

1. The Nineteenth Century Hindu Movement in India: a. Raja Rammohan Roy, b. Jeremy Bentham, Governor-General William Bentinck, and Lord Thomas Macaulay c. Debendranath Tagore, d. Arumuga (Arumuka) Navalar, e. Chandra Vidyasagar, f. Pundit Iswar Dayananda Saraswati, g. Keshab Sen, h. Bankim Chatterji, i. Indian National Congress, j. Contemporary China
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II. Swami Vivekananda and the Modern Hindu Response

1. The Nineteenth Century Hindu Movement in India

In order to get a better idea of the historical-cultural background and climate of the times in which Swami Vivekananda lived, we shall cover the Hindu movement that preceded his writings.

a. Raja Rammohan Roy (1772-1833): While the Western Indologists were primarily interested in India's past, the Nineteenth Century Hindus focused their attention on the countries present and future. It was necessary for Indians to shape their own destiny and future history. The Hindu Renaissance Movement begins with the great social, religious, and educational reformer Raja Rammohan Roy, born in Bengal of a Vaishnava (a follower of Sri Chaitanya) Brahmin family. He was employed by the British East India Company up to 1814, where he held the highest post open to an Indian at that time. After which he devoted the rest of his life to the regeneration of India, thereby becoming the Father of the Modern Hindu Movement and the Bengal Renaissance. He was a contemporary of the German, Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768-1834) the founder of Neo-Protestantism, a movement like Modern Hinduism that incorporated more contemporary ideas into its religion. In 1817, Roy played a key role along with the Scotchman David Hare

(1775-1842) and others, in the founding of Hindu College (later called Presidency College) in Calcutta, where Vivekananda was a student in 1880. He aided in the establishment of the General Assembly's Institution (later called Scottish Church College) in 1830, where Vivekananda finished off his College education. In addition, Rammohan the initiator of modern Bengali prose, founded the first Bengali newspaper, in Calcutta started the first Indian printing press, and supported democracy. This represents a movement from the medieval to the modern way of thinking.¹ He crusaded against Hindu customs such as sati, polygamy, child marriage and the caste system.

At Thousand Island Park, Vivekananda told his followers, "The great Hindu reformer, Raja Rammohan Roy, was a wonderful example of this unselfish work. He devoted his whole life to helping India.... He also founded the important religious Society called the Brahmo Samaj, and subscribed a hundred thousand dollars to found a university. He then stepped out and told them to go ahead without him. He cared nothing for fame or for results to himself." Sister Nivedita records, from Vivekananda, "We heard a long talk on Rammohan Roy, in which he pointed out three things as the dominant notes of this teacher's message, his acceptance of the Vedanta, his preaching of patriotism, and the love that embraced the Mussulman equally with the Hindu. In all these things, he claimed himself to have taken up the task that the breadth and foresight of Rammohan Roy had mapped out."²

After much study with astute reasoning, Raja Rammohan Roy brilliantly came to the following series of conclusions in order to reinterpret Hinduism in the light of modern thought. He conclude that the essential foundation of Indian society and culture is religion (not politics, the military, or economics), and that adjustments in that area are necessary to awaken the people. To be indigenous the new ideology had to rest on the ancient religious scriptures. In 1816 he was probably the first modern Indian to use the word Hinduism, which has become universally the most accepted name for the religion.³ Next, he

concluded that of all the multifarious and encyclopedic aspects of Hinduism, the *Upanishads* are the primary source of the religion. Therefore, the *Upanishads* should be translated from Sanskrit to Bengali so that more Indian people can properly understand it. Consequently, Rammohan came out with Shankara's *Vedantasara* in Bengali (1815) followed by an English version (1816). A Bengali translation of the *Kena, Isha, Katha, Mandukya, and Mundaka Upanishads* followed (1816-19), with all but the *Mundaka* appearing in English. His rationale was that being confronted with the true sources of their own tradition, the Hindus would realize the errors that have entered their faith over the centuries, which will bring about a regeneration in their religious and social life. Furthermore, Rammohan maintained that the fundamental tenets of social reform could be found in the Indian scriptures. For example, the *Upanishads* teach that religious knowledge should be subject to the process of reason. The same emphasis on reason should be applied to the social realm. He also draws extensively on the *Bhagavad Gita, Laws of Manu, Puranas, and Tantra*. The *Upanishads* and its commentaries if properly understood are fully compatible with Western rational and scientific thought and they contain all of the elements for a religion of reason.⁴ This was an important move from the esoteric where only a small number of people had access to the *Upanishads*, to the exoteric where a larger number of people could gain familiarity with the sacred scriptures.

