴ Ibid., p 230.

¹³⁵ Rolland, op. cit., quoting Vivekananda, p 165.

Obviously, it is important to achieve individuality but such a conception is very different from that understood in Western political philosophy. Huxley states that all exponents of the Perennial philosophy have insisted that :

Man's obsessive consciousness of, and insistence on being, a separate self is the final and most formidable obstacle to the unitive knowledge of God. To be a self is, for them, the original sin, and to die to self, in feeling will and intellect, is the final and all-inclusive virtue.¹³⁶

A few pages later, Huxley cites a story originally in Harper's magazine ('recent edition') entitled "How Men behave in Crisis". The story tells of a damaged B-17 plane and crew who were so severely injured that survival seemed impossible. A young psychiatrist who had been present on five combat missions as a medical observer, professed that in danger, men are likely to act most uniformly.

Their actions were remarkable alike...such action is typical of a crew who know intimately what fear is, that they can use, without being distracted by, its psychological concomitants, who are well trained, so that they can direct their action with clarity; and who have all the more than personal trust inherent in a unified team...

We can see then that, when the crisis came, each of these young men forgot their particular personality, which he had built up out of the elements provided by his heredity and the environment in which he had grown up...all of them behaved in the same strikingly similar and wholly admirable way. It was as though the crisis and the preliminary training for crisis had lifted

¹³⁶ *The Perennial Philosophy*, op. cit., p 36.

them out of their divergent personalities and raised them to some higher level.¹³⁷

It is highly significant, bearing this in mind, that although Vivekananda insisted that individuality is the highest form of reality, he acknowledged and even claimed that there is a special reality, beyond mundane reality - the same one of which Huxley is telling us. Vivekananda included this in his definition of individuality. As we have seen, his definition included a public personality because of the idea of social service. The idea of social service is essentially religious in that it is for collective salvation, linking this with individual *dharma* and individual salvation. Hence, his idea of individuality also had religious connotations. It could be likened to the personality engendered when individuality is joined to the Unitive ground.

On the surface, it appears to be very socialist, and opposed to liberalism, to proclaim that individuality is only a means of reaching a higher ground; and when the ultimate time dawns, it should be abandoned. Still, it is highly liberal in that Vivekananda's notion of individuality is dependent on nothing but the person himself, as in liberal thought. In a way, individuality to Vivekananda consists of breaking rules by rebelling against established practices and dogmatism and it also has a non-worldly, non-regulated aspect. In this way, the concept does not follow the liberal idea of freedom through regulation. Individuality, to Vivekananda, was ontological and not political or even practical. Conversely, such a concept of individuality is liberal as opposed to socialist in that personality and individuality are not dependent on or in reference to work or any external factor. There is an inherent personality, a divine spark, as there is in liberal thought. In this way, freedom is on more than one plane:

¹³⁷ Ibid., pp 41-2.

ontological, personal as well as practical. Liberals acknowledge that a mass murderer can realize his true desires and thus be free but freedom in society consists in being regulated. In socialist thought, freedom is on one plane only.

The term 'liberal' has been in use since the fourteenth century but has had a variety of meanings. It has referred to a class of free men, in other words, men who are neither serfs or slaves.¹³⁸

Liberalism as an ideology, classical or modern, centres around certain fundamental concepts such as free choice and private property. There has been a variety of opinions concerning these issues. Hereditary wealth was contentious: certain liberals disagreed with inherited wealth while others did not because it conformed to the principle of disposing of one's wealth however one desired. Nevertheless, such concepts and the differing opinions are integral to the liberal tradition. Vivekananda did not in contrast, expound on such issues and yet his opinion was ambivalent. On the one hand, he held a peculiarly Indian 'organic' view of property. He thought it strange that one person could own the land on which another was living. Land was a part of Mother Nature, the property of every person. There was an integral link between nature and truth. This 'organic' view held that the solution to life was to be found in nature. Truth was to be found in following one's *dharma*, which is cosmic in character. *Dharma* is confined not only to human; animals have their *dharma* as well. Hypothetically, if every being were to follow their *dharma*, the world would be perfect, Hinduism preaches; the world would reach the *satyug*,

¹³⁸ Heywood A., *Political Ideologies*, Macmillan, London, 1993, p 15.

the perfect era. Of course, there are such problems as ascertaining one's *dharma*. Vivekananda proclaimed that Truth is 'nobody's property; hence nor is nature.

On the other hand, he was pragmatic and desired the modernization and economic betterment of India. He could not possibly have disagreed with ownership of property. It must be understood that he was criticizing the feudal system of ownership and exploitation, in favour of a system of ownership in which people had the freedom to decide whether to purchase and sell their belongings, with the money that they had earned. He was in favour of a system in which people were not prohibited from earning, selling or purchasing; a system in which the *twice-born* castes did not have the sole ability to purchase, sell and earn a decent wage and did not have the authority to prevent others from earning, selling and purchasing. He preferred a system in which wealth was distributed according to merit and not birth; and one in which wealth could circulate. Liberal ideas resulted from the break-down of feudalism as a political ideology.¹³⁹ His 'organic' dissent must be appreciated in this context.

In many respects, liberalism reflected the aspirations of a middle rising class, whose interests conflicted with the established power of absolute monarchs and the landed aristocracy. Liberal ideas were radical, they sought a fundamental reform and even, at times, revolutionary change.¹⁴⁰

In this sense, Vivekananda's thought must be looked upon as liberal. Although there was not a 'middle rising class' corresponding to

¹³⁹ Ibid.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

Vivekananda's agent of change, his ideas fit the liberal mould. He criticized the political, social economic privileges of the *Brahmins* and the feudal system that existed in India and where social position was determined by birth. This revolution or reform had psychological concomitants: that freedom of conscience is an integral part of such reform. Such freedom of conscience was not possible under the highly regulated and exploitative system.

What is more contentious is the issue of whether individuals are self-seeking utility maximizers or whether there is an inherent humanistic character fed and inspired by a divine source. This is part of the larger question of whether man has aspirations other a material happiness: in other words whether man is spiritually inclined and whether spirituality plays a part in modern society. The capitalism advocated by classical liberals presumed that man was a "self-seeking utility maximizer". The goal of such capitalism was an industrialized, free-market economy, free from government intervention intra-nationality and internationally. Such as free market was traditionally alien to Third World countries "because their political cultures have emphasised the community rather than the individual."¹⁴¹ Yet it is interesting that industrialization in Japan assumed a peculiarly non-Western, non-individualist character, which emphasized group loyalty and not individual self-interest. The culture still exists in Japan today. Vivekananda praised Japan for retaining its innate nature. This reflects Vivekananda's incessant proclamations that the backbone of India is her spirituality and regardless of industrialization, modernization or even secularism, she should retain her character. Group loyalty, in Vivekananda's eyes, was visible in caste when it acted as an institution

¹⁴¹ Ibid., p 16.

moulding fraternity and patriotism. Furthermore, he saw spirituality as an inherent component of such fraternity and patriotism and hence was averse to the loss of such characteristics with the onset of industrialization.

In Vivekananda's mind, self-seeking utility maximizers and spirituality were mutually exclusive. If one were to be the former, s/he would not care for the interests of his/her fellow beings. Vivekananda, a religious pragmatist, regarded the manifestation of spirituality as the acknowledgement, in thought and action, of the fraternal bond linking all humans. Such was the realization of the religious and spiritual concept that all humans were ontologically linked. The manifestation of such a realization in the temporal world was morality in thought and action, consideration of the interests of others and without consideration of reciprocity. These were in direct opposition to the mentality of the self-seeking utility maximizer. Vivekananda searched and hoped for a system of capitalism not based on a selfish value-system, but one which included most of the integral aspects of capitalism such as industrialization, modernization and competition. Other key-concepts in Western culture which was based on liberal-capitalism are Freedom of Speech, Freedom of Religious Worship and the Right to Own Property, all of which Vivekananda wanted ingrained into the Indian nation. Liberals such as Hayek even state that economic liberty is an essential guarantee of political freedom and thus liberal democratic political systems are possible only in capitalist economic orders. Vivekananda realized this but the situation in India was more complex. He noted that economic liberty could not exist until there was social freedom. If one is constrained as to what profession one can practise, economic modernization for the nation is not possible. This is why Vivekananda could not have disagreed with

government intervention, because an authoritative prohibition on those caste and social customs which hindered equality of opportunity was necessary. In other words, the state needed to enforce conditions suitable for the realization of equality of opportunity for all individuals. This question will be addressed later in Chapter V.

Social freedom was not possible without respect for individuals. "Individualism is a belief in the central importance of the individual human being."¹⁴² Liberal thought focuses on the needs of the individual and not on the group. Vivekananda knew that liberal ideas could not permeate India as she regarded the group, the family, the village, the caste and the local community as the bearer of rights. The problem with feudalism in India was that it was reinforced by caste. Even if the feudal system were to break down, caste may still exist. Caste prevented individuals from being "confronted by a broader range of choices and social possibilities."¹⁴³ Heywood notes that with the break-down of feudalism in the West, individuals began, maybe for the first time, to think of themselves in personal terms.¹⁴⁴

Concepts such as respect for the individual and belief that each individual has distinctive qualities beneficial for society and the nation as a whole are characteristic of Vivekananda's thought. Such beliefs were the foundation of Natural Rights. To these Natural Rights Theorists, society should be structured to protect such rights. On the one hand, Vivekananda was convinced that society was in existence for the protection of the individual who, in political terms, was purely an aggregate of such rights. On the other, he opposed the concept and its concomitant implications, that

¹⁴² Ibid., p 18.

¹⁴³ Ibid., p 19.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

society was nothing but an aggregate of individuals; the atomistic argument. He dissented against the theory because accordingly, men were selfish bundles or rights, fighting for their own interests without consideration for other individuals. If the state regarded each man as an individual and not as part of a group of fraternity, then socially, economically and politically the man is treated as an individual, is therefore obliged to act as an individual and has no standing as part of a fraternity. This state would accept no spiritual bond between people and thus man as a political, social and economic being cannot accept spirituality. Vivekananda was opposed to this for obvious reasons. Furthermore, and as a consequence, man is given less social responsibility. He has little responsibility for his fellow man. Individual freedom is important because if society were atomistic, an individual requires freedom to exercise his / her will and for protection against abuses of liberty; if society is not atomistic, individuals require individual freedom to exercise social responsibility.

Individual freedom was of supreme importance but not at the expense of the fellow man. Acknowledgement of the spiritual bond between people was incompatible with atomism, yet it is not incompatible with individual freedom. On the contrary, it is the basis of individual freedom and individual freedom does not impinge on others, in the religious sense. Rawls stated that everyone is entitled to the widest possible freedom consistent with a like freedom for all. Liberalism incorporates the fact that individuals form and join associations. Any forced contract is illegitimate. This is very interesting because caste in India is a mixture of forced membership and voluntary membership. On the one hand, one is a member of a caste because of birth. On the other, in

India there is a tradition of renouncers who renounce society and caste and are members of neither. Furthermore, caste is not only an exploitative institution but also is a form of institutionalized fraternity. Hence an individual may be ambivalent as to whether he/she desires membership of a caste. This is more complex because one cannot choose which caste one is in. Moreover, if one chooses to exist in society, one must be a member of a caste. The option of existing in society and yet not being a member of a caste is not open to the individual. Hence, the individual's choice is restricted.

Liberalism involves a commitment to equality and a dissent against privileges. Liberalism strives to establish equality of opportunity, but not absolute equality because men are born different, as even Vivekananda stated. Society should not transform these into inequalities. Even though meritocracy was theoretically desirable, it was not possible. Vivekananda's attempt to educate the whole Indian nation was precisely the hope for the establishment of meritocracy.

A liberal society is a pluralistic society, composed of a diverse collection of groups and, therefore, one in which a broad range of opinions and views are tolerated. Social diversity is natural

and can be removed by political repression or perhaps, liberals have feared, the spread of dull conformism.¹⁴⁵

Healthy diversity of opinion, Vivekananda believed, is the only way in which ideas and arguments can be tested and established and society can progress. He incessantly claimed that no religions are completely true and there should be a dialogue between religions to establish which aspects should be disregarded as the 'peripherals' and which as the essentials. Even more radically he stated that religions should be subject to scientific examination and those aspects not proven should be regarded as superstition. All of this presumes an underlying ethos of tolerance, which liberalism stands for.

The liberal tradition asserts that the state must enforce this tolerance because firstly, if people are seen to be self-seeking utility maximizers, they must be prohibited from infringing on others; freedom is positive as well as negative. Secondly, because freedom exists only under the law, it is the duty of the state to enforce those conditions for the realization of equality of opportunity. However, society is a contract. Liberalism and Vivekananda assert that there is no absolute obligation to obey the state. If the state is exploitative it is the duty of the individual to defy the state. Vivekananda urged people to stop being cowards. They should stand up and take action. There has been a divergence of opinion as regards the question whether the state should be minimalist or interventionist, in the liberal tradition. A minimalist state is incapable of rectifying the injustices of society. If freedom were only positive, the unrestrained pursuit of wealth would lead on to new forms of poverty and injustice, T.H. Green claimed. He saw humans as being more than merely selfish individuals

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., p 25.

who are concerned only with their own self-interest. He attributed to them a empathy also characteristic of Vivekananda's understanding of human nature. Individual responsibilities should also be accompanied with those social responsibilities linking an individual with others. Heywood states that this was influenced by socialist ideas and emphasized the cooperative nature of humans; therefore, this strand of liberalism is seen as socialistic liberalism.

Heywood states that 'socialistic liberalism' led on to 'welfarism' on the basis of the equality of opportunity. One can imagine Vivekananda acquiescing to this. Furthermore, it has an economic implication. The building of schools and other such actions corresponding to welfarism create employment. Vivekananda stated that even luxury was important in India.¹⁴⁶ If one wants a luxury, another has to supply it and may employ others for this task. Keynes termed this the 'multiplier effect', "As with the provision of social welfare, modern liberals have been economic management as constructive in restoring the prosperity and harmony of civil society."¹⁴⁷ Unrestrained private enterprise is unworkable in complex industrialized societies or even in complex structure societies. Vivekananda reiterated this same sentiment when he criticized the abundance of materialism in the West.

Vivekananda took a middle position between complete state intervention and *laissez-faire* politics. He was in favour of individual initiative and yet, acknowledged that individual initiative had a limited role. Individual initiative could not rectify such grave abuses of injustice as *sati*, unless each and every individual wanted its abolition. Without

¹⁴⁶ S.V.C.W., Vol. IV, p 368.

¹⁴⁷ *Political Ideologies*, op. cit., p 49.

complete education, itself not possible, at least in the immediate future in such a large country as India, this would not occur. Hence, it was the duty of the state to interfere to change the opinion of people. He was opposed to the theocratic state, which incidentally was 'in stark contrast to the liberal conception of individual freedom', because he had witnessed incredible manipulation of religious ideology. The problem with assessing Vivekananda and liberalism is that, assuming that liberalism is a defined doctrine and the central concepts are those on which Western liberalism has expounded and deliberated, are fundamental to any liberal dialogue, Vivekananda was living in a country where the condition of the masses was worse, in many instances, than it had been when liberalism as a political doctrine emerged. Private property, as an example, was thus not a pressing issue. There are more important problems in associating Vivekananda with liberalism: such concepts as free choice and private property were in stark contrast with Indian notions of rebirth and arranged marriages, which Vivekananda agreed with. Concerning the latter, Vivekananda criticized the West for being too oriented towards the individual's desire without recourse to the consequences of such a decision. Concerning the doctrine of rebirth, Vivekananda asserted that *karma* was synonymous with the law of causation. This is reflected in the liberal vein: one has to pay attention that one's liberty does not infringe on the liberty of another. There is a grave problem in ascertaining what form liberalism would take in India because the Indian understanding of *karma* appears incompatible with liberalism as a theory - respective concepts of man, and their roles in the world: one's actions in this life have a bearing on the next life. It is not relevant to analyze this in respect to Vivekananda because his understanding of *karma* is greatly different both from the traditional

Indian understanding of *karma* and the liberal concept of man's role in this world. It must be concluded that Vivekananda was liberal because his concerns were very liberal and his utopian India would be liberal. It is fair to say that Vivekananda was an Indian liberal, concerned with the fight against feudalism, repression, abuses of authority and the fight for equality of opportunity, welfarism, individualism, freedom of choice, of conscience and of religion. Tolerance and pluralism featured high on his agenda and he was concerned with the harmony of society in the liberal vein.

CONCLUSION

In a country which regards groups as entities in all spheres of life, be they economic, legal, moral, social or political,¹⁴⁸ Vivekananda stood for his philosophy of acute individualism and radical, grass-root rebellion. A political religion which advocated that man should be treated with the respect due to Gods would probably be regarded as idiosyncratic, if not blatantly heretical. However, Vivekananda was not wholly individualistic in his philosophy. The concepts of Qualified Monism set the regulations for the concept of individuality. The amalgamation of individuality with the Unitive Ground is liberation, while individuality in itself is simply a form

¹⁴⁸ See Parekh B.C., *The Poverty of Indian Political Theory*, N.O.'Sullivan (ed.), 'Hull Papers on Indian Politics'.

of liberty. To digress: it is commonly remarked that contemporary India is a liberal democracy of a peculiar kind because it recognizes individuals and groups as bearers of rights - but would it have been different and more similar to the Western liberal democracies if Vivekananda's formula of individualism had been followed more closely? This is an interesting question because on one front, it implies that Vivekananda's ideas of individualism were so stringent that they followed the Western model as opposed to taking into account the important factor of its applicability to the Indian situation -hence the guidelines of the Advaita Tradition; on another front, this question requires a detailed study of contemporary India - her legal status, political status, and so on. Returning to the point at hand, the slight hint of communitarianism in Vivekananda's philosophy of individualism has practical benefits (as well as theoretical ones). Due to the demographic diversity of India, a political regime and ideology committed to the ideas of individualism, equality, a strict moral code and liberty may actually alienate minorities, creating further exclusivism and discord.

In practical terms, Vivekananda was creating secularism in another dimension. India was governed and itself based on a particularly Hindu ethos without even subdividing these ethics to accommodate the diversity of Indians. Secularism in India has become dogmatized. It now actually, yet unintentionally, encourages inter-religious conflict. Furthermore, secularism in India has embedded a rift in the psychological make-up of the country and her inhabitants. Religion is regarded as tradition and history while progress is regarded as the practical future.¹⁴⁹ Instead of joining progress with religion, what secularism did was to widen the gap. Progress is seen as disloyalty to religion; and being religious is seen as a

¹⁴⁹ See *ibid.*

hindrance to progress. Vivekananda wanted to ameliorate the situation by rationalizing the dichotomy. Logically, there should be no rift, especially as secularism is charged with the task of demolishing it. Vivekananda's secularism battled with precisely this. It attempted to abolish the debate over what to recycle and what to dispose of in the political and social framework and make-up of India. For example, in the previous dilemma, religion in one respect should be left aside, to aid progress. Vivekananda's secularism destroyed this dilemma by making religion and progress mutually compatible.

Vivekananda's brand of individualism with its religious character encouraged the belief that even though two people were not in agreement, they may not be explicitly in disagreement. On a national or community level, this meant that private and public interests should be in unison - a sentiment traditionally alien to India. As a result, according to him, there should be increased concord. There would be no dilemma between the welfare of one citizen and another. In religious terms, Vivekananda believed that an individual's salvation is inseparable from the collective salvation. Terms such as *Adhikara*, meaning 'collective responsibility', familiar to the Indian people, were means of persuasion: that it was their *dharma* to help others to gain liberty and rights (the Western concept of rights). At times Vivekananda would use such religious terms when he saw a hiatus in the theory in terms of its applicability to India; or when he was not sufficiently acquainted with the theory in which he had discerned a hiatus.

Although Vivekananda was probably not fully acquainted with all liberal theorists, his thought is distinctly liberal and not too much emphasis should be placed on his knowledge of them. Undoubtedly, he had

an understanding of Spencer, but this was also in the background of the Indian discourse on Spencer. Vivekananda may have been (at least in part) indebted to Spencer for his theories on violence and when the means should or should not justify the end (but this is not to say that Vivekananda is clear on this point; he left it very vague). However, Vivekananda's knowledge of liberalism appears not to have stretched far beyond the general knowledge of all University graduates - knowledge of the leftist politics of liberalism - especially those seeking to abolish the present society and aiming at the development of a new one. He was probably not acquainted with works such as Burke's *Reflections on the Revolution in France*¹⁵⁰ which criticized the leftist politics of the 1789 Revolution. He would have surely been acquainted with Rousseau. However, his concern was not to deconstruct the superstructure of India, but necessarily to hold it together while reconstructing it. Maybe because he was less than fully acquainted with Western Theorists, or he realized that they were not fully applicable to the fragile Indian situation, he added his own religious dimension to a primarily political theory.

Vivekananda's liberalism is nonetheless distinctly liberal in character. The major components of Vivekananda's liberalism are: firstly, education, to which Vivekananda gave the utmost importance. It was the first stage in attaining any sort of liberty as well as being an on-going means throughout the process of progress. It was also the end of progress. Secondly, individualism was a product of education, was not only a means but also an end. It was liberty as a means to liberation. Man was the bearer of rights and this created individuality (individual rights should not be sacrificed on any account). Thirdly, equality resulted from

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

individuality. Neither difference nor merit was to be translated by society into inequality. Fourthly, fraternity was a direct result of individuality and individual equality. The confraternity in Vivekananda's liberalism was paralleled only by the quintessential fraternity of Islam; fifthly, fearlessness and faith were the foundation stones on which all of these were erected. The source of all the above components was found the essentials of religion, politics and science - which Vivekananda saw to be identical.

The difference between the Eastern and Western approaches to man, as a part of the politico-national body is that the Eastern is purer. Western liberalism is founded on the belief that man is the ultimate macrocosm - in the sense that it is in the human psyche and being that all rights are bestowed. Rights are the ultimate microcosm, man is the guardian of these rights and society is merely an instrument devolving from both of these. Vivekananda added a less practical, religious aspect - a recipe for internationalism by adding religious boundaries - to this equation. Man is the quintessential macrocosm only in so far as he is in this world and 'bound' by rights and liberties. Religion is a higher plane on which man can live; on this plane, there is no need for such idiosyncratic trivialities as rights and liberties. Western theory also accepts this religious plane as different, divorced from the study of politics. Vivekananda's liberalism, on the other hand, has a deeply religious character. Thus, it is implied if not stated in Vivekananda's liberalism that man is the quintessential macrocosm only in so far as religion allows - in any practical sense this means that he is not. Rights and liberties take on a much smaller significance in this theory. On the one hand, for Vivekananda, fraternity exists because all men have the divine spark. On another level, it exists

because men are belittled and inferior in the international political arena. Only through international fraternity can a person achieve his full potential. Vivekananda joined religious and communist ideas. He confused these for two reasons: because he was not fully acquainted with such theories and also for practicality. This is a major problem with Vivekananda's liberalism as a theory: sometimes it is so pragmatic, catering to problems when they arise, that it can be actively problematic in its complexity. In this case it is trying to add a method for fraternity and internationalism into the notion that men are the bearer of rights.

Vivekananda also drew up ideas of fraternity, universality and humanity from spiritual theory. In Western Theory, man is the bearer of rights and this is common to all men. It is something tangible. They can test the freedoms, liberties and rights. Thus, they can understand or - to put it in Vivekananda's words, 'realize' - the fraternity. Vivekananda's liberalism, on the other hand, professes that there should be equality and fraternity between all people striving towards salvation. There is a spiritual bond between people. Although one cannot feel it now, they will eventually. They must endure a long period of sacrifice and hardship before they have reached the stage when they are able to feel it. In the meanwhile, they must have faith (another reason for Vivekananda's vehement insistence on faith). It is interesting to ask if a person has reached a state of worldly perfection, which in terms of Hinduism is unattachment, then how is the quality supposed to be manifested? Vivekananda, one could surmise, would say that when this state has been attained, worldly values do not matter. Equality is then a nugatory concept - everything is necessarily the same. This seems logical when related to the fact that the definition of unattachment is that neither the means nor

the end has any value. They are both pieces of a puzzle, both with the same value. Religion plays a large part in Vivekananda's recipes for fraternity and internationalism.

In Vivekananda's liberalism, the religious aspect also ensures that human ethics determine policy as opposed to *vice versa*; an outcome which could happen under the guise of liberalism. Even Western liberalism, despite its respect for the individual, may sacrifice the latter's rights for the good of the state. Only when, or after, this is insured can freedom from fear, tyranny and other forms of oppression be achieved.

Vivekananda was undoubtedly less constrained in making policies than were Western theorists. The latter are paradoxically, limited by their greater academic understanding of liberalism as a whole as well as a detailed understanding of the notions underlying the theory. Vivekananda's religious aspect gives him the scope to exaggerate. For example, for him, attached to the concept of freedom is the notion of the 'Superman'. At times, this 'Superhuman' lives the humble, heroic life. At other times, he is courageous, fearless and rebellious. This notion is completely absent in Western liberal thought - Rousseau's Lawgiver is the most proximate notion and yet it is still poles apart from 'superhuman'. Vivekananda drew on Indian religious ideas such as the Soul Force and the *Brahman*: Such ideas help to form an image of an omnipotent, omniscient human being. This seems in direct contradistinction to the liberal understanding of individuality, diversity and tolerance.

Vivekananda's liberalism does retain a singularly Indian characteristic. For example, it specified that Truth is not worldly, therefore that any worldly impression of truth is subjective and should not, henceforth, be taken as infallible. This belief permits individualism and

diversity. Objectivity is a worldly concept. It is dependent on the world and on subjectivity. Thus, truth cannot be both subjective and 'divine'. If truth is worldly, then diversity is not a sin. However, the conclusion that subjective truth should not be tolerated could also result from this belief. Vivekananda's liberalism counteracts this by professing that all truths are shades of the Ultimate Truth.

A major component of Vivekananda's liberalism is social service. Social service should be without distinction of caste and creed. In European thought, to service "implies a feeling of voluntary debasement, of humility. It is the 'Dienen, Dienen' of Kundry in Parsifal. This sentiment is completely absent from the Vedantism of Vivekananda. To serve, to love, is to be the equal of the one served or loved. Far from abasement, he always regarded it as fullness of life."¹⁵¹ Another reconciliation he achieved is between the contemplative life and social action. In Hinduism, the dignity of humanity is a very lofty concept. Vivekananda joined the traditional Indian emphasis on spiritual devotion with the social path. He brought it down to earth by joining it to the Western idea of organization and action.

Vivekananda's liberalism is the amalgamation of Western liberalism with Indian Spirituality (as a theory). It attempts to give to India what she desperately needs by joining her good points with beneficial aspects of the Western liberal character. The emphasizing of apparently masculine qualities of Hinduism and Indians was to be the aim of Vivekananda's liberalism. In the spirit of the West, it supplied to every Indian, regardless of their social standing, the essentials and fundamentals of the religion, faith and spirit of brotherhood and rationality. Vivekananda's liberalism was seen to be rationalistic, and systematic and in line with modern

¹⁵¹ Rolland, *op. cit.*, p 277.

science. Eventually, a united nation was the only solution to combat the years of stagnation and division in India. India then would only conquer the rot that she had been enduring for centuries. In theory, it is successful.

With hindsight, it is plain to see that the world seems to worry that advancement and modernity inevitably lead to destruction. The idea that spirituality is lacking is a common ailment. Vivekananda seems to have anticipated this sentiment, be it only a sentiment or indeed the actual case, that the lack of spirituality causes indiscriminate advancement and will eventually lead to destruction. The Western character seems to turn more and more to spirituality and introversion. Vivekananda's premise, that the ultimate goal of perfection is neither material nor spiritual but a mixture of both, seems to be ahead of its time. He appears to have prognosticated the future situation.

He believed that the only life worth living was in pursuit of an eternal reality. On the practical plane, this consisted of a strict moral code which included not only morality, but also rationality and religion. Conversely, Vivekananda was averse to a strict moral code. On the 'higher' plane, this consisted of spirituality as *jivan mukti*. On the practical plane, the psyche of the Indian would be forced to realize that his existence was not only spiritual - it was also mundane. It entailed that he should concentrate not only on spirituality - which Vivekananda professed that the Indian was apt to do. A more realistic understanding of his manifest side would enable him to live like a man, to rationalize and discern good from bad in this life. On the individual level he would concentrate more on and give more care to his worldly duties. On the national level, this would mean that the nation stood a much stronger chance of being regenerated. His 'spiritual' duties would not contradict (in pragmatic terms, they would

actually coincide with his national and manifest duties. A better understanding of his 'worldly' culture as well as the cultural institutions corresponding would then permeate his existence on this practical plane and his life would be more 'successful'. The only acceptable response for India was the creation of a new ideology based on a realistic conception of life, without incessant recourse to the cult of spirituality.

Vivekananda was a religious man yet his main premise was that man could reach salvation in the religious sense only if he worked in this world. He would not, if he simply prayed to God and lived an existence of life-negation. Vivekananda attempted to explain the notion of *karma* in respect to action. Here, he was probably influenced by liberal thought, yet it maintained a distinctly religious flavour as a guard against atheism and materialism. Vivekananda's liberalism was an attempt to pragmatize religious politics in a secular manner.

It is questionable whether Vivekananda's liberalism was created primarily for the perfection of the soul, or for the perfection of society. Of course, Vivekananda was fundamentally a religious man. At the same time it cannot be doubted that he was vehement in his protestations that India should regenerate herself, from within. Precisely because Vivekananda's liberalism is a religio-politic, the answer to the question whether Vivekananda's liberalism was created for the perfection for the soul or for the perfection of society, is debatable. Furthermore, the liberal content deems that the welfare of society is of utmost importance; at others, the religious content deems that human rights should not be sacrificed for the good of society. Progress would result from cooperation and not conflict, Vivekananda asserted. This is indicative of whether Vivekananda's liberalism was more concerned with the welfare of man or of society. If it

were the latter, Vivekananda would not have been concerned whether progress resulted from conflict or cooperation. Yet it could also be said that Vivekananda's main priority was the regeneration of India. The welfare of her citizens was an integral aspect of the re-building of India. The two convictions - mainly that 'The regeneration of India was imperative'; and 'man should not be harmed for the good of the state' - can exist dialectically or dichotomously. Vivekananda attempted to combine them dialectically. He asserted that the perfect individual would inevitably lead the perfect, moral, unselfish life and in turn would create the perfect society. To him, these were not mutually exclusive.

The underlying question is whether Vivekananda's liberalism is ultimately another political theory, and its religious aspect a result of the need for it to be applicable to India. On the other hand, it may really have been a religious doctrine which emphasized that the regeneration of India was simply a small yet integral aspect of the welfare (manifest as well as spiritual) of the people. This is part of the larger question of whether Vivekananda was at heart a politician looking for a religious basis or simply a religious man who advocated specific political ideas.

CHAPTER V

VIVEKANANDA'S ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL THOUGHT

In economic terms, Vivekananda was greatly inspired by Japanese industrialization, although he never translated this inspiration into a concrete programme. In India, he concentrated on the ethical message of *Vedanta*. The idea of a redefined relationship between Indians and the British was for him, not primarily economic, but political. Political education would aid in this redefinition. Practical *Vedanta* was neither an adequate nor a coherent ideology for the state in terms of economics and the administration of internal affairs. If intentional, it was certainly affected by Vivekananda's disgust of ideologies which easily degenerate into dogma. Secularist India could survive without an ideology but an India torn by anarchic communalism could not. The line between ideology and dogmatism is very thin.

Vivekananda had in mind cooperative theories of evolution, state, society and politics. Many political and social theories attempt to bind their followers through antagonism to an enemy. Vivekananda's idea of unity concerned people being bound for a common cause, rather than against one. Vivekananda's contention against social and political theories such as communism, socialism, liberalism, capitalism was that they were antagonistic theories resultant from their material vision of life and hence their selfishness and encouragement of this attitude in their followers. He discerned no difference between regarding people primarily as citizens or individuals. In theories such as liberalism, it was the latter and hence man's needs and desires were given a higher priority than those of the state. Vivekananda, in accordance with the Qualified Monist

Weltanschauung, saw the needs of society, state and population as indivisible. This appears similar to the socialist and communist ideologies, but it was different in that the Qualified Monist viewpoint drew simultaneous correlations between man, the state, society and the General Will; as Renou describes¹. The institution of caste makes this especially possible in the Indian state and at the same time impedes indivisibility. Vivekananda was confused as to the advantages and disadvantages of the respective viewpoints because historically, in India, the centre - the government and the *Brahmins* - had been exploitative of and antagonistic towards the individuals.

Practical *Vedanta* was more than an attempt to join service to humanity with the religious idea of salvation; it was moreover, an attempt to create a cooperative theory for the Indian state. It was a recipe for the Indian state, albeit a vague one, more than a simple extension of the theory of service to humanity.

In light of the fact that the basic principles necessary for a practice of the organized service to humanity were in place by the latter half of 1894, the reason for Vivekananda's exposition of a theory of 'Practical Vedanta' in 1896 suddenly appears less clear. It simply cannot be maintained that the theory of 'Practical Vedanta' provided the necessary philosophical underpinning for Vivekananda's religion of serving God through service to man as has been assumed.²

¹ See Renou's quotation in Chapter I, footnote 220.

² Beckerlegge G., 'Swami Vivekananda and the seva: taking social service seriously', being a paper given at the Workshop in Vivekananda and the Modernization of Hinduism, Centre of South Asian Studies, 26/27 November 1993, p 2.

Vivekananda had no manifest and detailed blueprint or programme for the state, its transition from a colonial society into an independent one, thus one must translate his ideas for the Ramakrishna Mission into his ideas for the state; he saw the Mission as the agent of change. His contribution was pragmatic and not academic. He had tremendous faith in the ability of India and Indians. His study of European history was evidently inspired by something more than intellectual curiosity - attracted by the decline of great civilizations, social revolution and the lives of heroic men. He explored the West's record and in it sought India's solutions.³ To him, the occult should only be useful and utilized if it aided in spiritual realization and supported up by experience. As a beginning, India needed to be regenerated materially (politically, socially, economically) and only then, spiritually. This was very different from what he preached in the United States, for two reasons: he did not want to 'hang India's dirty linen in public'; and because America was governed by the notion that man's needs and desires were of ultimate importance and society was continually being bettered for his satisfaction. It was through regulation and society that Americans looked to the betterment of human nature. Vivekananda mistook this for a non-spiritual approach to life because it aimed only at the amelioration of man's social existence and not his essence. Furthermore, such political and social theories aspired to respectively, perfect political and social communities, and not to perfect humans. Society *per se* was the goal. Vivekananda, not understanding the distinction between religion and culture failed to comprehend that politics and religion were completely different realms (and furthermore, his

³ Raychaudhuri T., *Europe Reconsidered. Perceptions of the West in Nineteenth Century Bengal*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1988, p 226.

interest in Western history persuaded him that they were not). "Society is made the test of truth. Now this is very illogical. Society is only a stage of growth through which we are passing...Society is good at a certain stage, but it cannot be our ideal; it is in constant flux."⁴

Vivekananda had a religious understanding of life and therefore society constituted more than a stage in evolution. Politics in the West was obviously solely concerned with society, the material welfare of man and the state. Paradoxically, Vivekananda saw this as non-spirituality yet also acknowledged that without a state, there would be anarchy.

Three hundred million sub-human creatures, their souls crushed for centuries under the feet of *everyone*, compatriots and aliens, co-religionists and people of other faiths alike, capable of slave-like industry, listless like slaves without hope, without any past or any future, concerned only with bare survival in the present by any means available with the slave's proneness to jealousy, intolerant of their compatriots success, cynical and without faith like men who have lost all hope, stopping to low cunning and trickery like the jackal, the ultimate in selfishness, bootlickers to the powerful, verily the god of death to the powerless, weak, devoid of any moral stamina, spread all over India like maggots feeding on stinking rotten flesh - this is our image in the eyes of the English official.

Intoxicated by the heady wine of newly acquired power, fearsome like wild animals who see no difference between good and evil, slaves to women, insane in their lust, drenched in alcohol from head to foot, without any norms of ritual conduct, unclean and materialistic, dependent on things material, grabbing other people's territory and wealth by hook or crook, without faith in the life to come, the body their

⁴ S.V.C.W., Vol. VI, p 144

self, its appetites the only concern of their lives - such is the image of the western demon in Indian eyes.⁵

The first paragraph is indicative of the how the British regarded the Indians: incapable of governing themselves because they had no organization and no structure, in other words, they had no concept of a state. Vivekananda realized that India could not achieve independence if she had no state. On the other hand, the second paragraph is indicative of a state with no spiritual foundation and guidance. This could be the corrupted state, or the extremely non-interventionist, *laissez-faire* state in which the government would not intervene even if the society were becoming immoral or amoral. It was too individualistic in Vivekananda's view. For India, an infrastructure must be built before she could harbour any realistic desires for independence. A religio-moral foundation must underpin the infrastructure or it could easily degenerate into an individualistic and immoral state. He was confident that independence would be a higher probability with a newly defined relationship between the British and a well organized, structured Indian nation.

There was an existent cultural Indian nation within the territorial, administrative and imperialist nation because despite decades of imperialism, the Indians and British had two completely different social orders, societal regulations, value systems (legal and otherwise), intermediary associations; all in all, two discrete frames of social, economic and religious reference. India was very different from colonial societies such as Algeria in which there was a closer integration between the

⁵ S.V.C.W., Vol. VI, pp 149-50, (in Bengali) in Raychaudhuri, op. cit., pp 267-8, Raychaudhuri's translation. His reference, in the bibliography: "8 vols., 1st. edition, 1970-22, 15th edition, 1977. [The number of editions for the different volumes]."

dominating French and subjugated Algerians. Indians lived in a completely different society to the British. There were two main stages in building an Indian nation: to start with, the relationship within Indian society must be redefined through the construction of intermediary associations. These must be more than the inaugural ones governing the religious interaction of castes and people within them. They needed to provide the framework for improving the relationship between those of the higher and the lower castes within Indian society, so that communication was possible. This would lead to the creation of an infrastructure. The second stage requires that the importance of religion as a governing factor of men's lives must be lessened. When Vivekananda asserted this, he had in mind not the moral bedrock of religion, but those parts which had been misinterpreted to advocate 'life negation'. In this case he was adamant that religion must serve society and the state and not *vice versa*. This is precisely because the modern state and not religion determines the existence and the psyche of people: the political is the personal. Vivekananda's problem was that he was unable fully to understand the intricacies and difficulties, because he did not fully appreciate that even though there was a distinctly Indian society, there were no more than traces of a cultural Indian nation; he assumed that the foundations for a territorial, economically self-sufficient nation were already set; a belief which arose from a naive assumption that a common identity was sufficient to create non-exploitative, interdependent relations (economic and otherwise) between Indians.

The first effects of imperialism are economic: "The huge price India has to pay England for the inestimate privilege of being ruled by Englishmen is a small thing compared with the murderous drain by which we purchased the more exquisite privilege of being exploited by British

capital.”⁶ Raychaudhuri emphasizes: “The end products of this persistent occupation were a series of stereotypes, often mutually contradictory which influenced social attitudes and informed political consciousness.”⁷ Raychaudhuri goes on to say that the embryonic national consciousness, thrust for reform and pride in India co-existed peacefully with colonial rule specifically because colonialism defined relationships and cultures in terms of power and thus limited the Indian perception of her own power.⁸ Furthermore, changes occur not through simple transmission of ideas or influences, but through mutations which are copied exactly because the dominating culture is seen to be superior. The Indian discourse on liberalism was informed by a minute fraction, and even that distorted, of what liberal thought consisted of, hence Vivekananda’s attitude towards it. Consequently, the modern liberal categorization of *sati* for example, as barbaric was resented because Indians generally felt that those liberals did not understand the full implication of *sati*. Ironically, aspects of defensiveness co-existed with the adoption of liberal-humanism. This is visibly resplendent in Vivekananda.

Liberal-humanism was manifest in many ways: “An awareness that the Indian nation had to comprehend ethnic groups other than the Hindus had been the basis of political organization as far back as 1851, when the Indian British Association was founded.”⁹ The difficulty was in the realization of a pan-Indian consciousness and this was what Vivekananda was battling for. Denationalization was the worst consequence of alien rule. Furthermore, the atomist structure of society on which the Western state

⁶ Hager, A., *Socialist Ideas in Indian Nationalist Thought*, unpublished Ph.D. thesis, p 91,

⁷ Raychaudhuri, *op.cit.*, p xi.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ *Ibid.*, p 12.

was modelled was thrust onto India, and this was what Vivekananda battled against. Politically, denationalization was the worst consequence of alien rule and economically, it was the 'drain'. Both were products of an atomist view of reality and hence Vivekananda's individualism, very different from capitalist atomism, yet both had an abstract concept of unity. Vivekananda posited unity as a secondary goal while in capitalist atomism, it was the ultimate goal of every person. As a result Vivekananda's concept of nationalism and economism was characterized by interdependence, social cohesion and a naive view that community spirit would create a pan-Indian humanitarian sentiment. In addition to the difficulty of putting this pan-Indian consciousness into practice, there was opposition. India was split between those who admired the British and British rule (this set included many Bengalis who enjoyed a relatively prosperous life and stable employment, Muslims who enjoyed preferential treatment, those who thought self-rule could never match up to the modernity of the West, and those who had encountered their first experience of respect under the Judao-Christian ethic as opposed to that of the *jati* system) and those who wanted it to end. The line was not easy to draw. As a result, the Indian nation would have a confused view of its role. In his religious and organic vein, Vivekananda thought that the Indian nation had a responsibility to lift the veil of ignorance not by superimposing its own rules, but by following those laid down by nature and religion. The relationship between the lower and higher castes to be bridged by the intermediary associations and the Indian nation was not socialist, but Hindu in nature. Vivekananda had faith in the Hindu's instinctively taking the right course because of centuries of genius. Vivekananda regarded the Indian genius to lie in the ability to create a

pan-Indian consciousness through religious foundations - political notions and even institutions through religious criteria.¹⁰

Vivekananda was adamant that India should not imitate the Western conception of the state and society. Firstly, it was too atomistic and secondly, imitation would convince India that the West was superior, moreover, it always ended in failure because imitation is never perfect and no two nations are the same. Indians would be examining Western concepts through Indian criteria and would thus have a distorted vision of them.¹¹ Vivekananda did want to produce a 'Western-style' man and woman.¹² He realized that the mere existence and character of the state encourages its citizens to portray those same characteristics as a liberal state encourages liberal ideas. If a state is strong, opposition to it must be strong, encouraging all its citizens to emulate strength. Conversely if the state rules by might, it encourages its citizens to do so also. By its very nature, it encourages a certain type of being, whether to accommodate it, emulate 'goodness' and 'righteousness' or to oppose it. "[So] long as the world was ruled by the strong, meat eating was essential for ordinary mortals."¹³ The state could not force people to be good, it could only provide conditions in which they could make responsible moral decisions."¹⁴ At the same time, the state should be an 'umbrella' to accommodate Vivekananda's idea of unity in diversity. The state should not encourage the spiritually inclined to be aggressive, for instance. If this were the case, it would actively discourage people from taking an interest in political and state affairs - it would seem that it was detaching itself

¹⁰ Ibid., pp 245-6.

¹¹ S. V. C. W., vol. VII, p 505.

¹² Raychaudhuri, op. cit., pp 299-300 and p 301 respectively

¹³ Ibid., p 306

¹⁴ Heywood, op. cit. p 45.

from the populace and naturally people would yearn for the personal. The state must be personalized in its ability to cater for all types of people, and in order that both the citizen and the state can affect each other. Individuality and individual *dharma* should not be overlooked by the state.

The personal is truly the political in Vivekananda's quintessential opinion, and particularly because he did not create restrictions regarding where the state could and could not intrude. The nature of the state confused him. On the one hand, the personal was to be the political so as to inhibit any unnecessary intrusion by the state and yet this was in itself widespread intrusion. This was the interventionist state and yet he was against extreme intervention, for that created automation which would eventually lead to the destruction of civilization.¹⁵ Automation in India could exist by the state's attempting to order the chaos.

Vivekananda wanted his religious, social and political philosophy to influence equally both Muslim and Hindu religions *within India* to create a religious philosophy by which both would live and which also achieved his aim of impeding communalism and helping the state. The pertinent element is he wanted to alter aspects of Islam only in India and was unconcerned with Islam in general, outside India; a fact unacknowledged by many analysts. This alters the emphasis in interpretation. Thus, it is difficult to categorize him as anti-Muslim. The religious philosophy was to incorporate aspects of both Islam and Hinduism. Vivekananda had no respect either for Hinduism in its then-current form or for Islam in India and thus had no reservations about changing them.

¹⁵ S.V.C.W., Vol. VII, p 363.

Vivekananda wrestled with something of an existentialist question. Muslims and Hindus had been in close contact and thus their cultures had influenced each other. Vivekananda attempted to discern why, despite this, there was mutual antagonism, why Hindus defined themselves in contradistinction to Muslims and *vice versa*. He was concerned that not only did communal groups define themselves thus, but individuals also believed in and defined themselves in this same way. Sartre posed this same question: Marxism can explain that Paul Valery is a *petit bourgeois* intellectual but it cannot explain why he is.

Vivekananda's conclusion was that there was nothing better than antagonism to keep these two factions together; he attempted to find common elements and integrate both religions. The 'Body of Islam' he saw as an important aspect because it embodied Muslims' striving to establish *Shari'a* on Earth. For the Hindu, good conduct and spirituality (the combination of *artha*, *dharma* and *kama*) were synonymous with heaven and this was the 'mind of *Vedanta*': hence the amalgamation, the combination of life-asserting and devotional aspects of religion. Singhvi notes that detaching oneself from the world is an easier task than actively participating to improve the world; and many are deluded as to which task 'paves the path to God'.¹⁶

Perspicaciously Vivekananda realized that communal politics could not correlate social interests with group interests; there was a severe dichotomy: "how does a social class manage to promote its collective interest when this differs from the individual interests of the members of the class?"¹⁷, only because collective action is simply collective individual

¹⁶ Singhvi L.M., *Freedom on Trial*, Second Impression, Vikas Publishing House, Delhi, 1991, pp 128-9.

¹⁷ Birnbaum P. and Leca J., (eds.), *Individualism: Theories and Methods*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1990, p 52. Henceforth, *Individualism*.

action. It is the Prisoner's Dilemma to a certain extent. However, when a common cause were found this dichotomy would cease to exist.

Independence would result from a redefined relationship. The political is the personal because society shapes the psyche of the individual and the group. "He puts forth his tremendous power upon society; and society makes him what he is."¹⁸ A society can be regulated with facility from this perspective. The extent of regimentation is to be decided by religion, Vivekananda asserted. The Cairo Population Conference in September 1994 gave the world an image of a society regimented by religion, in direct contradistinction from Vivekananda's idea of religion informing society and the nation of the extent of regimentation. It is portrayed that Catholic countries were less concerned with the welfare of their religionists, their inhabitants, than with the fertility regulations.

Time's Chart of existing and projected world populations shows that the flip side of lower infant mortality, better medical care and a longer life is more people. With economic growth and an effort to educate people in family planning - as in the western world and China - population growth will level off. But when the numbers get out of hand - as in the proliferation of mice in a field or rabbits in Australia - predators descend, massacres occur and starvation results. This is the point that the Vatican is missing. It is much better and more Christian to educate people and help them help themselves than to keep sending in peacekeepers after overarmed, overpopulated, underfed and desperate nations have begun waging war on one another or on their own populations.¹⁹

¹⁸ S.V.C.W., Vol. IV, p 120

¹⁹ 'Time' Magazine, 26th September 1994. Opinion from B. Delaney, Mississauga, Canada.

Vivekananda was adamant that a nation is good because its citizens are good and not because of the laws enacted by parliament. Religion may be the destructive factor in the personal-political equation and hence Vivekananda asked what good religion is to society. Many were outraged because to them, society is subordinate to religion and not *vice versa*; but it was this belief which allowed Vivekananda to attempt a transformation of both Islam and Hinduism in India. The quintessential goal of human striving is freedom, for Vivekananda. However, freedom by nature, is not social; hence Vivekananda did not see society as the ultimate goal of human striving, but regarded it was an imperfect stage in evolution. Hence Vivekananda attempted to create a new relationship between society and religion. This re-definition incorporated a re-evaluation of both, society and religion.

As a result of his understanding of society, ethics had a different meaning.

There are attempts at producing a system of ethics from mere grounds of utility. I challenge any man to produce such a rational system of ethics. Do good to others. Why? Because it is the highest utility. Support a man says, "I do not care for utility: I want to cut the throats of others and be rich"... What prevents me from cutting the throats of my brothers so long as I can make myself safe from the police, and make myself happy? What will you answer? You are bound to show some utility?²⁰

²⁰ S.V.C.W., Vol. IV, p 205.

This questions the justification of authority, institutions and institutionalism. Traditionally with liberal thought, authority was based on the assumption that man acquiesced to being governed in order to be free; and institutions were the institutionalization of this authority. Vivekananda refuted this. His reasoning for the use of civil society derived from a very different source. He believed that ethics should be based on the natural goodness of man and hence an individual's natural bent towards civil society. "We find that man enjoys his intellect much more than an animal enjoys his senses."²¹ His understanding of man, of evolution and thus of society was religious and cooperative. He was also disheartened with American society - based on morality but no American knew why. If Indians renounced society, they would realizing that only love and morality can keep society together, Vivekananda proclaimed.²² It is comparable to adhering to the rules of a game because you want the game to continue.

Society is the practical foundation of moral co-existence and behaviour, thus it makes good sense. Morality is enhanced by religion. This is also a redefinition of the relationship between man and religion, religion and government, government and man, society and man, religion and society, and government and society. Society should not, though, be the substitute for religion. The state should not have the power to exclude or grant those rights which are fundamental. To Vivekananda, there was a distinct division between morality and rights because he did not fully comprehend the nature of rights. Instead, he translated rights as *dharma* and the division ensued.

²¹ Ibid., p 210.

²² Ibid., p 243.

Vivekananda was concerned that one form of colonial control shall not have passed away merely to be replaced by another. Despite this redefined relationship and other considerations, there still was no common cause for the unity of the nation. Vivekananda was searching for a central reference point. It should be informed by religious morality, but not derivative from righteousness, given that political, social and economic considerations were important. There should not be an enemy within or without Indian society in order for unity to be achieved, yet on the other hand, if there were an enemy, India must fight for the survival of liberty. Vivekananda emphasized that Indians should have a strong internal inclination to distinguish what is right from what is wrong and the courage to fight for or against it; a common purpose for unity; a fight *for* and not *against* unless this proves necessary (the 'Body of Islam' preaches that if necessary, one should fight in the mosque). Strength and unity should not exist only when there is an enemy. Strength is an integral aspects of this equation. Civility is a sign of strength, Vivekananda emphasized.

Unity is not only for attack but also for defence which must be backed-up with practical strength. The enemy is universal, such as tyranny and not particular. Vivekananda wanted to conquer the world with spirituality not only for India but also for the benefit of those countries. In this way and being a religious man, he was dedicated to the amelioration of the situation of the world as a whole. Why should a society be rich and free if it is not to help those who are in need? A national should not guide another solely because it will eventually be beneficial for itself, but because doing so is right. There should be an element of universality.

Besides his grand ideas for the Indian nation, Vivekananda knew that the institutions within the nation and the psyche of the people had also to be changed. This would be the most difficult task because no nation-state could develop if its citizens were running about with the idea that they were slaves and no better than animals, he proclaimed. Furthermore, and inevitably, Indians would be suspicious of any attempt to redefine their position in society since in their experience, 'Brahmin-rule', British rule and Mughal rule had all proclaimed to do precisely this, but instead had simply altered the balance of power. Once the psyche of the people and their consciousness of such institutions had been transformed, the relationship would have been redefined; not only between the state and individuals, but between the nation and other nations. Vivekananda believed that if people were to become 'civil animals', concerned with politics and the political welfare of the nation and its populace, the next step would be to incorporate a religious morality and a civil code in this equation, to inform such political concerns. As a result, law, morality, interdependence, subservience, exploitation and equality would all take on different meanings. In very quintessentially religious Vivekanandian terms, the relationship between the state and the citizen would be reciprocal.²³

The essence of the new moral order Vivekananda wanted established, was that the well-being of the whole nation is based on interdependence and thus morality should be enacted without selfish greed; yet reality is far from this. The other side of the coin is that Vivekananda sought to nurture a modern, humanistic person as a citizen.

²³ Erikson E., *Gandhi's Truth. On the Origins of Nonviolence*, W.W. Norton and Company, New York, 1969, p 125. Erikson describes this exact relationship in regards Gandhi, as a father-and-son relationship.

Vivekananda's fault lies in the fact that he did not formulate a chronological programme of action. One is confused as to whether the existing Indian hierarchy should be made just, or the creation of a moral, humanistic citizen should be enacted first. Vivekananda said that the state should try to discourage the animal and encourage the moral man. General welfare should be placed above individual welfare; the rationalistic above the instinctual. An image of his ideal person is reflected in his understanding of 'intention': he joined intention with responsibility and omission. It was an individual's active responsibility to consider; the omission of considering does not constitute an excuse; not simply, 'if' one had considered, one would have realized; but that one should have considered and if 'a rational man' did, the conclusion and the fact that one should have considered would have been patently obvious. This had positive implications for the state; *dharma* was action and state-oriented. For Vivekananda the worship of the state was the bridge between *karmayoga* and service. Again, he assumed the interrelation of the concepts of citizenship and religion (God is realized through service to the state directly and through service to other citizens).

Vivekananda was convinced that the individual was more important than the state.²⁴ One can debate whether he would have placed collective welfare above that of the individual. The dilemmas faced by Vivekananda in his utopian ideals were over the difference between humanism and the tenets of the Hindu religion. It could be held that the individual should not be sacrificed for the good of the community. Was the society which protected the welfare of all the individuals more important, or was it the

²⁴ I later refute that Vivekananda was concerned more with a single individual's welfare above that of a collection of individuals. Although this may appear to be a contradiction, Vivekananda held both views.

individuals, because it was he who comprised society? This is highly pertinent: individualism is a hollow concept without 'freedom of thought'; yet free thought cannot exist without risk of peril to the state and authority. Moreover, Vivekananda could not accept ossified religion yet as a religious man he could not accept the notion that society was to be put on a higher pedestal than God, although, in certain instances, he proclaimed that religion was futile unless it served man. Religion is different from God. He could not align his religious orientations with the realization that religious 'good' was abstract. One would reap the religious benefit only in the abstract, whereas the social, economical and political 'good' was realizable. He fluctuated between the religious argument that we are simple creatures with simple needs and the fact that there would be no need for society if this were the case.²⁵

However, Vivekananda regarded society as a stage in evolution. Man's highest aspiration should be the realization of the unity of mankind, the inseparability of *Atman* and *Brahman* - what is called the Unitive Ground. Society was the goal of temporal aspirations, but to Vivekananda man was composed of more than temporal sensibilities. If man were to acknowledge only his temporal sensibilities, he would succumb to the allure of materialism because the nature of society is materialistic. He even recognized a contradiction in the fact that he was advocating material pleasures over spiritual ones and that people were complex creatures entitled to exercise their desires, even if materialistic, contrary to what they had been told by many Britishers and *Brahmins*. "Moreover, there is at least an anomaly in Vivekananda's emphasizing hero renunciation of

²⁵ Swami Prabhavananda, 'Sermon on the Mount III' in Isherwood, op. cit, pp 330-1.

material passions while emphasizing socialist ambitions for a materially prosperous society.”²⁶

Vivekananda never resolved, probably because he never tackled, elementary questions regarding the state, possibly because he was never in a position to need to do so. On the one hand, Vivekananda’s theory of the state is slightly anomalous because of this, yet on the other, Gandhi and Nehru among others, were influenced by him and thus he deserves recognition. The difference between the respective types of state Gandhi and Vivekananda would have advocated is that the former would have preferred a vegetarian, saintly state; whereas for the latter, the greatest priority was a strong state. ‘Vices’ such as meat-eating and sexuality were to be accommodated, or even encouraged if they dissuaded dispassion in action and encouraged strength. To Vivekananda, the idea of the maternal state was elementary.

At the beginning when the mother is truly the matrix of survival, we can learn to trust the world and develop the basic ingredient of all vitality: hope. Having tasted our mother’s body with mouth and with senses, we remain part of it and yet also become strong enough to part from it.²⁷

To Vivekananda, the selfless mother gave hope and encouraged the ability to break away - strength. Hope was strength. She nurtures all aspects of the child to stand on its own feet: vitality, strength, determination. The allegorical connection between mother and the nation is more than causal. To Vivekananda, the state should not only be maternalistic, but it should nurture characteristics in the individual

²⁶ Hager, op. cit., p 61.

conducive to strength. The state should 'care' for the welfare of its members, and if the situation arose in which the individual was unable to sustain oneself, the state should intervene. However, until that time arose, the individual was expected to utilize initiative, individuality, freedom of thought and other individualist attributes that have been nurtured by the state, to maintain one's life in the world. Vivekananda's concept of the state was highly political. Vivekananda envisaged individual interpretations of morality, dependent on the situation; hence his emphasis on individual initiative and his disgust at dogmatic morality, whether in religion or politics.

Vivekananda's theory of society nevertheless had both a religious and a humanitarian inclination. At times, these are indistinguishable and at others, overlap. He was concerned about the welfare of the people, irrespective of religion. Society was to reflect Truth, which aimed to secure the societal position of people rather than realigning it after it had been dislocated. It was to protect against and discourage immorality, not to cure it. "What good is it to talk of your strength of your muscles, of the superiority of your Western institutions, if you cannot make Truth square with your society?"²⁸ To Vivekananda, the most important aspect of society and a nation was the people, without whom the society and the nation meant nothing. He cannot be accused of being atomistic because his theory was based on a deeply religious, not political, foundation. He did not understand the implications of atomism such as the Western state: is atomistic in its capitalism because it believes in unity as a product of individuality. He was retaliating against Indian reincarnation ideologies:

²⁷ Erikson, *op. cit.*, p 154. This quotation, although concerns Gandhi, it is applicable to Vivekananda.

²⁸ *S.V.C.W.*, Vol. IV, p 85.

In this type of analysis, it is the structure of society that are taken as active elements, individuals being characterized as behaving in a passive manner, and having only the freedom to enact a pre-ordained destiny. It is worth noting here a very particular form of holistic methodology which we can call here minimal individualism or dissimulated individualism, in which the individual is characterized as merely the site to point to which collective forces or ideas cross. An individual's expectations and plans are determined entirely by his social environment.²⁹

According to the individualistic scheme, the situation is reversed: institutions and traditions are followed only if they do not conflict with the situation.³⁰ There are many theories such as that put forward by Roemer and Margret Levi which assume that "the individual and the ruler seek to maximize and all changes in behaviour are attributable to changes in constraint."³¹

Society means nothing without individuality and through this, empathy and brotherhood.³² The renouncer in the Hindu tradition ironically emphasizes this by demonstrating that there is an alternative to society. It is undisputed that laws are necessary, but the Indian sub-continent has been infiltrated by a myriad of laws, permitting one liberty while denying one hundred. Individuality cannot exist under these conditions and the nation would collapse, Vivekananda asserted. Laws are separative and destroy fraternity.

²⁹ *Individualism*, op. cit., pp 40-1.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p 44.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p 68.

³² This is one of the themes of *S.V.C.W.*, Vol. III

To Vivekananda, socialism lacked the ability to reconceptualize the Hindu religion and tradition. To him, socialism was misdirected. Selfishness was internal and spiritual and not material. The motivation of an *Advaitist* is to overcome this; the two aspects are therefore complementary. “If Advaita is crucial to the actualisation of socialism, socialism is equally crucial to the actualisation of Advaita.”³³ There is a difficulty in combining them not discerned by Vivekananda. Both start from completely different concepts of the nature of life and man; socialism deals with the public sphere and *Advaita* with the individual. Furthermore, Vivekananda used religious and spiritual concepts for his idea of citizenship: “In addition to the concept of *seva* (service)...the rationale behind what has been come to be known as sadhana of social service through reference to Vivekananda’s understanding of *karmayoga* and his theory of Practical Vedanta.”³⁴ In other words, the individual has a reciprocal relationship with the state and not only with other individuals and society. Obligations and duty are very different from the socialist understanding of them, where the individual and his/her obligations are conceptualized in relation to the works he does which in turn cumulate in an obligation to society and the individuals in it - and not directly to the state. In *Advaita* there is a direct relationship between the individual and the state. Furthermore, there is an element of worship for the state and nation as a bridge between service and *karmayoga*. In socialism, the state is for the convenience of the individuals.

Vivekananda was too concerned to show that *Vedanta* offers something which can ‘cover the whole field of life’ - ideas and practice, and held that the *Bhagavadgita*

³³ Hager, op. cit., p 31.

³⁴ Beckerlegge, op. cit., p 1.

provides the best commentary on this 'practical' philosophy. 'Practicability' is seen to stem from the power of Vedanta to generate the realisation of that truth.³⁵

Vivekananda merged political, ethical, religious, economic, social and practical notions and incited Alasinga Perumal to action on the grounds that "'your religion teaches you that every being is only your own self multiplied.'"³⁶ This was the bedrock of Practical *Vedanta* and his ideology for the Indian nation-state. Beckerlegge contends that Vivekananda was not the first to propound this, as Ram Mohan Roy had found a purely ethical message in the *Isa Upanishad* half a century before. Yet what the latter found was really a theomonism in that the ethical imperative arises from the belief that the same God is in the subject and in other beings; which was different from Schopenhauer's monism of will and Shankara's monism of consciousness or *Ishk*. Vivekananda added a more practical dimension in that the motivation was to mobilize India's élites to help the poor. His identification with the "disinherited of this earth also created a keen sensitiveness to discrimination and inequality."³⁷ It can be contended that the focus of regeneration was primarily aimed at the poor and illiterate.

One can draw great contrasts between Western and Indian societies. Most Indian thinkers take the caste system as a paradigm of Indian society and posit it as an institution working against the national sentiment. However, Vivekananda contended that hierarchy even in its quintessential form is not as just as *varna*. In Western society, it is 'each according to his merit' which can be misapplied in social conditions and other factors;

³⁵ Ibid., p 3.

³⁶ Ibid., p 8

whereas in Indian society and *varna*, it is 'each according to his needs'. In a perfect state, each of the *varnas* would be interdependent: - the *Brahmins* as the tutors; the rulers with the general well-being in mind; the traders trading on behalf of the collective whole; the *Shudras* as the blue-collar workers. For Vivekananda, the division of labour minimizes frantic and unregulated competition that derives from the capitalist atomistic understanding of human nature. Because Vivekananda had travelled to America, he was perplexed as to the meaning of civilization. On the one hand, the U.S.A. was very civilized: the women were educated and each person had more liberty than the average man in India. On the other, the people seemed further alienated from themselves and from nature. The Indian was more closely in touch with his senses and in effect with nature. The American had abandoned nature altogether; his desires were purely material and he strove not for happiness but for material benefit. These, to Vivekananda, were not necessarily contradictory, but the latter was temporary and therefore would eventually lead to dissatisfaction and unhappiness. Materialism fosters exploitation and dissatisfaction since capitalism only makes the issue of want greater. The longing would recommence and the pain become even more intense. What certainly puzzled Vivekananda was whether the 'material route' was the only route to civilization and whether, in fact, the *constituted* civilization He was confused as to whether progress necessarily led to alienation; whether it was contrary to religion or whether it could be reconciled with religion and nature. In other words, he was confused as to whether modern society should be founded on natural or unnatural bonds. Natural bonds should not be confused with internal nature; here, religion attempts to overcome

³⁷ Raychaudhuri, op. cit., p125.

it and it is also dominated by the physical reality in which all beings are separate and therefore egocentric.

Socialism broke natural bonds, such as that of family, while emphasizing the collective bond. Vivekananda saw this as leading inevitably to the denial of the nature of man and eventually to the breakdown of morality. To him, morality stemmed from the natural bonds of life. For instance, selflessness derives from giving to children; the love of the mother is open-handed, not expecting return. That is not to say that if one has no brother, one cannot feel fraternal love. Morality is the translation of these into a wider arena. Such sentiments have been instilled into man; if they were forcefully removed, society would disintegrate. Society has, as history has shown, failed to create artificially such an intensity of morality as that which derives from natural bonds. Socialism should be amalgamated with spirituality and hence with the acceptance of nature. To Vivekananda, spirituality is the intensification of the sentiment generated from selflessness and natural bonds. Society gives to artificial bonds, such as fraternity and citizenship, a quasi-naturalness. Society aims to extinguish selfish desires and stimulate the will to satisfy 'general desires'. In religious terms, this comprises the acceptance of real Nature; in political and national terms, it is the manifestation of values of citizenship. Vivekananda sought a greater intensity of such sentiments; such intensity is impossible to portray in secular, political and materialistic language - the language of rights, duties and collective welfare. Socialism seeks narrow institutional change and not the 'root and branch reform', the mental revolution that signifies the conquest of internal nature. There must, of course, be a complementary material change.

Material change is a prerequisite for social utopia. Vivekananda's contention was that Western social and political theories are too involved with material change. He was concerned that there must be a balance between spirituality and materialism. "A little of it [material civilization], perhaps, is good for us."³⁸ Vivekananda understood the capitalist work ethic and hierarchy; he believed in competition but was unhappy with extreme *laissez-faire* economics. It seems contradictory to agree with the market economy of capitalism and not the extreme *laissez-faire*, especially when one acknowledges that Vivekananda was not very conversant with capitalist economics. Moreover, he regarded capitalism as a method, not a system, and thus saw it more as an ideology than a way of life. It is ironic that he was dissatisfied with hierarchical socialism, viewing it as a contradiction in terms. He leaned towards the idea of the state not as propagator, rather as a tutor who does not dictate, but merely points out, 'letting people discover' the 'natural' and in the case of modern society, 'economic', 'political' and 'social' bonds. To his way of thinking, any ideology has the ability to exploit and restrict, hence his dissatisfaction with purely material and self-serving systems such as capitalism and socialism.

"This is the study of what can be called the ambivalent relationship between religion and socialism in modern Indian thought."³⁹ The orientation of each is quite different but both can be translated into the concerns for human fulfilment, into social visions oriented towards solidarity - sentiments of private and public well-being. Capitalism and Liberalism, on the other hand, are more concerned with solidarity. "Thus

³⁸ S.V.C.W., Vol. III. pp 171-2.

³⁹ Hager, op. cit., p 2.

radical resistance to British rule was commonly linked with the advocacy of both socialism and traditional religion.”⁴⁰ Emancipation was translated into the rhetoric of non-exploitation and non-capitalism. Despite admiring aspects of the West, Indians had a natural tendency to denigrate Western culture and extol India, which distorted their viewpoint; therefore, their opinions as to what was and what was not important for India was in turn distorted. Furthermore, the Soviet Union was taken to be the prototype of socialism.

Vivekananda’s theories were a form of resistance to the radicalism of the Soviet Union but had similar socialist intentions. It was a fight for moderation in the face of socialist extremism, “the rejection of Soviet-style socialism rooted in India’s distinctive heritage, a heritage of highly developed religious sensibility.”⁴¹ Socialism became an axis around which to understand Indian thought. “Religion’s typical weakness as an ideology is its failure to visualize practical institutions which could embody and express its values in all spheres of activity. Religion is often especially weak in reconciling its aspirational social values with the demands of productive activity.”⁴² Socialism further rejected any form of religion or spirituality. Vivekananda was the first to articulate the problematic. Others, by glossing over this, in effect, rejected both a socialized utopia as well as the notion that a spiritualized transformation can usher in a harmonious society prior to, or without the need of, transformed productive organization: that morals and socialization reinforce each other was dismissed.⁴³

⁴⁰ Ibid., p 4.

⁴¹ Ibid., p 5.

⁴² Ibid., p 7.

⁴³ Ibid.

Vivekananda's concern was with an economic base and an ideological superstructure, the interdependence of the material and spiritual in social matters. The world is a gymnasium and the state is a gymnasium to strengthen spiritual natures. His great emancipatory fervour was for women and against poverty, ritual, degradation and subjugation. Social liberation was the ultimate goal and thus social action was the means. Vivekananda failed to explain why social action was imperative. He understood that *karmayoga* and service were really forms of worship and the state should be worshipped in the material world because the latter was simply a collection of individuals - social action was therefore a contribution to personal and spiritual liberation and thus a sacrifice of worldly egocentricity. It was a religious dictum, because ultimately religion was a social good. The sacrifice of the self and emancipation of the self was religious liberation. "What guarantee have we that this civilisation will last, unless it is based on religion, on the goodness of man? Depend on it, religion goes to the root of the matter. If it is right, all is right."⁴⁴

However, Vivekananda had no institutional or organizational blueprint for the state. His idea was to catalyse, not to engineer, change and expected that the utopian state would fall into place. He did not believe that anyone could engineer change because circumstances would, in the end, determine the product. Education is his dictum and everything would supposedly happen. The solution, to him, was to increase the power of the masses. This stems from the fact that he saw evolution as linear - starting with priestly rule (*Brahmins*), continuing to monarchical rule (*Kshatriya*), progressing to rule by traders (*Vaishya*) and eventually to *Shudra* rule - by the masses - thus his task was simply to catalyse, when

⁴⁴ S.V.C.W., Vol. V, p 202.

society had become stagnant because of the foreign interruptions of imperialism and invasion. "Everything goes to show that Socialism...is coming on the boards. The people will certainly want the satisfaction of their material needs, less work, no oppression, no war, more food,"⁴⁵ Vivekananda's ideas were revolutionary but they were not detailed. In a way, Gandhi and Nehru detailed his thought.

To the reformers I will point out that I am a greater reformer than any one of them. They want to reform only the little bits. I want root-and-branch-reform...Every one of these reformers only touches the first two castes, and no other...You must go down to the basis of the thing, to the very root of the matter. That is what I call radical reform.⁴⁶

He was clear in that he wanted reform but was unsure of the methodology. He was concerned about the 'unnatural hierarchy' of capitalism and that those who laboured did not enjoy the fruits of their labour; yet he was unsure how to find new methods of production. He wanted to spark a revolution but was unsure what state would emerge, in practice, afterwards. His equation was that exploitation would be obliterated by socialism and selfishness by religion. This was his combination of socialist production and *varna*.

Political freedom is the life breath of a nation; to attempt social reform, educational reform, industrial expansion, the moral improvement of the race without aiming

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ibid., Vol. III, pp 213-216.

foremost at political freedom, is the very height of ignorance and futility.⁴⁷

Vivekananda realized that the establishment of an Indian nation was futile if it were not accompanied or preceded by economic stability, or even by economic prosperity. Political independence was in a way incidental to economic stability because to Vivekananda, political unity was of little use if the whole nation were unified in starvation. Consequently, he insisted on an economic base, then politics and culture were to act as an ideological superstructure on which to build an economically prosperous population. There were two fallacies with his interpretation: firstly, he presumed that establishing the right economic organization would in itself secure a quality of cultural life. He even stated that *Shudra* rule would 'bring down' the culture of a nation, unless there be a strong cultural foundation which should have been built during previous eras. This economic error is common to materialistic socialism and capitalism in which the collective aim emerges from economic aims and a superstructure is built according to the economic structure. The second fallacy is that any set of economic aims can be posited on any society.⁴⁸ Spiritual transformation can occur regardless of economic constraints - that is the nature of spiritualism. Vivekananda had a romantic and cooperative idea of society, evolution and revolutions (economic and spiritual revolutions were interdependent) and even assumed that spiritual and economic aims would merge, creating a doctrinal foundation. He not only translated political aims but also economic aims into religious rhetoric and *vice versa*. He attempted no harmonization, simply a direct translation.

⁴⁷ Hager, op. cit., p 101, quoting from Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, *Bande Mataram*, p 86.

⁴⁸ Ibid., p 320, quoting Lohia R., *Marx, Gandhi and Socialism*, p 341

With socialism and capitalism the translation is more difficult because both deny the relevance of virtue, which is defined as personal self-restraint; otherwise, political changes would not also be religious changes (Vivekananda's idea of secularism incorporated the interdependence of political and religious realms). The spirit of community cannot thrive in great economic inequality because one class is living off another.

The reason for the relationship between spirituality and economics, to Vivekananda's thinking was not simply because he was a religious man but because he believed that economics and politics, as worldly doctrines, based themselves on causality. As a religious man, he regarded causality as a lack of free will in which circumstances, not oneself, dominate one's life. Variation was limited to temporal situations and hence restricted. Furthermore, because of this, man's psyche and moreover man's morality was based on his experience of the world. Morality should be a product of religion and spirituality, its bedrock the welfare of man, it could, as do non-worldly doctrines, hypothesise morality so that morality would be a theory and man would know how to act morally in all situations and not only in those previously encountered. As with Kant, for Vivekananda freedom involves self-restraint and *the exercise of the will over nature*. "Desire is infinite, its fulfilment limited."⁴⁹ Freedom was power over the self and nature, not succumbing to it. This conception derives not only from Kantian theory but the Hindu theology. In national terms, it is synonymous with citizenship values - the power over oneself is the desire to do good for others more than the desire to do good for oneself. In religious terms, it is the difference between Real and Apparent Selves in which moral action is true well-being.

⁴⁹ S.V.C.W., Vol. V, p 428.

There is a paradox: on the one hand, social and political rules and morality should be based on the natural bonds of life - such as familial; on the other, nature proves a hindrance to freedom because of causality. This seeming paradox is nullified if one realizes that Vivekananda was theorizing on two different planes. Natural bonds pertain to the internal nature of a person and in this sense it is the internal nature that is dictating the external nature; whereas, with causality, it would be the external nature dominating the internal. Thus either obviously or ironically, society, social and political rules and organization can never be perfect unless they obey the bonds of nature because for human conduct, natural bonds are religious rules.

The founding fathers of a nation can at best instil a nation with institutions and a constitution but they cannot make allowances for human nature - this is the role of citizenship values.⁵⁰ Singhvi points out that since Independence, India has laid too much emphasis on rights and not enough on duties, leading to another kind of dangerous 'deficit financing'. Citizenship, rights and obligations create a sense of belonging, the problem being that this is more easily recognizable in smaller social and political communities. The strength of citizenship lies not in its enforceability, but in its appeal to the nature of man. "Without civic morality, communities perish; without personal morality their survival has no value."⁵¹

Citizenship can uphold freedom, equality and justice but if religious and social freedom are not interdependent, they become nugatory, as in antagonistic communalism. Hence, the Indian Constitution must include secular values and since citizenship is a meeting point for the citizens and

⁵⁰ Singhvi, op. cit.

⁵¹ Ibid., p 234, quoting Bertrand Russell.

the state, the citizen must be a secularist. The citizen would work for the reconciliation of pluralism, the unity of goals through the “normative order of values and the functional ethos of institutions”⁵² and the constitution would incorporate them. This was exactly what Vivekananda attempted to instil. In India there was no normative order because, traditionally, Hindus and Muslims have been treated differently socially, politically and even economically. It has as the result that the ‘dynamic interaction’ of community, individual and group values is absent. Citizenship is the basis of freedom and freedom is the basis of civilization. Singhvi quotes Walter Scheel, former President of the FDR: “Citizenship is the cornerstone of civilized society. Neither economics nor political progress can be achieved without the development of citizenship as a theoretical and applied discipline.”⁵³ Singhvi goes on to say: “Good citizenship is regarded as the meeting point of the state, the society and the individual...It postulates an equipoise between rights and obligations...between what a citizen is bound to give and what he is entitled to receive.”⁵⁴

Citizenship creates a sense of temporal belonging, empathy, concern, cooperation, public order and public accountability. This condition is imperative in India because while Hindus feel a sense of belonging which is ‘otherworldly’, many Muslims feel a sense of belonging to an Islamic state which in contemporary India translates as Pakistan: both ignoring the Indian state and the welfare of the members. “[E]ach nation must give in order to live. When you give life, you will have life; when you receive, you must pay for it by giving it to others.”⁵⁵ Nietzsche said that the pain of

⁵² Ibid., p 236.

⁵³ Ibid., p 18.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ S.V.C.W., Vol. II, p 273.

deprivation is much more intense than the pleasure of receiving. Vivekananda would not have agreed that a citizen should give simply for the selfish, reciprocal reason that if he does not, he will himself be deprived. Yet it is this precise sentiment which he echoed in proclaiming that all people are part of the same ontological being and thus not to give is to deprive oneself. Because it is phrased in religious rhetoric, it is more palatable. Here lies the creation of new loyalties - from individual selves to the communal self - in which each individual endures civic obligations to keep the political system alive.⁵⁶ It has been argued that citizenship is incompatible with the creation of new loyalties because citizenship has a definite hierarchical structure of loyalties which is well defined. I do not agree with this and I believe this is refuted later, when Janowitz and his definition of citizenship are addressed. The state protects citizens against abuses of liberty and thus there is freedom only under the law. The Social Contract Theory, although not literally true, emphasizes the importance of the state to the individual - and, conversely, the fact that political authority, the basis of that importance, comes from the individual to the state; from 'below'.

Vivekananda conceptualized the sacrifice as one between sense pleasures *versus* 'the [political] Good Life'. He had much faith in the intelligence, rational choice and desires of the individual. "So with men desiring a heaven full of sense-pleasures...the loss of it is the loss of heaven to them...each man will find that there is something higher."⁵⁷ In the religious sense it is God, in the social, it is society and in the political it is nation and citizenship. His incessant proclamations of the Unity of

⁵⁶ Leca 'Individualism and Citizenship' in *Individualism*, op. cit., p 147, quoting Janowitz, *The Reconstruction of Patriotism*.

⁵⁷ *S.V.C.W.*, Vol. IV, p 14.

Beings, from where the idea of social service, helping others and doing good derived can be translated as citizenship in the political arena.⁵⁸ The pursuit of common welfare was, to Vivekananda, more than a social duty; it was a religious one. Furthermore, the relationship between ruler and ruled plays a large part in Vivekananda's idea of spirituality and its conciliation with politics: the fact that people would obey the just state not only because it is a political dictum, but moreover it is a spiritual duty to obey and serve yourself through serving others. "In nations and churches where the relationship between teacher and taught is not maintained spirituality is almost an unknown quality."⁵⁹ Only through sacrifice and compassion, can a nation be governed by freedom, individuality, citizenship values and patriotism, all of which dialectically relate.

Vivekananda's task was much greater than he envisioned: his entire vision assumes a will on the part of the individual to keep the political system alive. He needed not only to produce a political consciousness, but also create a desire to keep the political system existent. In addition, Vivekananda included a strict moral code by which the political system should abide which required further effort and expertise.

'Civisme' is the ethic underlying citizenship. The citizen is a loyal practitioner of rational and legal administration in nation-building. There must therefore, be a political map available to the citizen. The individual need not directly participate and might even admit that the map is unintelligible, or certain aspects of it; but there must be a map. This Vivekananda did not cogitate. Only if this map exists can empathy be collective and a product of choice (civic); and the true extent of inter-

⁵⁸ Ibid., p 370.

⁵⁹ Ibid., Vol. II, p 28.

individual recognition realized (civility). Paradoxically, civility can be maintained without citizenship and can perish despite its existence, as in internal war. "When 'ethnic groups' are too separated culturally speaking, and later are too economically and politically unequal, civility cannot be strong enough to encompass everyone as citizens of the same political unit."⁶⁰

Leca goes on to say:

[O]n the contrary, the struggle for citizenship destroys civility, and civility is only maintained in the maintenance of each community with its own laws and social organizations, along the lines of the Ottoman *millet*, until nationalism is able to create political communities which are relatively homogeneous culturally...until the next manifestation of cultural pluralism arises, and asks more civility of its citizens.⁶¹

The membership for community and society requires more than a blood link - it requires obligations to be fulfilled, commitment to those obligations which may be private or public or both simultaneously (to die for one's country); civility; conformity and in Vivekananda's ideal state, individualism. These factors are not easily internalized by the individual because they require simultaneously, conformity and non-conformity, initiative and uniformity, the thirst for material pleasures and the discipline to reject them, the acceptance of nature in Vivekananda's religious terms and the ability to be a civil animal. He proclaimed that desire was infinite and its realization limited.⁶² As has been mentioned previously, Vivekananda's conception of freedom involves self-restraint

⁶⁰ Leca, 'Individualism and Citizenship', in *Individualism*, op. cit., p 157.

⁶¹ Ibid.,

⁶² S.V.C.W., Vol. V, p 428.

and *the exercise of will over nature*. Freedom is the power over oneself and nature.

Individualism has, indeed, many spectral qualities: indeterminate shape, evocative power, and a myriad of other qualities attributed to it and which allow it to take many forms on a scale which ranges from benevolent to terror according to perceptions of it.⁶³

The importance of individualism is that it is contrasted to totalitarianism or holism. Foucault gives three meanings of individualism:

(1) The individualist attitude, characterized by the absolute value attributed to the individual in his singularity and by the degree of independence conceded to him vis-à-vis the group to which he belongs and the institutions to which he is answerable; (2) the positive valuation of private life, that is the importance granted to the family relationships, to the form of domestic activity, and the domain of patrimonial interests; (3) the intensity of the relations of self, that is, of the forms in which one is called upon to take oneself as the object of knowledge and a field of action, so as to transform, correct and purify oneself and find valuation.⁶⁴

There must be a transition from individual to citizen; yet a socio-political order does not base itself on the consent of individuals rather than citizens. There are three questions that Vivekananda should have asked: What is the basis of political obligation and what are its limits (and what causes the individual to participate in public life in a 'civic' way and in accordance

⁶³ Birnbaum and Leca, 'Introduction' in *Individualism*, op. cit., p 1.

⁶⁴ Leca, 'Individualism and Citizenship' in *ibid.*, p 141, quoting Foucault, 'The Care of the Self', *The History of Sexuality*, p 42.

with public interest)?, secondly, how is the extension of citizenship to be understood? Access of individuals to citizenship creates different types of political communities (owners, taxpayers, national, members of ethnic and religious groups, territorial residents, whatever their nationality); and thirdly, how is citizenship to be understood, since the nature of rights and obligations vary considerably? Can belonging to certain religions exempt one from certain obligations? Or do ethnic groups mean differential application of criminal law?⁶⁵

The reason Vivekananda did not contemplate these questions was because he did not define what the individual was and what the concept comprised. These three questions are based on given range of parameters, or at least a definition of the individual. The legitimation of government based on the acceptance of rights and obligations is therefore based on a certain definition of the individual. Vivekananda had many (these will be elucidated later). Citizenship is wide in juridical terms and is classified vaguely (rights, obligations - diverse, private, political, totality of specified roles, attitudinal and behavioural roles). It is a reality as well as desired ideal; the citizen is a theoretical and social reformer whose identity is based on individuality (that is, in Vivekananda's ideal state). Citizenship is a concept, ideal and reality which permits individuals to stray from a group, association and so on without fear of being legally punished or ostracised - or simply without any fear because he has protection and security of the state of which he is a member - hence, it enhances individuality. "The citizenship of a person is a degree to which he can control his own destiny within the group,"⁶⁶ The state's role in this area is

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Ibid., p 145.

to ensure that a party to a contract will not disturb the natural equilibrium of society.

Citizenship does not exist when the separation between governors and subjects is total and permanent. As Morris Janowitz points out:

By definition citizenship rests on a balance, or rather, on an interaction of obligations and rights. Citizenship is a pattern and a rough balance between rights and obligations in order to make possible the shared *process* of ruling and being ruled.⁶⁷ (italics mine)

Thus, new loyalties are not incompatible with citizenship. It is not a concept embedded into the psyche of a person at birth and resting there immutable until death. The object of loyalty may change as the balance of rights and obligations is altered.

There is a strong relation between the individual and citizenship and yet precisely this relation causes a 'crisis of citizenship': the legitimation of government, governmental authority and political obligation are dependent on the individual; yet the individual cannot legitimate government. Citizenship and government alternate between being legitimized through the concept of the individual and the citizen. There is an element of faith in the system, which usurps the position of consent. Custom, a barrier to the supremacy of law, is still the basis of citizenship. In India the religious and the political must be complementary and the individual a citizen of both. In the West, citizenship is real because it is secular; in Islam it is (ideo)logical. The difference between European and Islamic citizenship is that the former is public, based on feudalism and the

⁶⁷ Ibid., p 147, quoting M. Janowitz, *Social Forces*, p 3.

separation of religious and political realms: Islamic is private and based on the tribal and patrimonial in which there is a liaison between the religious and political.⁶⁸

Durkheim stated that citizenship is most necessary to individualism in order that the individual exercise initiative and not be forced to conform by the associations that are created to resist the atomization of society.⁶⁹ The Indian citizen is more concerned with duties than with interests. Vivekananda's definition of 'interest' included rights and the Weberian concept of obligation in modern capitalism, simply because his definition of 'rights' derived from the Indian word *dharma*. Poignantly, it is from *dharma* that he deduced 'interests'. His definition of interest is not individual, material and selfish but rather cosmic (*dharma* is a cosmic obligation and thus it is in each soul's interest to sustain their own *dharma* to maintain the cosmic revolution), spiritual and religious. Thus, he did not define the political individualist dilemma as individualism *versus* compulsion but rather as inner compulsion *versus* external compulsion.

Vivekananda held dual views on competition in its relation to individualism. On the one hand, the lack of it was the downfall of the nation and the reason for the manipulation of the caste system; on the other, it was a product of materialism. Vivekananda avoid the issues of heredity. He realized that people cannot be classified by nature because they are a mixture of many elements - he classified them by vocation (not occupation) so as to avoid the issue of hereditary caste occupation; especially because he advocated education as a means of freeing people from precisely this, emphasizing ability and not heredity. His ideas of

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Ibid., p 167-8.

meritocracy are simplistic and he oversimplified its relation to economic and political power. He was confused as to the associational idea of heredity. While there is a drastic need to revolutionize the religio-economic-political hierarchy in Indian society, the abolition of heredity seems harsh yet justified. On the one hand, the abolition of heredity goes against the grain of disposing of one's property however one desired. On the other, many people in India have been disadvantaged by their birth and state intervention is perceived, by many, to be in operation to rectify precisely this inequality in social and economic life. When assessing Vivekananda in this context, one must keep in mind Vivekananda's idea of freedom (from passions) and the fact that he regarded men as the only 'real gods' of a nation. It is from this perspective that one must assess his idea of individualism.

There are many types of individualism: utilitarian, romantic, juridical, ethical and sociological. Vivekananda was unconcerned with the methodological individualism concerned with 'macro' in terms of 'micro' behaviour. It is not the individual who is the legitimator of institutions. To Vivekananda, individualism took on different meanings in different aspects of life - a definition influenced by his Indian understanding of *dharma*. Individualism contains paradoxical elements: it involves economic, political and social self-restraint and uncompromising political obligation mentally and overt. In this context, *dharma* is almost indistinguishable from individualism.

At the time of his disgrace, his supporters had abandoned him. When he was reinstated to his post they came back to him. 'Go away, he shouted at them. And one of them replied: 'Come now, sir, be realistic. Didn't

you know that it is market forces which govern human relations? You are disgraced and we have you; you find the king's favour once again and we serve you once again. It is as simple as that. There is no need to make such a fuss about it.'⁷⁰

In contrast to this there is the individualism of the pre-Islamic warrior who denies his rank to hurl his own defiance at the enemy. *Dharma* is utilitarian in the market place, heroic in the battle field and altruistic in collective action. If one can say this, *dharma* is less individual than individualism in that it would not uphold the action taken by the supporters of Lian Po without rigorous self-questioning about the morality of such action. It is more moral than individualism. One of the essential lessons of methodological individualism is that society is not a system. The world is not a singular bundle of phenomena and the individual is not a single bundle of emotions; societies are not coherent wholes. "Dharma as explained by the Swami, was the ideal for the good life, a morally acceptable pursuit of legitimate material ends."⁷¹ Vivekananda included manly prowess, diplomacy, armed strength in pursuit of political goals, affluence and philanthropy in this concept. *Dharma* was action-oriented with a moral slant. It is the ability to separate and recognize selfish individualism from moral individualism and the inclination to act according to the latter. "What is known as *savoir faire* is largely the ability to switch from one key to another and to recognize the clues which make the switches appropriate."⁷² Here is found that citizenship-individualism dialectic that concerned Vivekananda.

⁷⁰ Birnbaum and Leca 'Introduction' in *ibid.*, p 9, (Supporters of Lian Po, at the Kingdom of Zhao)

⁷¹ Raychaudhuri, *op. cit.*, p 268.

⁷² Gellner, 'The Gaffe-Avoiding Animal' in *Individualism*, *op. cit.*, p 21.

In the ethical sense individualism is opposed to collectivism; in the sociological sense, autonomy is given by law, custom and social constraints. The idea that tradition is an ideology which governs society is the assumption that society is a 'whole'.⁷³

There are four considerations for Vivekananda to contemplate concerning individualism: whether class- and nation-oriented action includes incentive for individual actors; the ontology of individual actors; the structure of class conflict; and the game theory as technical apparatus.⁷⁴ "The current debate is between the psychological views of behaviour as an execution of internalized norms and the view of behaviour as intentional, strategic action."⁷⁵

In a society dominated by communalism, the opposing party or even the idea of it is utilized towards unity. Secularism bases itself on a harmonious conception of human nature where individuals are embedded in different types of relationships with each other within a multi-dimensional described social structure.⁷⁶ Secularism is tolerance, universalism, freedom, the rule of law, obligation civic ethics and citizenship in a dynamic state of interaction. Obviously, this interaction should be tailored to the society. "In India's heterogeneous reality and in its aspirations of homogeneity, secularism is synonymous with the philosophy and technology of national integration."⁷⁷ Individuals should be united in spite of dividing factors and not *vice versa* (*Gemeinschaft*).

⁷³ See quotation attached to footnote 29.

⁷⁴ Przeworski, 'Marxism and Rational Choice', in *ibid.*, p 64.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p 65.

⁷⁶ Badie, 'Community, Individualism and Culture', in *ibid.*, p 81.

⁷⁷ Singhvi, *op. cit.*, p 130.

As a cultural rather than a structural phenomenon, community thus becomes less rigid, less exclusive less uniform category than when it is seen as the objective model for the structuration of human relations...Transition from stateless political organisation to state organization coupled with social formation of communities to that of an associational type.⁷⁸

Vivekananda never recognized that the state is not always rational nor, even more poignantly, always national. There were three main obstacles to the realization of Vivekananda's perfect society and state: the lack of individualism, the lack of political will to destroy and recreate; and the lack of an individual and individual understanding of law (juridical culture gives meaning in particular to the relation between man and material goods, including land). In the modern state individuals not only relate to the centre but to one another as individuals, not simply as definitions given to them by the state through caste, for example. There should be an individualized notion of citizenship. Achieving this is very difficult in India because, as I have mentioned before, there is an abyss between the Muslim and the Hindu notions of political and social values. This problem is exacerbated for two reason: religious values and, moreover, religious politics are dominant in India; and Muslims and Hindus hold very different, even opposing, conceptions of religious politics.

Islam is characterized by a mainstream tradition which is egalitarian, weakly structured, and deprived of leadership, and which leads to its periphery its most ritual and hierarchical organizational forms while

⁷⁸ Badie, 'Community, Individualism and Culture', in *Individualism*, op. cit., pp 98-104.

undermining the dynamics of centralization necessary to state-building.⁷⁹

All erratic forms of social mobilization run the risk of increasing community resistance, which is seen as natural social protest against change. This resistance is increased when it is not accompanied by raising standards of education or other indicators of social mobilization.⁸⁰ Yet in Islam the case is very different: "Community protest occurs, therefore, in the Islamic world, not as a non-modern or residual expression of discontent, as was the case in the West, but, on the contrary, as a form of protest stimulated by the dominant cultural mode."⁸¹

The only plausible answer seems to be secularist because the abyss between Hindu and Muslim conceptions of religious politics seems to be unbridgeable. Badie gives two solutions: a secular or revolutionary type state which is charismatic through rational-legal legitimacy, supplanting claims to community legitimacy; or a conservative state, re-utilizing traditional forms of legitimacy to coexist with community allegiances. He gives the examples of Morocco where the Prince is the conciliator between rival tribes, Persian (centre drawing legitimacy from the community) and Western (individualized citizenship) conceptions of the state, society and citizenship. Badie's main contention is that there is an incompatibility between the modern state and communitarianism; *Gesellschaft* (independent individuals' wills and spheres of who relates to whom) works and communities, if opposed, lack clearly defined positive expectations of each other. The problem for Vivekananda's situation is that religion in

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Ibid.

India infiltrates vertically and horizontally and hence there are clearly defined expectations.

Vivekananda was not a believer in absolute democracy. In the U.S.A., he did not scrutinize the democratic government, but concentrated on the free society and liberty of individuals. He concluded that such a society dilutes social morality by failing to cultivate widespread and active popular concerns with the pursuit of the 'common good' which can prevent economic power and exploitation. In the progression to the utopian state, people must

[h]ave the education by which they can learn to combine among themselves and be united by the accomplishment of any object for the common good of the people, or by which they can have concerted intellect to conceive the idea of popular right in the treasures collected by the king for his subjects or even such education by which they can be fired with the aspiration to gain the right of

representation in the control of the state revenue and expenditure.⁸²

The lack of democracy in India troubled Vivekananda because it disproved his notion of the cultural genius of India in promoting her spirituality. Even caste was moral and anti-exploitative in essence. It incorporated the quintessential idea of restriction for the good of oneself through discipline and self-restraint. Because of the lack of democracy, Vivekananda must explain the absence of a presumably moral and anti-exploitative institution. He thus pointed out that the system in India is actually based on an ancient democracy - *panchayats* and ancient republics - and that caste is actually an institution leading to the realization of the divine because of its nurturing of the fraternal spirit and self-restraint. Political democracy, to Vivekananda, overstated its ability to subvert entrenched social and economic structures and could change the mentality of the people only if associated with spirituality and religion. Political democracy simply changes the social and economic life of people, without much dissent.

The Indian nation, state and society cannot be defined since it is composed of a such a range of apparently irreconcilable factors and hence the difficulty in ascertaining exactly what aspects need to be transformed and the ability to visualize their transformation. Not one reformer of the Hindu Renaissance has envisioned the 'completed' Indian society.

Vivekananda was concerned with caste, solidaristic community and inward transformation. Caste, joint family and the village community were all solidaristic yet anti-individualistic and could either be used for

⁸² S.V.C.W., Vol. IV, p 440

mobilization or would prove a hindrance to it. An inward transformation should manifest itself in an external effect and should be socially shaped and enabled. To Vivekananda, religion consisted of a re-awakening, restructuring, developing and taking on new ideas (even if these do not belong to India since religion is universal) continual or otherwise. He advocated education for this purpose and admitted that while mistakes would be made, it would eventually create modern and well-defined relations of society, law, production and hence security.

When Vivekananda contemplated the Rule of Law, he neglected to consider whether this entailed delegation of representation. Because he was convinced that a nation's goodness depended on the goodness of its citizens and not the rules enacted by parliament, he did not investigate thoroughly the question of delegation or representation - a question the implications of which are very high on the agenda of political theorists. On the contrary, he discerned a direct relation between the opinion of citizen on legislation and favoured quasi-direct democracy. He made an idiosyncratic connection between slavery and the state. Most political theorists would blame slavery and freedom primarily on society, social morality and so on, rather than on a less proximate relationship with the state. Probably because of Vivekananda's experience of colonial rule (the amount and limit of freedom and slavery directly correlating to the amount permitted by the central state), he discerned a direct relationship between freedom and the state. Americans are inferior to Indians, but their state is greater, he insisted. He transcribed this to this version of the perfect Indian state and hence demonstrated his ignorance of the issue of delegation and representation. He saw these as intermediary associations

which were a part of society and as such would inform the state. 'We want men, not slaves', he persistently insisted.

The basis of much of Vivekananda's thought was religious. Vivekananda's conviction that citizens should be treated as individuals was not a political dictum, but was, rather, derivative of the notion that *dharma* was individualistic and highly influential in what we call identity.

In young adulthood the stage of the *Antevasin* is replaced by that of the householder (*Grhastha*) I find it very congenial that this scheme allows for a succession of pointedly different life styles. Instead of the almost vindictive monotony of Judean-Christian strictures by which we gain or forfeit salvation by the formation of one consistently virtuous character almost from the cradle to the very grave, the Hindu system first decrees that the *Antevasin* delay and sublimate his sexuality in order to be a devoted student of eternal values, but then assigns him as the first duty of young adulthood the experience of all those varied sexual and sensual pleasures which are so comprehensively depicted on temples devoted to this aspect of life.⁸³

It is very easy to contend that Vivekananda's thought was religious or religio-individualistic but the difference between it and Western political thought is the perspective governing the conception of the stability of the state. Because of the rationalist tradition of the West (and possibly conceptions of Plato's state) there are semi-objective criteria in assessing the stability of society, the state and its citizens such as the objective notion of harmony of state, society and the populace: people are relatively happy, the governors have the ability to rule which is assessed not on the basis of the success of the state, but its lack of failure (and hence the

⁸³ Erikson, op. cit., p 37.

tradition of democracy and protest-politics), for instance. The Indian tradition lacks this form of rationalism; being religious but also individualistic yet not in the style of liberalism. The political focus of liberalism is the ability of the state maintain the happiness of its citizens. The main political focus is the state and society - institutions providing the cohesive factor for individuals. The Indian tradition does not have these cohesive institutions and hence the main political focus is on the people and their *dharma*. One could easily refute this statement by simply mentioning caste, yet this is a social institution to maintain the social structure and actually destroys the coherence of society. More poignantly, caste is not a political institution for political purposes and cohesion. The focus of the Indian tradition is the individual and his *dharma*. The stability of the state, society and happiness of the people are measured thus; not from the point of view of the personified state or society. “Neither the state nor the king, neither the mace bearer, govern the people; it is only *dharma* that people secure mutual protection.” says the *Mahabharata*.⁸⁴

Dharma in its wider sense is not individualistic at all. It takes the part of society in the Western tradition. It is service to one's own community and thus humanity at large. The combination of *artha*, *dharma* and *kama* is the meaning of salvation for Indians but there is a grave difficulty for the state in incorporating or even understanding this in political terms. Ideally, the state should arrest one from deviating from one's *dharma*; but what constitutes one's *dharma*? For Gandhi, was it to be a politician or a lawyer?; is it ancestral? Paradoxically, *dharma* has an objective criterion for judging its success but it is not measurable in the same way that the success or failure of a state is. *Dharma* is a cosmic duty

⁸⁴ Ibid.

- to keep the cosmos evolving. Only the linking individual *dharmas* binds each society and also the world. This has no implications for the state and society in the same way as have objective criteria in the Western tradition, because in this sense *dharma* is not individualistic at all. Not only do individuals have an obligation to work their own *dharma* but nature, animals and all natural entities also have this duty. Hence, the success of the cosmos (roughly translated as 'the state' for political purposes) cannot be measured through the success of the individual in the same as in the Western tradition. This is very impractical and quite anarchistic but it forms the basis for Vivekananda's contemplations.

You are as free as you were in the beginning, are now, and always will be. He who knows that he is free is free; he who knows that he is bound is bound...slaves do actions for somebody else. You do actions for nobody else.⁸⁵

This is very similar to the Rousseauian basis of the state and society. Vivekananda's solution for cohesion and mutual respect is very different from the liberal, and is very metaphysical and ontological: "I am all the wicked. I am getting punished in hell...This is the goal of philosophy [to know that I am the Infinite]. Aims, motives, purposes, and duties live in the background."⁸⁶ Vivekananda's vision of mutual respect, community, state and society *versus* communalism is in many instances worded as an attack against religious fanaticism.⁸⁷

⁸⁵ *S.V.C.W., Vol. II, pp 471-2.*

⁸⁶ *Ibid., p 472.*

⁸⁷ For example, *ibid., p 364.*

One must remember that Vivekananda's position was the Perennial Philosophy in which a religion should be infinitely large, large enough to incorporate every type of being and belief. He translated this dictum into social and political recipes. Expansion, internally and externally, was a method for destroying communalism through modernity. To Vivekananda modernity was unequivocally a sign of tolerance, synthesis and secularism; he contrasted it with the archaic notions of exclusivity witnessed in the caste system and in religious fanaticism in Hinduism as well as in other religion. The first sign of the revival of national life - by this he meant the harmony of the nation - was expansion.⁸⁸ The export of Hindu education was another sign of modernity to him.⁸⁹ Singhvi reverberates this in his view of secularism: "The path to progressive secularism in India will be paved by socialisation of our composite culture, by equalization of opportunities, by rationalisation of religion and by spiritualization and humanism of reason."⁹⁰

Vivekananda acknowledged that qualities such as pluralism, freedom, secularism entailed restrictions. Of the common temple he said:

Here should be taught the common grounds of our different sects, and at the time the different sects should have perfect liberty to come and teach their doctrines, with only one restriction, that is, not to quarrel with other sects.⁹¹

This is a perfect illustration of how Vivekananda reached the same conclusion as Western political theorists through religious reasoning - in

⁸⁸ S.V.C.W., Vol. III, p 272.

⁸⁹ Ibid., p 273.

⁹⁰ Singhvi, op. cit., p 130.

⁹¹ Ibid., p 303.

this instance that people should not impinge on other people's liberty if they want their own to be honoured. Democracy sustains basic liberties while totalitarianism and licentiousness destroy them and obliterate independence and autonomy. Vivekananda questioned whether anyone deserves power who is not ready to give liberty.⁹² "[T]he only purpose for which power can be rightfully exercised over any member of a civilised community, against his will, is to prevent harm to others."⁹³ Rawls echoed this by stating that everyone is entitled to the widest possible liberty consistent with a like liberty for all. In the ethical sense individualism is opposed to collectivism; in the sociological sense, autonomy is given through law, custom and social constraints. Restrictions are coupled with positive freedoms, not only negative ones. Vivekananda held a dual attitude concerning autonomy. On the one hand, it is paradoxical that autonomy should be 'given'. In Hindu religious sense, it is inherent and the goal of life is to maintain this autonomy and all discipline cultivated in this world is to be utilized to arrest any corruption of this autonomy, whether such corruption be materialism, egocentricity, or benefiting from another's down-fall. On the other hand, Vivekananda realized that autonomy was two-fold. There was religious autonomy and social, political and economic (temporal) autonomy, that are given by the state. If the state were not to regulate the extent of autonomy, anarchy would ensue. Furthermore, because Vivekananda believed that religious autonomy was essentially more important than temporal autonomy, he did not dissent against the state's role as donator and regulator of the latter type of autonomy.

⁹² S.V.C.W., Vol. IV, pp 434-5.

⁹³ Mill J.S., *On Liberty*, p 173, 1859.

“[T]o form a free government, that is, to temper together these opposite elements of liberty and restraint in one consistent work, requires much thought and deep reflection.”⁹⁴ The present Constitution stipulates that every person born in the territory of India and domiciled in the territory of India for not less than five years immediately preceding the commencement of the Constitution is declared to be a citizen of India. One of the questions in Vivekananda’s mind concerned who was entitled to be called an ‘Indian’. On the one hand, he wanted this category to be as large as possible and on the other, not so large that it would be dominated by division. He was confused as to which religions were without doubt Indian or ‘Hindu’. Liberty and restraint were different for different religions, providing another difficulty for the state. The simple solution was to treat citizens as individuals, yet to ignore groups and religions as having social, legal, economic and political rights is also another form of injustice. The Constitution should enshrine “a system of values and furnishes an architectural lay-out for economic, social and political institutions to function and grow.”⁹⁵

In theory Vivekananda’s state should be a moral institution incorporating *dharma*, *rta*, constitutionalism, the universal idea of rights and the ideology of constitutionalism. It cannot or, rather, should not discriminate irrationally.

Ideology is a set of basic beliefs by which a society orders reality so as to render itself intelligible, rational and acceptable. Constitutionalism is a systematic scheme, coordinated body of ideas, and an integrated set of assertions, theories, norms, aims and institutions relating

⁹⁴ Singhvi, op. cit., p 36, quoting Edmund Burke.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

to human life, culture, political governance, legal system and socio-economic programmes.⁹⁶

It is a programme “of social and political organisation in terms of those fundamental goals and norms and in keeping with its world-view”⁹⁷, for which a “modicum of public order is an indispensable pre-requisite for constitutionalism”⁹⁸, and is the basis of the development of citizenship values of national unity and solidarity. In a way *Weltanschauung* is a form of citizenship and patriotism and the society must keep the social and political organization in line with this. Even Vivekananda’s statement calling on people to arise and awake can be put into this context: the constitution can be written, the law can be set but without the cooperation of the citizens, nothing can succeed. For example, the idea of the Rule of Law and the Spirit of Liberty are the basis not only of society but of the state and this must be proven to citizens.

Secularism is, however, less a matter of structures and provisions and more a way of life and freedom tested in and by the vicissitudes and trivialities of life. Singhvi points out that religion and “religious considerations should be ignored and purposely excluded or as a system of social ethics based upon a doctrine that ethical standards and conduct should be determined without reference to religion.”⁹⁹ It is undoubtedly true that social ethics should be determined without reference to religion, but the question of religion is complex. In theory Islam is committed to an Islamic state and thus in a political sense it may be difficult to give Islam and Hinduism or any other combinations of religion a common cause.

⁹⁶ Ibid., pp 5-6

⁹⁷ Ibid., p5.

⁹⁸ Ibid., p 11.

⁹⁹ Ibid., p 88.

Secularism can be either the omission of religion from the political stage or the active incorporation of it in a non-discriminatory manner. For India at the time of Vivekananda, secularism could be the fight against 'Divide and Rule', for example.

Religions and religionists together should be opposed to communal politics and religion as a dividing force. This attitude is not more Hindu than Muslim. Many Hindus believe that caste as a dividing system is a part of their religion and hence would be in as great a dilemma as Muslims in this respect. Again, the problem is that one cannot measure the intensity of the dilemma. Vivekananda realized that the state must be rigid in this respect. The state is entrusted with the application of the Rule of Law and equality regarded of religion or any other difference in all matters; this is secularism.

Because of his uncertainty over his definition of individuality and the individual, Vivekananda was ambivalent on such questions as ownership competition and the importance of society or the individual. The greatest problem is that of ownership and inequality. He was against large-scale private ownership because of his fear of monopolies and his belief in competition. He was also in favour of meritocracy. Yet he did not contemplate the situation arising when a person, because of merit, creates a monopoly. He understood the capitalist work ethic (sources of private wealth competing against each other) and yet he was too ideal in his economic outlook. Vivekananda closely follows Rousseau in that he believed that because people are part of the capitalist game, they will, without disrespect and without antagonism, play the game and accept the loss as well as the gain; victory and defeat. In this scheme the state

machinery will have no difficulty in exercising its jurisdiction through Trusts, associations, Companies and Guilds.

Political democracy is a form and method of government whereby changes and possibly revolutionary changes are brought about without bloodshed. In this context Vivekananda overstated the ability of political democracy to entrench social and economic structures and antagonisms. Constitutionalism ignores the fact that extra-parliamentary powers are needed and this is where Vivekananda's influence is strongest. He emphasized the interpenetration between economic and political power and the corresponding transformation of the whole society.

Capital intensive production cannot be achieved in the Third World whereas in the first world, less labour is utilized in creating the same product. India needs to improve her standing not only for her own good but, moreover, so that the first world would not have the ability to exploit her labour. Again, it is here that Vivekananda's influence is felt most strongly because the thrust for higher living standards must be accompanied by a corresponding uplift and maintenance of religio-political notions such as liberty and individuality. Without these, higher living standards are enjoyed exclusively by the rich. Furthermore the correspondence of individuality and liberty conciliates the state and Hindu religion, an important aspect of modernization in India, as Vivekananda emphasized. He attempted to reconcile capitalist structure with the humanistic slant of the Hindu religion.

Vivekananda was utopian as well as realistic in his perceptions of the mutual need of the state and the individual of each other. The establishment of equality of opportunity was possible only through state action, hence the need for the state by the individual. Furthermore, the

adoption of an egalitarian ethos, by each individual, was an individual conversion and not an institutional transformation; hence the need for the individual by the state. Vivekananda was concerned with creating a political, social, economic, work and humanistic ethos on which the future state should be based. He was concerned with making an Indian state but his presumption was that the Indian nation was 'competent' if only the social situation (caste) and the political ethos of dominance and subservience were to be changed. Vivekananda mentioned that Indians should not be given freedom if they would utilize it to make slaves. However, he did not differentiate between state- and citizen-action. Vivekananda did not foresee a contradiction between direct democracy at the village level (through *panchayats*) and delegation or representation at the state level.

The contradiction runs deeper when Vivekananda's plans for socialist community building and industrialization are taken into account. Socialist community building is effected at the village level. National industrialization is the responsibility of the centralized state. However, socialist community building is impossible under the constraints of an evolving capitalist order. It appears that Vivekananda was more concerned with 'revolution-making' than with socialist community building; the importance of the latter in a country such as India was understood by Vivekananda, but not by other reformers such as Gandhi. In this way, Vivekananda was of greater importance to the Indian situation and applicable to the emerging India. There is no doubt that he was concerned with community building but not on such a microscopic scale as was Gandhi. The former wanted a national community and was concerned with patriotism and his communities were not isolated, autonomous village

communities. They were intermediate communities standing between the absolute individual and the absolute state and he realized that if the fostering of a community is the goal of the revolution, then community building must be part of the revolutionary process.

The difficulty for Vivekananda concerning the relationship between the nation and the state lay in the fact that

the doctrine of nationalism cannot be understood until the concepts of 'nation' and 'state' are clearly defined and distinguished. A 'nation' is a cultural entity, a collection of people bound together by shared values and traditions, for example, a common language, religion and history and usually occupying the same geographical area. A 'state' is a political association, which enjoys sovereignty, supreme and unrestricted power, within territorial borders. The goal of nationalism is that the nation and the state should as far as possible coincide.¹⁰⁰

India was nation without an indigenous state during Occupation. "Ultimately, nations are defined subjectively by their members, rather than objectively, by any set of external factors...Patriotism or a sense of national consciousness can be regarded as an essential precondition of nationalism."¹⁰¹ Nationalism can exist without the desire for self-government and here is where Vivekananda's thought takes on its greatest significance. He formulated his theories in consideration of nationalism not only in opposition to the invaders, but for India as a nation in itself. The Indian state was to encourage a sense of belonging and of equality between people and religions, so as to prevent the latter looking beyond

¹⁰⁰ Heywood, op.cit., p 142.

the common Indian culture to their 'own' historical roots. Cultural and religious unity were to be established.

Political Nationalism is

the belief that the nation is the only rightful and proper unit of government, that the boundaries of government should coincide in the main with those of nationality, as John Stuart Mill suggested. Nationalism is therefore both a political principle and a form of political organisation. The principle is the right of national self-determination, which is realised in the ideal form of political organization, the nation-state. Each sovereign state should encompass a single nation.¹⁰²

The nation-state's importance is in that it is the only legitimate form of government and it makes it blatantly obvious that nationality is "stronger and politically more significant [than] rival social cleavage, such as social class, race or religion, which may cut across social borders."¹⁰³ It is the job of secularism to accommodate as extreme a view as possible without harm to public order and morality. There is no absolute rationality stipulating that the majority should have predominant influence simply because it constitutes a majority. Vivekananda attempted to ascertain the difference between a dominant ideology and a dominant morality. For him, the former should be Indian and the latter, universalist. The predominant morality should lie in the freedom of religion and conscience and right to profess, preach and propagate religion which is incorporated in secularism and democracy and is subject to the restriction of public order and

¹⁰¹ Ibid., p 145.

¹⁰² Ibid., p 148.

¹⁰³ Ibid., p 149

morality. In modern India this is encapsulated in Articles 25 to 28 of the Constitution.

Vivekananda created a confusion between public and private morality through his creation of the new religio-morality of the 'Mind of *Vedanta* and the body of Islam'. This is especially true in India because Muslims and Hindus have different private morals. The interference of the state into the private lives of the people amounts to totalitarianism. Freedom of religion incorporates an inherent tension between the two opposite goals: of equal respect for all religions; and dogmatic intolerance, including proselytization and legalizing discrimination.¹⁰⁴ In this case it is the state that is discriminatory. However, the modern society requires a non-religious mode of cognition and social educational institutions to generate a secular temper and genuine respect for all religions.¹⁰⁵

Freedom of religion is not only freedom of thought but freedom of association, as well as of participation. Moreover, it particularly concerns minorities. The liberation of all Islamic peoples is ambivalent for the state. For example, Ayatollah Khomeini's *fatwa* against the writer Rushdie raised a serious question about the level of compatibility between Islam and citizenship. Significantly for liberalism, tensions arose between the ideas of tolerance and acceptance of creeds, cultures, religions, races and Rousseau's idea of citizenship as a social contract. The Indian state must over-ride religion to abolish this split in loyalties. Patriotism cannot be linked too closely with religion, because in India, many believe that nationality is too closely linked with religion: whites are mainly Christians who rarely see themselves as Indians; many Muslims see themselves as Muslims with

¹⁰⁴ Chakrabarty, B., (ed.), *Secularism and Indian Polity*, Segment Book Distributors, New Delhi, 1990, p 18.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, p 19.

devotion to *Shari'a*. The devotion to India must be on the grounds of seeing India succeed materially, economically, politically in all respects - for each person's own benefit and because one is and will continue living in India because of one's free will. In this sense it must be wholly secular.

Citizenship postulates *the relationship of belonging to a state by birth or choice* and an intention to continue such a relationship. There is something emotional and spiritual about the sense of belonging. *In operative terms and in the vocabulary of rights, citizenship connotes a right and a duty to take part in the affairs of the civil society.*¹⁰⁶

The citizen is not restricted from being a member of other organization, within or transcending the state. Indian jurisprudence attempts to convey, on one level, that no dichotomy exists between obedience and loyalty to such organisations, and to the state simultaneously. How can any person convince Muslims that Indian jurisprudence, founded as it is on concepts of *Rta* and *Dharma*, are not particularly Hindu - or are they? Vivekananda would in this respect encounter a problem not only with Muslims because of their devotion to the Islamic state but also with Hindus who are in the main deeply religious and would regard such an approach as treachery to their religion. Vivekananda took a multi-faceted approach towards this. On the one hand, he was not averse to the Muslim devotion to the spiritual Islamic state but was antipathetic to such loyalty on a temporal level. This is unproblematic to Hindus who theoretically discern a difference between temporal life and religion; but to Muslims there is no difference even on the theoretical level; it is exemplified in the Middle East peace process in

¹⁰⁶ Singhvi, op. cit., p 239.

where many Jews and Muslims think that Rabin and Arafat respectively have turned traitor to their causes.

The degeneration of humanism in cultural terms is one of the major problems which Vivekananda attempted to ameliorate. He believed that people could learn how to handle freedom only through the struggle for freedom. Spiritual equality thrives through being in synthesis with material equality. An ethic of austerity is needed to “secure socialist economic arrangements against being corrupted, subverted or undermined by recalcitrant material freed.”¹⁰⁷ Better Hindu-Muslim relationships and better treatment of Untouchables are aspects of this. ‘Rights, spirituality’ through education can eliminate all social injustices, Vivekananda protested, and encourage harmonious relationships and a communal feeling (in the most positive sense of the word).

Nationalism, a doctrine cutting across ideologies, need not necessarily stem from any system of inter-related ideas or scheme. It is a teaching or a body of teaching. National identity / patriotism / citizenship is the foundation of a nation and is incorporated in Rousseau’s General Will in which every person is his own master. “Nationalism came to stand for social cohesion, order and stability...sought to integrate the increasingly powerful working class into the ‘nation’ and to preserve the established social structure.”¹⁰⁸ Progression is possible only through mutual cooperation. In itself, tolerance is a difficult topic, whether it includes stretching to the existence of tolerant and intolerant views for the benefit of national cohesion; whether one could abuse such aspects as liberty and freedom outside the law in the name of national cohesion and whether

¹⁰⁷ Hager, op. cit., pp 329-30, quoting from Lohia R., *Marx, Gandhi and Socialism*, p 123.

¹⁰⁸ Heywood, op. cit., p 138.

devotion to one's country entails protecting another individual against abuses of liberty outside the law.

In one way Vivekananda assumed that every Indian was in favour of nationalism. His standpoint was very Hindu in that he assumed that every Indian, regardless of religion wanted the abolition of British rule. It was influenced by his opinion that every person's loyalty was foremostly to India and only secondly to their religion, a sentiment beneficial for the modernization of India. Because of this assumption Vivekananda anticipated little opposition and India could cultivate an economic movement with spiritual significance: *swadeshi*. It is also because of this assumption that the individual is of the utmost importance and that the establishment of grass-root authority was not problematic. In this context, Islamic nationalism should vanish and *laissez-faire* can be coupled dialectically with interventionism; without the threat of oppressiveness (Vivekananda's social contract is spiritual in that the state is governed by what is 'right'). None the less, he still maintained that interventionism should still be minimal. The initial role of the state is to protect and not to enforce, it must not encroach on the private sphere. An extremely minimal state cannot ensure against abuses of power and rectify the injustices and inequalities of civil society.

Vivekananda followed the Rousseau-type argument in the individualism *is* the morality and community through self-restraint where association is free and autonomous - not from coercion. Rousseau stated "Freedom is 'submitting yourself to the regulation that you helped impose upon yourselves and upon the community at large.'" ¹⁰⁹ There should be no forceful imposition of interests but a real community of interests. The

¹⁰⁹ Hager, op. cit., p 132, quoting from Gandhi, *Swadeshi and Swaraj*, p 147.

majority may not always be right. Liberty is the only reason that restraint can be legally exercised - the right to property, heredity and so on - providing that individuals are equal in the eyes of the law. The state's role is to ensure that neither party will disturb the natural equilibrium. The newfound state is materially prosperous not only for the benefit of the wealthy. Vivekananda envisaged a state beneficial to each and every member of the society. When one considered Ambedkar's criticism of Hindu society, one appreciates the other side of the coin. Vivekananda wanted socialism and capitalism in their essential qualities including fraternity, democracy, public conscience, individuality and equality - the principles the state should apply before the adoption of capitalism and socialism. Although Vivekananda was in favour of an economic base for India, *humanitarian and not economic policies should be the priority.* Vivekananda was not as left-wing as many would accuse him of being because he was concerned with the theories in their quintessential glory and if there was any doubt, he would advocate pragmatic theories above ideological ones. Many left-wingers, even today, will argue against mechanization because of the loss of jobs for a section of society. Vivekananda, in his utopian and communal attitude, would argue that it creates more jobs for another sector thus aiding society as a whole. He was against the selfish attitude of those who would argue that despite the benefit for the society, "I am a menial worker and a menial worker I will die even though the country needs to progress; I will not and do not care for future populations because 'me' is all that I care about!"

One route easily taken by the Indian state is to follow that of bureaucratic socialism with a highly centralized state machinery and public economy to enhance industrialization, to abolish private enterprise

for fear that the British system has taught the ethic of exploitation, and even though in theory to make religion ubiquitous, in fact to make it personal. The redeeming factor is that Vivekananda understood socialism and capitalism to be an ethos and not a system; that he regarded socialism as more crassly materialistic than was capitalism. The latter, to the extent he understood it from his observations in the U.S.A., still incorporated liberty and basic human rights as part of its system and ethos; whereas socialism saw human well-being only in terms of material conditions and objective criteria. He formulated no economic criticism but one can imagine him stating that a

free national government could regain domestic ownership of land and resources, drive tougher bargains with foreign capital on matters of wages and other economic benefits and enact a protective tariff to foster domestic industrialization. Such a government could also

borrow foreign capital, pay interest and retain a share of the profits rather than losing all of the profit abroad.¹¹⁰

The issue, to Vivekananda, in terms of the Hindu social economy, was: cooperation and renunciation; British policies impoverished India; British owned companies in India - a drain on Indian natural resources; labour laws in favour of the British and not Indian workers. There are many questions Vivekananda should have cogitated upon: cheap labour is detrimental also to Britain's workforce; how socialism can be put into practice through investment according to a plan and not to profit in such a way that would create market imperialism or mass unemployment. Vivekananda was very modern and not particularly left-wing. Vivekananda saw the Hindu society as fraught with oppression and strife. To him, the underclasses were made to work long hours at minimal wages. The living Hindu religion was not vast and tolerant, but dominated by rules arresting individually instead of being principles to guide it; morality was secondary; religion determined the economic as opposed to *vice versa*; there was neither community nor communal spirit. Vivekananda's wish, besides that of ameliorating the Hindu society, was to make it good for all citizens, not only those who benefit from a regime and type of society. He wanted Hinduism to serve the whole of the population instead of a minority. The advantage of Hinduism is overt in its difference from Buddhism: the latter attempts to interpret the world whereas the former attempts to change it.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., p 151.

VIVEKANANDA'S CRITIQUE OF CAPITALISM, COMMUNISM AND THE MODERN STATE

Vivekananda had an ambivalent opinion on capitalism. He admired its ability to change a whole society through propagation of only one idea: that of gain. Every person seemed infatuated with gain and as a result of their striving for it, the whole society would, as if magically, transform 'over-night'. Yet he could not acquiesce to such a materialistic, atomistic and overtly selfish system which directly contradicted the aspirations of the religion and spirituality. The ambivalence in his attitude was also a product of his understanding of capitalism: he saw it as foremostly an ideology and not as a system. He looked for a compromise between the two because he recognized that India needed to be improved economically but he also recognized that this needed to be done with a spiritual dimension. His view of communism was far less ambivalent. The respective bases of capitalism and communism were the same in that they centred on a materialist understanding of life. Yet capitalism looked to the individual to create his own utopia whereas communism did not afford as much respect to the individual. The state took over vital aspects of human activity. Vivekananda acknowledged the sincere desire of communism but could not advocate such an anti-human ideology.

The Capitalist God was money, as Gandhi proclaimed. There was a fundamental thirst for trade in any form because the whole economic system was geared towards unlimited production. This thirst, in many instances, over-rode any sentiment of human community, fraternity and sacrifice for the good of mankind. It turned the world into a market. A materialist view of reality characterised capitalism and posited man in the

middle of this system as a creature of infinite wants and desires. As spirituality strove to abolish property as an emotion, capitalism sought to cultivate precisely this. The multiplication of goods was not offset by a decrease in desire; quite the opposite. Such a system, based on the satisfaction and multiplication of desires structures society, morality, legality around such desires. This is doubly easy because of man's mistaken belief in his own particularity and hence his ability to function in an atomistically styled structure. However, this goes directly against the grain of the spiritual aspiration.

Vivekananda did not elucidate on the ability of capitalism to renew and sustain itself but rather relief on the instinctual habit of man to atomize and particularize, to explain the continued existence of a system based on selfishness, lack of fraternal feeling and patriotism, and a desire to gain from other's misfortunes (as he saw it).

Vivekananda did not separate capitalism from industrialization or even from the selfish view of man. Ironically, as a result of his promulgations of communitarian feelings, he advocated that some materialism was necessary in India to raise the standard of living for the whole nation. "Material civilisation, nay, even luxury, is necessary to create work for the poor."¹¹¹ Capitalism and industrialization were necessary in India to create a better situation for all of India. If luxury is desired, work is created. Eventually, a luxury such as food will be commonplace. The standard of living in India would be improved. Mechanization creates jobs for those who build the machines and those who build the factory in which to put those machines, for instance. This also creates within a society an

¹¹¹ S.V.C.W., Vol. IV, p 368.

equality which is economic and therefore flexible: one that would proximitize the gap between the lower and higher classes.

Materialism has come to the rescue of India in a certain sense by throwing the doors of life to everyone, by destroying the exclusive privileges of caste, by opening up to discussion the inestimable treasures which were hidden away in the hands of a very few who have even lost the use of them.¹¹²

It is pertinent that Vivekananda's view about the benefit of materialism is almost certainly confined to its benefit within India because of the existence of a rigid, archaic hierarchy vulnerable to the loosening effect of materialism. He advocated that India should take aspects of materialism from the West.

Vivekananda was not wholly in praise of capitalism. He did not come to terms with the idea of private property. Organically speaking, it seems an oxymoron that the land one person lives on is the property of another or moreover that one can accumulate land, an element of Mother Nature which belongs to all of humanity, jointly and severally. He was also individualistic and fighting against the implication of nemesis in the notion of *karma*. As a parallel, he could not reconcile the fact that many people were born debtors to the owners of private property. Parekh writes that for Gandhi (but this is applicable also to Vivekananda)

private property was subversive to the social order because it conflicted with the fundamental principles underlying and sustaining it. The customs, values, traditions, ways of life and thought, habits, language and educational, political and other institutions constituting a

¹¹² Ibid., Vol. III, p 157.

social order were created by the quiet co-operative and anonymous sacrifices of countless men and women over several generations, none of whom asked for or could ever receive rewards for all their efforts. And their integrity was preserved by every citizen using them in a morally responsible manner. Every social order was this of necessity a co-operative enterprise created and sustained by the spirit of sharing, mutual concern, self-sacrifice and *yajna*. And its moral and cultural capital available by its very nature to all its members as freely as the air they breathe, constituted their collective and common heritage to be lovingly cherished and enriched. The institution of private property rested on the opposite principles and breathed a very different spirit. It stressed selfishness, aggression, exclusive ownership, narrow individualism, a reward for every effort made, possessiveness and a right to do what one liked with one's property. It was hardly surprising, Gandhi argued, that its domination in the modern age should have atomised and culturally impoverished society and undermined the basic conditions of human development.¹¹³

Communism was based on this same conception of man and a materialistic understanding of life. As a result, it does not attempt to improve the nature of man from which the ills of society are consequently derived. Instead it aims to change society, presuming that as a product of social change, man's nature will be influenced accordingly. To Vivekananda, the ultimate goal was the spiritualization of man and not the perfection of society. The former was a religious solution derived from an understanding of temporal life as having a spiritual aspect. The latter was purely materialistic and characteristic of communism. "It represented a

¹¹³ Parekh B.C., *Gandhi's Political Philosophy. A Critical Examination by Bhikhu Parekh*, Macmillan, Hampshire, 1989, pp 134-5, Henceforth, *G.P.P.*

statist approach to social problems, deified the state, impoverished the individual and dried up local sources of initiative and energy.”¹¹⁴ The state was the power-house of politics and economics. State ownership and sole responsibility for political matters destroyed initiative in individuals and was harmful to their conception of themselves as competent humans - a positive view Vivekananda was insistent on instilling into the Indian people. Such a conception of the state is constitutive of anti-humanism and anti-individualism.

In this view, economics dictated morality, legality and custom which were all institutionalized. Socially and individually derived goals were given only secondary status. The subordination of such human characteristics to economism was typical not only of communism, but also of capitalism. In essence, capitalism and communism were identical in Vivekananda's view.

Industrialization need not incorporate deleterious methods. The diffusion of industry, can make village industries more efficient and productive and thence improve the standard of living. However, state intervention is a problematic issue. Massive state intervention is necessary to invigorate industrialization and encourage equality, fraternity and humanism. *Laissez-faire* politics cannot transform a society so fraught with and distorted by inequality and exploitation; a society in which exploitation has created an immovable hierarchy sustained by such exploitation. This hierarchy can be destroyed through a change in public opinion accompanied or replaced by massive state intervention. The latter is instrumental in changing the former in a country without a pervading and single governing ideology. State action is necessary to alter the

¹¹⁴ Ibid., p 136.

structure and framework of society which in turn alters peoples' opinions. Radical change as Vivekananda envisaged is not possible to achieve by waiting for people to slowly modernize their opinions. Furthermore, Vivekananda believed that it was people's opinions that shape society.

The state needs to find a balance between human needs and desires with common welfare and the good of the nation (technological advancement, a decent standard of living for all the people, and natural liberties). The problem becomes more complex with a situation such as that in India: technological advancement can be effected through a centralized source; individual freedom and equality is secured through local administration; or alternatively the central authority can create guidelines assuring fair treatment to be adhered to by employees.

The guidelines affect only those who are working and are of working age, capability and so on. Equality and fraternity should stretch to encompass the whole population, regardless of differences. The idea of 'the economics of humanism' implies that each individual should be granted autonomy. State intervention is expected to alter a situation only when things go wrong. 'The economics of humanism' is very *laissez-faire* on the one hand, but on the other, it pervades the life of every citizen, because by its very nature, it is humanistic and not solely economic. Economic interaction, whether this be institutionalized or not, should be governed by humanist principles. Basically, this constitutes Vivekananda's attempt to gird economics with the morality of religion.

The justification of *laissez-faire* is acceptable to many; that of authority pervading the life of citizen is less so. Yet the justification for the latter is seen in instances such as *sati*. It is regarded by many as an act of devotion, of strength of will, and of the quintessential love within

marriage. Vivekananda acknowledged this, too. Furthermore, *sati* is seen to have a religious sanction. There are cases, however, in which the widow is forced onto the pyre. Vivekananda was adamant that the practice of *sati* be abolished. The state cannot wait until society is modernized and the opinions of people have changed. The principles of humanism would surely oppose the unwilling sacrifice of so many for the antiquated belief. State intervention is a necessity, otherwise 'humanism' and the state would be seen to advocate such miscarriages of justice. State intervention takes the form of laws regulating the behaviour of people; in the hope that morality will change to accommodate these laws. Eventually morality would govern this area. It must be noted that massive state intervention does not include totalitarian methods of government.

Humanism dictates that the organic¹¹⁵ aspects of social relations should not be destroyed by large scale mechanization and organization. The state must investigate "the nature of the technology and the forms of associate ownership and management which correspond to the self-development of men and women and are conducive to justice and equality of life in a genuine human community."¹¹⁶

The goal of humanistic economics is twofold: modernization and the economic amelioration coupled with the endeavour for human well-being and human progression. For the state to put this theory into practice is another matter. Although it deems that at times, centralization is necessary, the human factor of these economics ordains that decentralization, and federalism are together a goal worth working for. It

¹¹⁵ Hindu reformers have constantly stressed the importance of organic reform. This imagery pertains to a body in which there is no use having surgery on a liver if the heart is not in working order. Each should be ameliorated and each should in turn aid the amelioration of all orders.

¹¹⁶ *S.I.*, op. cit., p 40.

ensures against monopoly and totalitarianism, both of which are associated with a thrust for technological growth and its relation of production and distribution.¹¹⁷ The road to national modernization is fraught with the possibility of failing into centralization.

There is a dichotomy between 'humanism' and 'centralization'. The latter is usually effected for a future goal. The evils of authoritarianism are justified by the future good that will prevail (Huxley stated in *The Perennial Philosophy* that authoritarian ideologies justify their means by the end - an equation which 'true religions' cannot balance). Humanism, on the other hand, is not teleological. It is dangerous to state that the theory of humanism rejects sacrifice for benefit because then we are pushed into the argument of subjective preference and sacrifice.¹¹⁸ However, one must discern two distinct strands within the humanist argument. One is, without reverting to the argument of subjectivity, that a person's right should not be sacrificed for a future benefit; the other is that a small immediate benefit is nothing compared to realization of a greater future goal. The latter argument differs from the totalitarian argument in that the degree of sacrifice necessary is a major determining factor in deciding whether the future goal is justifiable.

'The economics of humanism' is a mixture of the thrust for modernity with a humanistic value-system. It usually supports a pluralistic conception of the state because only a pluralistic state can cater adequately to the varied desires of man and the vicissitudes of life.

There is a relation between humanistic economics and Christianity which consists, firstly, the active humanism of Christianity; secondly, the

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ A stoic monk may readily give up the right to Freedom of Speech because it does not matter much to him; whereas a politician may not. The argument of intensity follows.

worldliness of Christianity; and thirdly, the rationality of Christianity's service to the world. The last reason is particularly important because it transforms the aspirations of modernity held by 'humanism' into a practicable theory without degrading men into instruments of mechanization. Especially in Vivekananda's opinion, Christianity is particularly rational and humanistic. Furthermore, where scientific rationalism is "allowed to operate in the realm of moral ends or to dictate those ends, it reduces human persons into the means of material or revolutionary or planning technology and brings about a new oppression."¹¹⁹ The strength of Christianity in this area is in its moral code which, in effect, is the spiritualization of politics and economics. To elucidate, one must look at this in ethical terms. In ethics, there are many truths for each situation. Religion is characterized by acknowledging only one. A religion pervaded by ethics, is thus more easily accepted in a pluralistic and modern society.¹²⁰ This code is more receptive to the subjectivity of life. Economics is therefore 'spiritualized' and is considerably more acceptable.

In 'Indian terms', 'The Economics of Humanism' is an economic policy based on the principles of religion, which aims at the reformation of society not only on political, but also social and moral grounds. A highly rational approach supports this economic policy. It assesses reformation on economic grounds. Economic change is seen to be the catalyst for the social change that will lead to political and spiritual change, eventually culminating in a mental revolution. This approach does not see history through an economic viewpoint. However, the result of such a policy is

¹¹⁹ *S.I.*, op. cit., p 54.

¹²⁰ Incidentally, this is another reason why Vivekananda regarded Christianity as more palatable to a modern society.

aimed at the moral regeneration of a society. Therefore, economic change is primary and yet secondary in importance. The real aim is morally to regenerate society; it becomes possible also because this economic policy pervades every aspect of life, of every citizen, whether or not s/he is involved in economic activity. Because it is a policy supported not only by religionists but also rationalists, the policy is more legitimate. While religion's contribution supplied the craving for a deep human desire, the economic supplied the thirst for materialism, equality and liberty. This thrust

represents the efforts of India's foremost political thinkers to translate their integral humanistic vision into a political theory under Indian conditions. It is an ideology of social revolution which is based on an understanding of man in society, which corresponds his moral and spiritual nature on the one hand, and his rational, social character on the other, and looks forward to building a cultural and political home for him which does justice to all dimensions of his personality.¹²¹

Vivekananda attempted to contribute by adding emotive dynamism and political effectiveness, usually absent from a too-comprehensive policy. The former he tried to inspire through his use of rhetoric and ability to motivate a mass; the latter was a product of the motivated mass spreading to eventually include most of India. To compare it with Mao Tse Tung's policy is illustrative. Vivekananda, like Mao, saw his only chance of success being when the majority of the population would actively battle for this common goal - and the praxis was not a minority fighting for the

¹²¹ *S.I.*, op. cit., p 80.

benefit of a majority. Furthermore, with such a motivating force, the policy is instantly activated and the worldly utopia is set into motion. Many 'salvation theories' are usually put aside for the moment while worldly or 'real' problems are tackled. Hence these theories are discarded because there is never enough time for them to be solved. In the light of Christianity, Vivekananda admired the religion because the aspiration for this utopia pervades the religion and Christian preaching is aimed at inspiring the emotive force. It is even in the symbolism: "In the light of the Cross, the world is the theatre of the work and glorification of God; and history is the revelation of the hard core of human evil which constantly frustrates God's purpose."¹²²

The influence of Christianity as a worldly doctrine encouraged Vivekananda to follow his conviction that the root of evil is social and the remedy thus lies in politics and economics. Economics and politics are life-affirming. The importance of life-affirming humanism is that it attempts to combat the hierarchy of power in society. Politics aims straight at the disease and seeks to cure. Spirituality, although not a recipe for fraternity and equality, attempts to change the mentality of people in hope that, consequently, the society will change. In theory, this is more permanent but definitely not as speedily effective. Here is one of the times when Vivekananda is looking for a quick solution because the British in India and the state of the Indian society are immediate problems needing immediate attention. The test of humanistic politics is whether the achieved state will be fraught with as much corruption as that which it aimed to cure; whether the achieved state will be adequately responsive to the humanistic and pluralistic desires and needs of the people "not only

¹²² Ibid., p 84.

merely a technical, political or economic revolution but also achieve a really social revolution enhancing the humanity of persons in social relations and structures.”¹²³

The worldly humanism of Christianity is, in many instances, confused with that of Marxism-Leninism. The difference in theory is that Christianity bases its humanism on the appreciation of the integral ‘I-thou’ relationship whereas the latter is based on the distinction between the parts. The Hindu revolution was also not concerned with many Marxist-Leninist axioms such as individual identity deriving from work, non-competition and such features. In practice, the incorporation of Christianity into the Hindu revolution stressed the importance of anti-*Brahminism* and the thrust for equality. A political theory such as Marxist-Leninism aims at the general destruction of privilege. Christianity, as a religion, has an exclusive claim to project its egalitarian aspirations to the religious hierarchical structure and religious practices. It was probably the first to acknowledge *Shudras* as humans and to give everyone, regardless of rank, human pride. Christianity had the right to confront Hinduism on its own ground. The choice as either to remain in the Hindu religion and be abused, or join Christianity and live equally. Christianity thus frightened many Hindus and the awakening of social humanism in Hinduism was, to a large extent, a product of the fear of Christianity. Hence, Hindu humanism is a mixture of egalitarianism and patriotism - as the Hindus religion is inextricably associated with the Hindu nation, Christianity is seen similarly in relation to the West.¹²⁴

¹²³ Ibid., p 121.

¹²⁴ Ironically though, Christianity in India did not practise wholehearted egalitarianism as Dumont pointed out. Theoretically, the only way in which Christianity would be a threat to Hinduism is if it had preached and practised absolute egalitarianism.

Vivekananda took on aspects of Christianity in his version of the Hindu revolution. Christ was the archetypal man; every human should imitate him. This is notwithstanding the true religions and humanistic inspiration derive from the fact that man is a moral entity because he is the *Atman*, a divine spark of the divine light. Vivekananda was adamantly against the institutionalization of Christianity (and this took the form of patriotism). However, he adopted its worldly humanism and corresponding advantages.

Vivekananda's criticism of the modern state was more enlightened than that of many other Indian reformers. Not only did he witness the British state in India, in which both Indians and British knew that the state was "unequal, exploitative and based on force"¹²⁵ but he travelled extensively throughout the West and hence had a first-hand experience of other Western states in their indigenous surroundings. One major reason for British imperialism was economic and Vivekananda's view of the state, from his experience in India, was that it was exploitative, geared to and guided by material pleasure. He criticized that state for being impersonal, atomistic, dehumanizing, it was opposed to natural, organic and cosmic justice and guided by the self-interest it perpetuated as a binding force for the political, economic and social communities.

The binding influence of modern society and state is self-interest. The communitarian sentiment in society is generated not by an acknowledgement of the ontological similarity of humans but, rather, for selfish reasons. Others were to be utilized in the pursuit of one's self-interest and here lay the binding factor of society. The pursuit of wealth created economic relations; the pursuit of happiness created familial

¹²⁵ *G.P.P*, op. cit., p 11

relations, friends and society. Even the political community was created and maintained so that individuals would benefit and put their interests forward in the hope that these would be realized. The duty of care afforded to other people was generated not from a humanitarian sentiment but as a reciprocal gesture. The value of people in this situation is completely disregarded. Such a non-spiritual society was not maintained for the common good or for everyone's happiness, Vivekananda was insistent on. In this society, the equation is reversed. One's happiness is dependent on the social, economic and political orders and only because of this are they worth maintaining. They do not have any intrinsic worth. Society was an end in itself because it was fabricated for perpetuation of self-interest, whereas to Vivekananda, social order, not society, had an inherent worth. Society was a stage in evolution because what mattered was every man's happiness and the link between men, not those temporal desires Western society was designed to maintain. Ironically, as a result, Vivekananda admired the modern basis of the state because it aimed to cater to *all* people and for its encompassing and abstract equality. Indian society was based on a caste and hierarchical equality (or inequality).

Vivekananda's view was that abstract equality was good because it was flexible, still it was destroyed because modern man was encouraged to pursue his self-interest. Difference in modern society was distinguished by the fruits of this very self-interest. Hence, differences were incidental to such a concept of equality and not built in to it as they were into the spiritual concept of equality. As a result, differences became inequalities. There was a consequent disjunction between the abstract concept of equality and the inequality that had taken over society. The modern society and the modern political structure had difficulty coping and

therefore the state became extensively bureaucratic and mechanical in order to create a bureaucratized, mechanized and automated understanding of man. Inequalities were accentuated because the state could not and did not accommodate such differences in its rigid understanding. As the state's ability to manage decreased, inequalities increased and became the dominating and governing factor of society. Society was still seen as an end in itself, not social order, and thus was never altered. This is the present state of Western society, Vivekananda insisted. In political terms, active participation was nugatory because of the individualistic nature of the community where no one individual's cause would gain any credence because of the numbers of others awaiting attention. No person would help another's cause because society was individualistic. In economic terms, humanitarian commerce would crumble precisely because of this. Furthermore, it became the basis for morality within the state:

[S]ince in the absence of the nourishing soil of the sentiments of good will and mutual concern the moral life lacked roots and vitality, it had to depend on the non-moral motive of fear. Modern man took care not to harm others lest they should harm him, and he did a good turn to them as an investment for the future. Morality was reduced to a reciprocal egoism or enlightened self-interest and was sustained by fear. Self-interest was not a moral principle...enlightened self-interest was not one either. In modern civilisation morality was a form of prudence, a more effective way of pursuing self-interest.¹²⁶

A state with a spiritual foundation was by nature accommodating, benevolent, caring and infused with a spirit of fellowship. It

¹²⁶ Ibid., p 24.

accommodated differences without translating them into inequalities. Any state to a degree monopolizes morality. The modern society is atomistic and based on reciprocity and hence morality becomes based on reciprocity. "Since its atomic and morally depleted citizens lacked organic bonds and the capacity to organise and run their social relations themselves, the state was the sole source of moral order,"¹²⁷ Any morality based on reciprocity is selfish and is thus the destruction of morality. Hence the modern society's morality is no morality at all; yet the state becomes the supreme moral institution and its preservations, the supreme moral duty.¹²⁸ Such a morality changes in accordance with the changing nature of the economic climate and the resulting change in self-interest. This is the opposite of spiritual morality which is based on an eternal foundation but changes in respect of man's needs as a product of changing society (in turn based on these spiritual foundations and not self-interest). This spiritual, eternal frame of reference is the basis of *real* morality.

In one understanding, Vivekananda was more pragmatic, than individualistic or humanitarian in his treatment of the issue of the sacrifice of an individual for the good of the state or community. He articulated on the spiritual state and the need for its preservation. If one were to die for its preservation in order that the remaining population would live under such a state, it was courageous (he did not question the common philosophical question of how many sacrifices equated to the maintenance of how many survivors). The preservation of such a state was the highest duty of an individual. However, on the other hand, he did not want humans reduced to mere citizens whose greatest duty was loyalty to the

¹²⁷ Ibid., p 28.

¹²⁸ Ibid.

state. This contradiction is eased because Vivekananda did not question for one instance, the probability or implausibility of establishing a state with a spiritual foundation and morality. Hence loyalty to the state and to the spiritual good were synonymous. This is highly contentious because Vivekananda constantly emphasized that the society and state were means to protect the individual and they should serve the latter and not *vice versa*. There is, yet, an element of worship for the state and nation acting as a bridge between service and *karmayoga*. Service to individuals is in essence service to the state, where its importance transcends in some cases, that to the former; hence my view that Vivekananda would have advocated the sacrifice of some for the good of many. Although one should not lose sight of that spiritual Good and there is nothing higher than that Good, existence is temporal, Vivekananda constantly asserted, and therefore the spiritual state was important for one's life in the world and for the society. What is pertinent is that Vivekananda emphasized that one should practice independent thinking and not simply obey blindly. Spirituality - and hence morality - is ultimately internal and the individual should look inside for moral and considered guidance. If the state is corrupt, one should fight against it. If the state is in the right, Vivekananda would have asserted that one should have the *shraddha* to fight for it. Hence, it cannot be said that Vivekananda was opposed to the state.

Consequently, Vivekananda could not have opposed a degree of state intervention. For example, he disagreed vehemently with the practice of *sati*. It should be a fundamental change in the thinking and morality of people that should bring the cessation of such a practice. If this were not forthcoming. Vivekananda would not have disagreed with state intervention to outlaw such a practice and as a result, people's morality

would eventually change. Even though individuals should look inside themselves for moral and intelligent guidance, Vivekananda was aware of the false consciousness and thus the false morality which was pervading India. This is problematic when one considers that India consists of a culturally diverse and religiously plural population. Vivekananda was Hindu and his ideas that some religious ideas should change because they are anachronistic may not be adopted unequivocally by other religions. A Hindu is permitted to have a 'rational approach' to his religion and question fundamental aspects. There is a definitive separation between the Hindu religion and its culture through which one may question aspects of social practice believed to be religiously inclined and derived. Islam, on the other hand, is wholly different. Many Muslims would not take kindly to having a state, moreover, a non-Islamic and possibly in their view, a Westernized democratic state, impinge on their religious practices; it cannot be permitted to interfere with what they may see as integral aspects of their religion. For a politically, rationally motivated state to impose its views on prescriptions laid down by Mohammed will be construed not only as blasphemous, but as totalitarian: such an outcome is contrary to the democratic spirit Vivekananda wanted to instil. Vivekananda, or the rationally motivated state, may proclaim that these aspects are peripheral to the religion while this view may not be held by Muslims. The perfect example is the Shah Bano case in 1988. Vivekananda discerned no opposition to his view, a rational one (possibly as a result of the Hindu division between religion and culture), that social religious practices were peripheral to the essence of a religion. Religious tolerance remains polarized: on the one hand, it permits freedom of religious association, speech and thought; on the other, it is discriminatory and

totalitarian in that the state defines the limit of that freedom in the interest of public safety, order and morality. This is both just for its rational and obvious reasoning, yet unjust in that the secular state defines religious boundaries.

Vivekananda criticized the modern state for being materialistic, anthropocentric and irreligious. He

viewed it as an undifferentiated whole...unable to distinguish and analyse the complex pattern of relationships between its difference components such as capitalism, imperialism, industrialisation, the egotistical view of man and modern science, all of which he regarded as part of the same general phenomenon...caught up in the paradoxical position of wanting to appropriate part of the 'spirit' of modern civilisation while rejecting the very institutions and the social structure which that embodies and nurtured.¹²⁹

British style capitalism (political equality, economic and social inequality, class division) is inappropriate. India must have socialism and democracy and economic and cultural advancement. India has a tradition of federalism. "If social progress lies in evolutionary federalism, then India's past is the world's future."¹³⁰ Indian identity has received too little attention.

The sacrifice of the illusory self for the larger whole, simultaneously God and society was the bedrock of Vivekananda's (and Indian) nationalism; a movement to realize God in the nation, in our fellow countrymen. Self-sacrifice was self-realization, Vivekananda proclaimed. Subjective social philosophy and better self-understanding (social and individual) is contrasted with Western liberalism which posits objective

¹²⁹ Ibid., p 35. Parekh writes about Gandhi, but this is applicable also to Vivekananda.

selves as separate entities. Subjectivity is realization of purpose towards the former. Objectivity 'postulates artificial problems of freedom and order' already counteracted by the Hindu religion. To protect separateness in the name of freedom, anxieties and antagonisms and to efface separateness in the name of order and tensions exaggerates individualism and collectivism. It is materialist, individualist, capitalist and socialist at their worst. In this sense, spirituality is subjectivity; it guards against individualism and other apparent negative qualities. Objectivity is antagonism between the self and social existence. Hobbes explains it as the imposition on separate selves in the social order and Kant as the self-imposition of rationality which makes up the social order.

Vivekananda took his inspiration from the ancient republics, participatory self-governments acting in an egalitarian and autonomous spirit and emphasizing communal freedom. They were social wholes vitality and integrity were maintained through being directed at preserving the smaller wholes. '[They were] independent centres acting intimately upon each other but not fused into a single unity.'¹³¹ This is even more enticing because free and equal participation thrives well in small scale-societies; it is further enhanced by the theory that smaller communities help larger ones and *vice versa*. History has shown otherwise. Centralization and hierarchy in many instances overwhelm direct participation, since it needs not only the raw energy of individuals but also the concentrated and magnified energy of various sub-communities: for example, voluntary associations and intermediary units and secondary groups such as those postulated by Lasky, de Tocqueville and Durkheim. In

¹³⁰ Hager, op. cit, p 99.

¹³¹ Ibid., p 263.

this respect, caste can be beneficial. It acts as a sub-community and economic intermediary unit between the individual and the state; through which the energy of individuals can be systematized, concentrated and magnified.

Socialism incorporates large scale industrialization, contrary to participatory democracy. Large scale industrialization is dependent on the state not only for financing but also for maintenance, demands and goals, which in turn depend on the economic political policies of the state. Most of all, socialism depends on the outlook of the government. Thus "the flourishing of democratic virtue depends dialectically on the construction and maintenance of self-governing communities, to nourish and sustain dharma."¹³²

Economic decentralization is important but not to the extent of the Gandhian anachronistic self-sufficient village commune as this may only degenerate the economic and social policies of interdependence; because the personal is the political, autonomy creates a series of barriers within the nation. The barriers of religion and caste that now exist will be replaced by stronger and more inhibiting barriers governing not only the relationships of interaction with the divided communities (whether they be religious or social), but also the personal lives of people in the privacy of their own homes. As the state becomes increasingly ubiquitous, social values enter private lives. Just as the spirit of community cannot thrive in great economic inequality, the spirit of the nation (or citizenship values) cannot thrive in great national divide, intensified in the psyche of people. In other words, the cooperative psyche advocated by *Advaita* cannot exist alongside prevalent antagonism. In a capitalist democracy in the outward

¹³² Ibid., p 357.

and material understanding of humans, “a social egoism dominates life, checked only by the ordered conflict of the market.”¹³³ Western socialism is dominated by the same objectivism: human well-being in terms of material institutions, institutional arrangements and economic mechanisms. “It modifies but cannot replace or transcended the culture it inherits from capitalism, a culture of “economism” which imagines human well-being as the more and more rationalized satisfaction of material desires.”¹³⁴

To Vivekananda, spirituality is subjectivity and materialism is objectivity. Utopia is a combination of spiritualized democracy and Western socialism. “[T]he recovery of active individuality will depend on the development of a post-socialist “subjective” sensibility, in which various aspects of selfhood recognized and seek their well-being in the well-being of others.”¹³⁵ The liberty of capitalism, the equality of socialism and the fraternity of anarchism are doomed to failure without the basic understanding that no complex and highly developed system can exist without governmental force. Anarchy, for example, because of the survival instinct, turns to stateless communism or communalism to which India as a deeply backward country and community could easily revert. “The third world agrarian economy provoked an impulse to focus theoretically on the demands of village reconstruction, by contrast with Marxism which, as its extremes, approaches the problems of backward villages by simply hoping that they will disappear as a by-product of socialist progress.”¹³⁶ The Third World experience of capitalism is exploitative, economic and entails human

¹³³ Ibid., p 116.

¹³⁴ Ibid., 117.

¹³⁵ Ibid., p 118.

¹³⁶ Ibid., p 391.

demise. Thus, the ideal held by the Third World was not 'overly growth-based'. The first effects of imperialism are economic. Despite Marxism's hedonism, India's tradition arrested the achievement of an overall goal of "vulgar, artificial hedonism as a goal of human satisfaction, Indian thinkers found the socialist tradition inadequate and their own spiritual tradition indispensable, for picturing the possibility of an egalitarian community to subvert it by competitive greed and materialism."¹³⁷

Pal later changed his opinion on imperialism and stressed that the unification of humanity was impossible under any other human organisation. Vivekananda wanted to emulate exactly this unification, under the Indian nation. It is ironic that the Indians would take the British model for their ideal state and yet it was only the social idea to be adopted. "Like Vivekananda, Pal interprets Hindu freedom as a freedom Kant would applaud: freedom from slavery to the passions, not freedom to satisfy them,"¹³⁸ This is possible only when the multiplication of goods is coupled with the reduction of wants to eradicate egoism - Vivekananda encouraged self-restraint.

Vivekananda took a very simplistic view of the state. To him, socialism was mainly a humanitarian ethos and a limited structure of ownership imposed by the state, compatible with capitalist industrialization and competition. This scheme blatantly lacked a theory of collaborative action and community building. That is especially evident as regards individual and community action; that is apart from the state.

The problem with the amalgamation of Buddhist and socialist morality is that the former is restricted to the personal sphere and the

¹³⁷ Ibid.

¹³⁸ Ibid., p 134, quoting Vivekananda, *State and Society*, p 147

latter to the public sphere. The difference lies in the fact that “socialism seeks to abolish ‘property as an institution’ while Indian religion, at least in its ‘Upanishadic’ strain of ‘non-attachment’ seeks to abolish ‘property as emotion’.”¹³⁹ Vivekananda asserted that property should be owned not by the state, but by intermediary agents. “The mobilization of the oppressed for the direct construction of new social institutions”¹⁴⁰ is the method for the transformation to create popular socialism and people’s politics as opposed to state politics. Inevitably, land reform and distribution of the fruits of labour will lead onto the re-distribution of wealth.

Vivekananda was intent on establishing equality of opportunity, the Rule of Law, the independence of Justice, a dialectic relationship between nationalism and socialism and the interdependence of spiritual and economic revolutions. The persistent problems within this field are the amalgamation of religious notions with social ones and the Hindu-centred religiosity of this tradition. Socialist notions must be transformed into religious ones and *vice versa*. Only an ideology based on religion could act as a unifying factor and be common to all in India. On the other hand, it thus runs the risk of having a over-riding Hindu bias.

CRITIQUE

Vivekananda failed to realize that there is no homogenous Indian nation, yet formulated all his policies on the basis of the existence of this nation. His ideal of government also was not developed past the embryonic

¹³⁹ Ibid., Ibid., pp 327-8.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., p 137.

stage of the *panchayat*. He simply drew a correlation between what was right and self-government. He had a basic misunderstanding of the nature of the state. What is the hope of his understanding economics?:

If one nation becomes rich and powerful, it must be at the expense of another nation somewhere. Each piece of machinery that is invented will make twenty people rich and two hundred thousand people poor. It is the law of competition throughout.¹⁴¹

He was, however, communitarian in his attitude and would have advocated the sacrifice of one exploitative *Brahmin* for a whole *Shudra* caste, a dichotomy showing his lack of comprehension of economics. The quantitative question of positing sacrifice against gain in this context was not addressed. One must appreciate that Vivekananda did not concentrate on the economics thus he was concerned neither with demand and supply and welfare in economic terms nor with the management of economies. He simply stated that any atomism even in economic terms is the destruction of society, as in Western states. "And what are nations but multiplied individuals."¹⁴² "Each individual is like a bubble and the nations resemble many bubbles."¹⁴³ Even in his appraisal of man, he was divided between the religious conception and the political one. He vacillated between them even when he discussed the politics of the nation and it led to the inconsistency in his thought. The ideal man and the ideal citizen are based on different conceptions of man. Vivekananda's conception of the liberal state was nevertheless more consistent in its analysis of human nature than many European Liberals; for example, T.H. Green had a sympathetic

¹⁴¹ S.V.C.W., Vol. IV, p 206.

¹⁴² Ibid., Vol. II, p 271.

and cooperative idea of human nature and then excluded employers from this idea, stating that had they a choice they would, if restricted to 'negative freedoms', employ children, cheap labour and so on. Individuality was to T.H. Green a less individualistic phenomenon; it was more due to materialism's aiding the onset of individuality.

To Vivekananda, by contrast, individuality was spiritual rather than materialistic, and could be evoked in the most poverty-stricken circumstances. In The Atlantic Charter of 1941, Roosevelt and Churchill described four freedoms including that from want. From Vivekananda's perspective it would be highly materialistic because in his perception want is natural and advantageous. Self-restraint and want are not the first evils to be escaped. From the Charter's perspective, the freedom is to have and not to deny oneself.

Vivekananda is at times simplistic, theoretical and impractical; therefore, difficult to translate into pragmatism. His analysis of social change includes almost no analysis of specific social problems or how they might be solved. He can encapsulate his entire approach in a simple formula: "Educate our people so that they may be able to solve their own problems."¹⁴⁴ Vivekananda's thought is weakest where he tried to imagine the incarnation of non-exploitation in 'practical' social arrangements.¹⁴⁵

We must educate every Indian, man, woman and child, in the ideas of our religion and perfect spirit of the Vedantic gospel of equality...and because such education is impossible except through the aid of state finance the nationalist must emphasize the immediate need of

¹⁴³ Ibid., p 188.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., Vol. V., p 215.

¹⁴⁵ Hager, op. cit., p 31.

political freedom without which Indians cannot obtain the necessary control over their money.¹⁴⁶

There is very little emphasis in Vivekananda's thought on aspects of class struggle or class consciousness. The total elimination of class distinctions of classes, and where they will be in the cycle of revolution, is undetermined. There is no gradation as to what power should be re-allotted. There is very little consideration afforded to the Muslim aspect of India and their opinion of change, and even how the change will affect 'their' India and not only Hindu India. He persistently mentioned the spiritualization of India, but this will be opposed if the only part of Islam to be incorporated is the 'body'. Muslims want not only the body of Islam; they want the mind and the spirit as well. The Indian nation is not cohesively Indian. Vivekananda is too Hindu. Socialism through *sannyasi* is implausible. His agents were renouncers, monks devoted to the nation, and their patriotism was intense. Was their example of patriotism too abstract? Was the example they set too 'non-temporal' for a nation in need of economic betterment because of alien rule - implausible to translate into modern social structures? Was it too mystical and did it necessitate a fundamental knowledge of *Vedanta* or another Hindu doctrine? There is also a contradiction in his advocating individual renunciation and prosperity for the nation as a whole.¹⁴⁷

His idea of renunciation was modern. "Even the hard work and concentration involved in scientific research or technological invention, he pointed out, implied a measure of renunciation."¹⁴⁸ This is an ignorant interpretation of Vivekananda because the renunciation involved in scientific research is measurably different from that in the life of a hermit

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., pp 534-5.

¹⁴⁷ See quotation attached to footnote 26.

and a scientist would have to undergo massive training to become a *sannyasin*, despite his / her training as a scientist. He was hinting that even with material well-being, people should live only through materialism, since it would involve renunciation. Looked at another way, he could have been advocating the denunciation of selfish materialism for the general well-being. It is crucial for Vivekananda that mundane and material life should be organised to emphasize cooperative virtues. Every action should be moral; there should be no difference between social, political and personal actions. On the one hand, Vivekananda was looking at life too simplistically - who in reality would sacrifice their own desires for the good of the community in every instance even though doing so makes rational good sense? This was further emphasized when Vivekananda himself said that ethics is a flawed notion!

On the other hand, it seems entirely possible that men and women may be enthused by religion to devote their lives to the unselfish ideal of public service and to the subordination of their private interest to the common good.¹⁴⁹

Beckerlegge puts it to us that

Vivekananda was too concerned to show that *Vedanta* offers something which can 'cover the whole field of life - ideas and practice, and held that the Bhagavadgita provides the best commentary upon the 'practical' philosophy. 'Practicability' is seen to stem from the power of *Vedanta* to generate the realisation of that truth.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁸ Raychaudhuri, op. cit., p 252.

¹⁴⁹ Singhvi, op. cit., p 127.

¹⁵⁰ Beckerlegge, op. cit, p 3.

Vivekananda's theory in isolation is not itself a recipe for social action, as it concerns self-realization only. According to Vivekananda, moral man acts morally. Deussen recognized that the *Upanishadic* Monism of consciousness was not akin to the Monism of Will and therefore was not ethical. "Central to Hacker's analysis was his claim that Vivekananda failed to recognize the ethical potential of the Vishnu Purana and was forced instead of seize upon the artificial Vedanta ethic proposed by Deussen."¹⁵¹ Hacker's understanding of *Advaita* is as a subset of Hinduism, but Vivekananda's *Weltanschauung* is an amalgamation of *Vedanta*, *Advaita* and *Saktic* and *Vaisnava* elements. According to Killingly, the term '*Vedanta*' in nineteenth-century Bengal was often used to mean *Advaita*.

Furthermore, Vivekananda's education proposals were failures as political theories. His admission that he belonged to the whole world and not only to India is a further admission that his concentration was centred elsewhere. The largest problem in assessing Vivekananda is in taking his letters too seriously, in the light of his energetic and emotive character, of his wider intentions of regenerating India and of his extreme enthusiasm for the West, especially as the letters in question were written in the West. "By the time of his return to India, it would appear that Vivekananda retained the earlier goal of establishing a college in which to train 'preachers' who would carry both religious and secular education to the masses."¹⁵²

There is a large contradiction in his work:

¹⁵¹ Ibid., p 6.

¹⁵² Ibid., p 15.

Vivekananda seems, on the surface at least, unaware of any contradiction in advocating self-sacrifice for a society which cannot thereby be benefited. In the context of social action "self-sacrifice" implies a preference for a wider social good over a narrower personal one. This makes no sense if the possibility of a wider social good is denied.¹⁵³

As a conclusion to criticisms of Vivekananda and his thought concerning the state and its relation to Practical *Vedanta*, one must ask

did Vedanta emerge as something akin to a retrospective justification for action upon which Vivekananda had already embarked or did the theory arise out of a re-definition by Vivekananda of his mission, its scope and its priorities?¹⁵⁴

The persistent problem of the amalgamation of the traditional religious theme with the modern capitalist and socialist ones is that this achieved in, at times, the most incoherent and incongruous fashion, emphasizing contradistinction and error. This means that no thinker up to the time of Vivekananda had thought lucidly about the economy of the nation, first, because there was no nation and secondly, because the idea of integration of the Indian subcontinent's citizenry has been the perennial problem: to find an ideology, based only on religion as a unifying factor, and common to all India. The problem has occupied a larger space than the economics of the nation in the minds of the would-be reformers. The latter has been left to chance because the vision of an Indian nation had never emerged until Vivekananda created one; although even that was indistinct

¹⁵³ Hager, op. cit., p 18.

¹⁵⁴ Beckerlegge, op. cit., p 5.

and vague. Furthermore, the idea that the backward aspects of India would disappear, that the economic policies would simply fall into place once the nation had been set up, the country had modernized and developed a national consciousness - just as had happened in the Western world - was predominant in the minds of these reformers.

CONCLUSION AND VIVEKANANDA'S NATIONALISM

Vivekananda had only one intention: the regeneration of India. He neglected to address in detail the political problems such as the lack of nation and state, state policies, economics, foreign policy and home policy. In a sense this academic viewpoint is advantageous because one could also look only from an economic viewpoint in assessing all difficulties and their solutions. On the other hand, Vivekananda simply took an objective viewpoint which was far too impractical. He admired socialism as an economic and humanitarian system without really understanding its intricacies and was not even aware of the reality of socialistic economics and the situation into which it would put the country during transformation. He simply preferred it to the exploitation of capitalism, capitalist industrialization and the mainly capitalist ethic; but, ironically, he preferred capitalism in that its essence was linked to liberalism. He was naive; he simply admired aspects of America and wanted them transported to India. He realized that India was religious and therefore any political policy and government and system needed to have a religious slant but he did not, because of his ignorance in this area, preach that political policies needed to be amended to the Indian situation. Simply

because he did not understand the system, he could therefore not alter it legitimately.

On the one hand, people are of utmost importance and the only way of ameliorating their circumstances and position in society is the change of that society, Vivekananda's ultimate goal. On the other hand, a changed society is not the goal and is only a method of ameliorating their welfare. The question is whether social welfare is of utmost importance. Are people of utmost importance or not? Vivekananda's inconsistency is not simply a change of opinion to which every human is entitled; it amounts to incoherence. It is actually a lack of elucidation stemming from the fact that he did not understand the basic concepts. It does not follow that he ignored them; he actually failed to realize that there were any additional questions to answer. Furthermore, he did not contemplate the differences between types of states. What is a corrupted state and how can we discern it? How do we know that an emerging state is corrupted? What can we do to safeguard against this? He is presumably in the initial stages of his thesis and therefore he did not contemplate these questions as it seemed improbable that the Indian state would emerge in the near future. He did not even contemplate whether the internal structure should be pyramidal or otherwise. All he said was that India should be democratic as opposed to totalitarian. Vivekananda did not contemplate the nature of the state.

The first three decades of nineteenth century gave rise to such political doctrines as liberalism, conservatism, socialism, anarchism, communism and nationalism. Nationalism has proven the most difficult to describe and define.¹⁵⁵ There is myriad of types of nationalism. In one

¹⁵⁵ Parekh B. C., 'Ethnocentricity of the Nationalist Discourse', from Nations and Nationalism 1 (1), 1995, 25-52, ASEN, (Association for the Study of Ethnicity and Nationalism), London, p 25.

view, it is a Western phenomenon; in yet another, a universal and logical advancement; in yet another it is restricted to nation-hood, or race; and to others there needs to be a dialectic relation between the state and the nation for nationalism to be legitimate; there is even economic nationalism. It is those terms such as cultural, religious and linguistic nationalism that are ambiguous. There is always an element of patriotism, even if the object of worship is not a country. Hegel emphasized that one may glorify the state but not the nation; Herder that the nation and not the state was to be glorified; Fichte, both at different levels; Rousseau, the community but neither the state nor the nation; Gobineau, the race and nothing else; and Hobbes emphasized that none should be glorified.¹⁵⁶

Each had a definite and systematic analysis of the epitome of the state and the indigenous nation. The problem with Vivekananda was that he did not. He simply had notions of what 'Indian-ness' was and assumed that as a product of a shared identity, Indians would form a cooperative society, economic structure and state. He combined territorial, cultural, religious, ethnic and civil nationalism without ever realizing that there would be a difference in appeal, methodology of implementing such factors. He never questioned whether any or all of the them were forms of nationalism and whether their forms, if they existed at all, were structured and complementary. Hence, he created a haphazard form of nationalism respectively applicable to individual aspects of India but never to all that is India. As a consequence, it never applied to all of India at once and as a whole. His idea of a social revolution, in which the *Shudra* class would uproot the caste system, applied only to this caste and to no others. His idea of fighting against alien domination concerned only those who had the

¹⁵⁶ Ibid., p 26.

power to challenge this threat. He assumed that because of their common identity, those in power and the *Shudra* caste would carry this out simultaneously and these would magically combine. Unlike a political philosopher such as Marx, he created no systematic revolution, where one stage led on logically to another.

Moreover, Vivekananda articulated no alternative to the British civilization and idea of modernity. He never defined how the ancient civilization would relate dialectically to modernity: an element necessary to inspire a sense of confidence in any form of nationalism. The British had struck deep at the roots of Indian confidence by discrediting the latter's view on what comprised civilization and civilized man.¹⁵⁷ The Indian nation lacked confidence of its ability to cope with modernity and, moreover, with the independence many nationalists were urging. As a result, many Indians still regarded the British system to be their best opportunity to embrace modernity. Consequently, Vivekananda's nationalism was never to be Indian nationalism. It was Gandhi who further articulated such a nationalism and attempted to pull together aspects of ethnic, religious and cultural nationalism into a coherent whole ideology; he argued that "political independence was important not only as an expression of India's pride and a necessary means to stop its economic exploitation but also to preserve its civilization, without which political independence remained fragile."¹⁵⁸

Territorial nationalism is a relatively modern concept. A community was defined in terms of its way of life and this constituted loyalty. Traditional Muslim societies defined loyalty in terms of a way of life and

¹⁵⁷ *G.P.P.*, op. cit., p 17.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p 19.

even carried with them their personal laws, regarded as integral to their identity.¹⁵⁹

In the modern state territory enjoys unprecedented moral, political and ontological significance. It is the material basis of the state and unambiguously marks it off from its neighbours so that one knows where the boundaries of a state begin and end. The state is internally unified, freed of physical and legal barriers.¹⁶⁰

If one enters this territory, one is subject to its jurisdiction and not to that of one's own community. "The individual does not carry his *professio juris* and laws with him wherever he goes. Law is *lex terrae* and binds all coming under its jurisdiction, irrespective of their consent or volition."¹⁶¹

The disjunction with Vivekananda's conception of nationalism was that it was cultural nationalism, as exemplified in the cultural Muslim community, and yet he intended its imposition on a territorial society and nation since he was in favour of the modern society for India. It could be that, more pertinently, he wanted this because it derived its legitimacy from its citizens, whereas cultural nationalism derives its legitimacy from an established ideology or culture, possibly created many centuries previously. There is a certain dichotomy between the territory that derives its jurisdiction and authority from citizens and one that derives its status from a possibly immutable culture.

"The territory defines the corporate identity of its members. Britain is not where the British live, rather the British are those who live in

¹⁵⁹ 'Ethnocentricity of the Nationalist Discourse', op. cit., p 27

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

Britain.”¹⁶² An integral aspect of any nationalist doctrine is the search for identity. In this modern state, the territory defines the immediate identity. Cultural nationalism defines an identity in respect of culture, obviously; yet it was this nationalism which Vivekananda envisaged as creating the type of modern state defined above, in spite of the conflict of interests it entails. Such nationalism postulates one’s identity as an amalgamation of multiple identities “as the ethnic, religious, social and territorial, and they saw themselves as belonging to several collectivities, some of which were extra-territorial or common to several territorial units.”¹⁶³ This is evident in Vivekananda’s use of religious rhetoric and Hindu terms in enticing an Indian population composed of a myriad of ethnicities, religions, races and linguistic differences; even within the Hindu fold, he had to appeal to a multitude of loyalties, in his attempt to create a homogeneous Indian nation. “These identities and the concomitant loyalties were accepted as a necessary feature of communal life and limited the ruler’s claim to obedience.”¹⁶⁴ The dichotomy as to the source of identity is even more evident when one realizes that Vivekananda appealed to and even reinforced the diversity of obediences in an attempt to create an India with one authority and yet, he failed to emphasize sufficiently, the need to have an obedience to the state over and above that of communal and tribal affiliations.

[T]he modern state privileges the territorial identity. Its members do, of course, have multiple identities, affiliations and allegiances, but the territorial identity is

¹⁶² Ibid., p 28.

¹⁶³ Ibid.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid.

over-arching and dominant. When a state is at war with another, *all* ties between their citizens are suspended.¹⁶⁵

Vivekananda was not conscious of this disjunction and hence his disparate appeals to several identities. He simply saw the need to appeal to all sections of Indian society.

Vivekananda's understanding of the nature of the modern state was inadequate. It destroys the traditional relationship and dialogue between society and government. The state is possible only when the members dissolve their traditional forms of life and generate a new collectivity from which ensues a new identity. The qualitative transformation is accompanied by a prioritization of values, obligations and duties: the destruction of some in favour of others.¹⁶⁶ The most difficult aspect of the transformation for societies based on ties of culture and religion is that it is not the individual who chooses and prioritizes, but rather the impersonal, non-cultural and non-religious state which imposes its list of priorities. It is on this basis that authority and law is founded. "In the modern state law is abstracted from all other forms of societal control."¹⁶⁷ There are two points that must be made concerning this: firstly, that the foundation and legitimacy of law is derived from a rationality divorced (albeit not wholly so) from culture and religion. Law in the modern state is abstract. Secondly, cultural and religious social control is subservient to that law in most cases. It is here that Vivekananda's miscomprehension is most evident. His version of an indigenously Indian nation was not innately compatible with this relation. On the one hand, he was dissatisfied with the basis of morality's being utilitarian and morality's being expressed in the

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid.

language of rights and obligations. He saw this as a product of a material understanding of life and he wanted India to have a morality informed by religion as the basis of law and the stage. In this context, religion and religious morality take on a superlative role and law cannot be distinguished from the purely societal control which is based on a mixture of culture and religion in varying proportions. In practical terms, it cannot be argued that the state's law should supersede societal control because both are founded on the same logic and rationality. On the other hand, he did not want religion to play too great a part in the governing of the nation; the exploitation of religion was evident in India. Furthermore, he was not in favour of the centralization of power because of the atrocities and impersonal nature of a centralized state that he had witnessed during years of colonial rule. He opposed a situation in which religion and cultural societal control superseded the law of the country, people were subject to an anachronistically evident cultural and religious social control over and above that of a humanitarian-rational law. The modern state should be typically characterized by supreme power or sovereignty in legislative terms and an insistence that its citizens are not subject to any law to which the populace has not acquiesced because its role is not the maintenance of law and order *per se*, but as a representative whole.¹⁶⁸

The crux of the controversy rests on Vivekananda's idea of establishing a characteristically Indian nation as opposed to the model imposed on it by the West. The Indian psyche needed to be politically modernized and the converse, to have a politically informed basis for the state, was too Western, in his view. The Indian mind was more concerned

¹⁶⁷ Ibid., p 29.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid.

with, more widely informed about and had more confidence in religion and spirituality and thus these should influence the nation. The modern state requires citizens who are removed from their ethnic, religious and cultural identities and it thrives on a socio-economic-political identity: one which Vivekananda was averse to entertaining. As a result, equality is abstract and law is based on this abstract equality. In this state Muslim personal law would not be permitted. Vivekananda had immense pride in the Indian culture and was adamant that an individual should not be separated from it. Equality had a religious, metaphysical and ontological foundation and was definitely not abstract in the political sense. Such an equality was variously defined. Nevertheless he had faith in abstract equality for its ability to accommodate and alter itself according to different situations. Parekh explains the tension between such opposing conceptions:

Since [abstract] equality is defined in abstract terms, the modern state feels deeply uneasy in the presence of well-organised ethnic, religious and other communities lest they should introduce differences, subvert the principle of equality, and set up rival foci of loyalty.¹⁶⁹

In a country where communities are given rights and a political and legal status, the balance of degrees of proportion is difficult to establish and was a question not addressed by Vivekananda. Consequently, the state must sanction, punish and reward accordingly but all this presumes an obedience of its members. It is not readily acceptable in India, where religious, cultural and ethnic loyalties supersede the state's authority, in many cases.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid.

It was Vivekananda's intention to prove to others as well as to himself that this Western model of the 'modern state' was not necessarily the only version which could be created. The Indian culture was compatible with modernity and could thus create a modern Indian state infused with an unequivocally Indian character. On the one level he was battling with the question of what was 'Indian' and what was 'modern'. On another, he was adopting aspects of this modern state without subjecting them to the scrutiny of 'Indian-ness', thus incorporating facets of a peculiarly Western state, and then joined to them aspects of what he saw as Indian; hence the disjunction. As a result he created a conception in which some peculiarly Indian aspects appeared hand-in-hand, but not harmoniously, with peculiarly Western conceptions. An obvious example is found in his confusion of how to combine spiritual equality with the material and economic benefits of atomism. He did not understand, firstly, that political atomism was different from economic atomism and secondly, that capitalism was not necessarily an ideology but rather a system of economics and commercial activity; furthermore, that capitalism was not necessarily adjoined to imperialism. Another example is that of authority. Its establishment was of ultimate importance to any nation yet, when in the West, he witnessed a strange phenomenon. People were afraid of authority and obeyed it blindly. Those who were not afraid of it disobeyed it ruthlessly, with neither remorse nor any morsel of respect either for it or at least the rationality upon which it was founded. This he mistook for atomism and a material understanding of life; every person is completely different from all others, divorced from any common tie and hence with no respect for the law that governs others and binds the society together. People were concerned simply with what affected them and thus in this

situation the foundation and rationale underlying laws and authority differed for each. To one it may be morality and to another, simply the exploitation of the lower strata of society by the higher echelons. Vivekananda wanted India to cling on to her religious foundation, then any future authority and equality would be respect not only because it was established, but because of the underlying spiritual equality of all people and the fact that the morality on which the law was based was religious.

Hobbes contended that the state should ask for nothing more than its citizens' acknowledgement of a common structure of authority. As long as they abide by the laws, the state could ask for nothing else.¹⁷⁰ This may be so, but Vivekananda was strongly opposed to such a minimalist and atomistic state since human rights would be subordinate to the idea of authority. Even if the religious, ethnic and other cultures differ for each section of society, there must be a shared political culture, "an agreed framework of rights and liberties, common political institutions and structure of authority, and a shared mode of political discourse."¹⁷¹ The citizens are related through a loyalty to their polity. Vivekananda was more in favour of a participatory theory of the state: here, the state was built from the bottom upwards and based on active participation from its citizens who internalized the state.¹⁷² One could argue that this may be difficult with such differences in religious affiliations as are witnessed in India. Political issues are not devoid of religious inclinations.

As a consequence of failing to discern the difference between the nation and the state, Vivekananda failed to clarify whether he was more

¹⁷⁰ Ibid., p 30.

¹⁷¹ Ibid., p 31.

¹⁷² Ibid.

concerned with the nation or the state.¹⁷³ He used the word 'nation' when referring to each.¹⁷⁴ In the building of a state, a nation is required to find ways of incorporating members who were not previously part of the nation. Vivekananda wanted to create a national consciousness both inclusive and tolerant, yet the fundamental problem was that he was not aware of the methodological differences between nation-building and state-building even in terms of consciousness. He simply justified the need to preserve the culture on the grounds that such an identity was beneficial for the whole country. His idea of identity encapsulated "interrelated ideas of collective pride, ancestral loyalty and communal integrity."¹⁷⁵ The Western conception of nationalism was that history is a means to be utilized for another goal, such as a sense of unity and pride, while Vivekananda conceived of history as being integral to the nationalist cause. A nation was not solely a man-made territorial boundary with a shared and possibly exclusive collectivity, whether economic, social, religious or political. The nation may be a by-product of the state. The basis of a nation lay in its historical roots. The relationship between members had been in existence before the establishment of the state. Vivekananda emphasized spirituality, toleration, and unity in diversity as criteria for accepting people to the nation. It is relevant that in the Indian conception, a nation

¹⁷³ In *S.V.C.W.*, Vol IV, p 362, Vivekananda mentioned that education is required to help each individual 'develop their lost individuality'. He continued to mention the nation and each man and women needed to recover this individuality. Throughout this monologue, Vivekananda omitted an important link in the chain: the state, which is integral in aiding this development for the nation and the individuals.

¹⁷⁴ In *S.V.C.W.*, Vol. IV, p 28, Vivekananda attempted to explain the relationship between the teacher and taught, and he made a correlation between this relationship of the 'teacher and taught' and the nation. However, he referred to 'nation' when he meant 'state': "In nations and churches where this relationship between teacher and taught is not maintained spirituality is almost an unknown quantity."; in the same volume, p 472, Vivekananda mentioned nations and government and in this context, he mentioned self-interest and self-defence. However, he does not mention the 'state'. Therefore, we must presume that Vivekananda included in his definition of 'nation', a conception of the state.

¹⁷⁵ 'Ethnocentricity of the Nationalist Discourse', op. cit., p 40.

must exist before the state and not come into existence simply because of the establishment of the state. What is characteristic about both conceptions of nationalism is, as Parekh elucidates:

However we must not judge nationalism in abstract and ahistorical terms. Nationalism insists on the unity of the nation, and hence on the equality of all its members. Whatever their economic, social and other inequalities and differences, they are all accepted as members of a single community and deemed to be entitled to a basic equality. Historically speaking almost every nationalist movement has attacked the tribal, regional, caste-based and sometimes even class-based hierarchies, and generated a spirit of equality and mutual help. Tribal when viewed externally, it is deeply anti-tribal when seen from within. It asserts the dignity of the oppressed and marginalised groups, and gives them both the confidence to take pride in their ways of life and the courage to stand up to the political and cultural hegemony of the dominant states.¹⁷⁶

Vivekananda attempted to create an indigenously Indian nationalism, as opposed to Gandhi, who

bypassed the dominant nationalist vocabulary...He showed that not every movement for independence is national, not every national struggle is nationalist and that not every nationalist movement need articulate itself in the language of European rather than home-grown theories of nationalism.¹⁷⁷

Vivekananda attempted to create a national movement for independence his use of rhetoric was not so much an attempt to move away from

¹⁷⁶ Ibid., p 49.

Western notions and doctrines of nationalism and nationality, but simply the product of an individual trained in religion, attempting to formulate a political theory. Nevertheless, Vivekananda was adamant that Indian nationalism and the emergent Indian nation should be wholly different from Western models. The concepts within his strain of nationalism were, however, no different from Western nationalism. Although such concepts were certainly and naturally adapted to the Indian situation, Vivekananda did not emerge with new and ingenious ways to conceptualize nationalism. Unlike Gandhi, he did not break with the dominant and traditional conceptions of nationalism. Gandhi discouraged industrialization and modernization to a certain extent. Vivekananda, remaining true to traditional forms of nationalism, reinterpreted such concepts in view of the Indian situation, and regarded them as inherent and integral to the national cause. Nationalism, national unity and independence were impossibilities without industrialization and modernization, both actually integral in creating a national and fraternal sentiment. In turn, these were the foundations of nationalism. Vivekananda's was not a conscious effort to separate Indian nationalism merely from the Western discourse of nationalism through the use of different rhetoric. It would be unjustifiable to say that he created an Indian nationalist discourse simply because he aspired to an independent Indian state or nation. For this, such theories must be systematized and must incorporate aspects such as national consciousness, methodology, idea of forthcoming good, future state, unity, nation-hood, state-hood, and an alternative to the current system. These are not necessarily Western concepts solely because they are expressed in

¹⁷⁷ *G.P.P.*, op. cit., Introduction, p 3.

the Western political vocabulary. They are universal and facts of contemporary nationalist and political life.

In order to achieve the dual objective of justifying their rule to themselves and their subjects in a single and consistent language, the British needed to show that

they had something to *give* to the Indians which the latter badly *needed*.¹⁷⁸

Vivekananda did not try to convince the British that they were not needed, nor did he convince the Indians that they did not need the British. He failed to articulate the way in which Indian culture was compatible with modernity and instead looked to the West for a material understanding of life and economic acumen. As a result, the British culture, which was the British most successful export, was held onto with veracity, by Indians. There were many British-loving Indians in India who saw their ancient culture as being incompatible with modernity. Furthermore, this 'modern culture' of the British was couched in universally desirable language. Unlike Gandhi, Vivekananda failed to articulate an alternative to the Western model. Vivekananda expounded on the evil of materialism, stating that the body was characterized by two aspects: it is distinct and enclosed, separate (which is the ontological basis of particularity) and is also the basis of misconception that there is no spiritual link between people; secondly, the body is the seat of the senses that by nature, are unsatisfied and limitless. Thus, any society based on this is selfish and relies on the 'multiplicity of wants'; a civilization based on it lacks moral and spiritual depth, has no guiding principles and is devoid of meaning and purpose. It de-humanizes man, perverts the psyche and is suffused with violence. It reduces wisdom to knowledge which is in turn reduced to power, utilized as an instrument of control. This society perverts the pursuit of truth and has no system of knowledge for critical examination.¹⁷⁹ It is, inevitably, doomed.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid., p 11.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid.

CONCLUSION

In the earlier chapters, I have argued that Vivekananda's major philosophical project was to develop a synthetic vision of Indian civilization. Convinced that the Hindu society had become degenerate, he set about regenerating it on the basis of a vision of India that drew upon the best in the Hindu civilization, and also upon the great insights of Islam, Christianity and modernity. I have outlined that synthetic vision in the earlier chapters. In the course of outlining it, I have pointed out from time to time, the insights and the limitations of that vision.

As I have argued earlier, Vivekananda's synthetic vision of India was remarkable in its originality and perceptiveness. His critique of Hinduism was in many respects, profound and it enabled him to highlight the central ambiguities of Hinduism. He perceived that it had both, a deep individualist core but also a deep collectivist thrust. He set about finding a form of Hindu self-understanding in which individualism and collectivism was reconciled in such a way that individualism did not degenerate into anarchism, and collectivism did not degenerate into tyrannical conformity. I also argued that Vivekananda analyzed Islam and Christianity with a great deal of perspicacity and was able to show their important insights and contributions. Insofar as modernity was concerned, he, unlike many others, saw it with considerable detachment and objectivity. While some of his contemporaries were deeply contentious of modernity and while others were deeply mesmerized by it, Vivekananda was able to see it in the round and was able to appreciate both its strengths and weaknesses. Due to his fairly profound understanding of Hinduism, Islam, Christianity

and modernity, the creative synthesis that he evolved, was original, penetrating and unsurprisingly has been a source of tremendous influence on his successors.

Vivekananda's synthesis had other admirable characteristics: Vivekananda gave a wonderful example of how to be profoundly self-critical of one's own heritage, his understanding of Hinduism, although deep and sympathetic, was also relentless and rigorously critical. Furthermore, Vivekananda showed how a dialogue between different religions was possible. While remaining committed to Hinduism, he had the detachment to appreciate the insights of both Christianity and Islam and he set a splendid example of how to conduct an inter-faith dialogue. Moreover, Vivekananda, far more than many other Indian thinker, attempted to combine the indigenous traditions of India with modernity. He gave an example of how to indigenize modernity and modernize indigenous traditions. This was a brilliant manner of combining indigenous traditions and modernity which predictably had a enormous influence on his successors, not least of them, Mahatma Gandhi. Another strikingly important aspect of Vivekananda's thought was that although he was a deeply religious man, he nevertheless had an understanding of a secular vision of life. It is striking that his thought operates at two levels at once: both the secular and the religious. This way of exploring the limits of religion and the limits of secularity, and to propose a way of looking at man and society in which both the secular and religious dimensions are blended harmoniously, is a remarkable contribution to Indian nationalist thought. In the current climate in India, where the secular fundamentalists and the religious fundamentalist are busy tearing each other apart, Vivekananda has a lesson for them all.

While Vivekananda's creative synthesis was perceptive, enlightening and original, it had its own limitations. Insofar as Hinduism is concerned, Vivekananda had considerable difficulty understanding the nature and dynamics of the caste system as well as the ideas of social hierarchy. Although he perspicaciously criticized what he called 'Don't Touchism', he failed to explain fully why these ideas of purity and pollution had become central to Hinduism.

Indubitably, Vivekananda had been probing in his analysis of India. However, his analysis was insufficiently convincing. He failed to explore the ideas of caste and social hierarchy; he neglected to explain why purity and pollution had entered Indian thought and why they had taken certain forms. While Vivekananda was correct to point out that Hindu religious and social thought pointed in different directions, one being individualist and the other collectivist, he failed to explain how these two contradictory tendencies had managed to co-exist for centuries.

Vivekananda's critiques of Islam and Christianity were certainly penetrating. However, they suffered from certain blind-spots. Insofar as Christianity was concerned, he was correct to highlight its ideas of active social service, fraternity and human solidarity, but he failed to explore how these ideas were embedded in a certain deeper way of understanding man and society. Similarly, when he analyzed Islam, he perceptively saw that Islam had great ideas as equality, fraternity and community. He nevertheless failed to understand fully that these ideas could not simply and arbitrarily be detached and attached to the Hindu tradition. These ideas were deeply embedded within a certain philosophical tradition. One cannot simply take them over the transplant them in a different tradition. For these and other reason, Vivekananda's attempt to combine Hinduism

with the important insights of Christianity and Islam remain an incomplete and not wholly convincing project. A similar kind of point can be made about his attempt to blend Hindu society with modernity. Although Vivekananda perceived some of the important insights of modernity, he failed to understanding the philosophical context in which these insights were nurtured and developed. He thought in a manner that was reminiscent of many of his predecessors: that one could simply take the best out of different traditions and create a synthesis. This is simply untenable. The best in each tradition is an integral part of the totality of that tradition and therefore cannot be mechanically attached.

To conclude, I have argued that Vivekananda was one of the most creative and important writers of nineteenth and twentieth century India. As I have shown, his thought suffers from many limitations. However, it also contains some extremely profound insights. Not surprisingly, he has been one of the greatest influences on almost all Indian, especially Hindu, writers. It is a great tribute to the originality and penetration of his thought that it continues to be relevant even today. I wholly believe that we can learn much from his ideas and that they are of considerable importance in solving India's contemporary problems.

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