This act reminds one of the Protestant Reformer Martin Luther (1483-1546), a contemporary of Sri Chaitanya (1486-1534) who like him reacted against Medieval Scholastic philosophy (Thomas Aquinas/Shankara, etc.) and emphasized a personal religion (Protestantism/Bengal Vaishnavism), but in other ways their approach differs. Luther translated the *Bible* from Latin to German, so that far more people would have a better understanding of the original religion, as compared to the way it was being practiced at that time. Rammohan thought the Hindu Brahmins, and Luther the Christian Priests, had to

some extent obscured the true meaning of the sacred text, allowing for misguided religious practices. Though Rammohan knew many languages, he correctly concluded that English was the most appropriate foreign language for the *Upanishads* to be rendered into. Through the English translations, these great religious philosophical ideas were conveyed to Westerners, who were shown the “pure spirit” of Hinduism. He took the initiative to interpret Indian religion to the West, “to impart Divine knowledge to mankind at large.”⁵

In Germany when Arthur Schopenhauer read Rammohan’s translation of the *Upanishads*, he pointed out, they were interpreted from a theistic and not a monistic standpoint. For example, Rammohan replaces the word Brahman (neuter) with He. The symbol OM appears in his Bengali but not in his English translation of the *Mandukya Upanishad*. Rammohan relates the study of the *Upanishads* to social goals, not just to liberation.⁶

Rammohan objected to the idea of maya as illusion, since he considered the concept of the unreality of the world to be unbeneficial for Indian society. This criticism was accepted by subsequent 19th century Modern Hindus such as D. Tagore, I. Vidyasagar, Dayananda Saraswati, Keshab Sen, Bankim Chatterji, and later Sri Aurobindo. For example, Ishwar Vidyasagar did not want George Berkeley’s (1685-1753) subjective idealistic ideas taught on the curriculum nor his books in the library at Sanskrit College, Calcutta where he was the Principal.⁷ These Modern Hindu’s opposed the mayavadin idea of the world as being unreal, an illusion, dream, or appearance. Even Sri Ramakrishna said these ideas should not be taught to married people (including M), but due to there usefulness could be utilized by a small number of dedicated Advaitic yogis. It does harm to a married person to be taught that their spouse, children, or job is unreal. In the West philosophers Georg Hegel, Bertrand Russell, G. E. Moore, and Albert Schweitzer also rejected the idea of the world as unreal or an appearance. Russell and Moore adopted the term realism in opposition to idealism.

Vivekananda taught Advaita Vedanta from the affirmative standpoint that the world is Divine and in our true nature we are that higher reality. He said, "Vedanta takes the further step and asserts the positive side--Mukti or freedom. 'I am Existence absolute, Knowledge absolute, Bliss absolute, I am He.'"⁸ This differs considerably from the negative approach that the world is unreal or an appearance.

In 1825-26, Rammohan founded Vedanta College to teach Vedanta from a pure and uncompromising monotheistic (not monistic) standpoint. There they offered courses that synthesized Western and Indian learning. Another innovation of Rammohan was as one of the founders of the study of Comparative Religions he studied Islam and Buddhism in detail, yet he realized it is best to focus on Christianity and within that religion on the teachings of Jesus. To this day most Indian writers have concentrated on the *New Testament* in their presentation of Christianity. Thus in 1820, he came out with *The Precepts of Jesus*, a commentary based on the ethical and practical teachings of the *New Testament*, and not theological issues. For Rammohan Roy, Jesus was a prophet and moral teacher inspired by God and not the Son of God. In authoring the book he demonstrated openness and respect for other religions, and he hoped Hindus would make an original contribution to the study of Jesus.⁹ With knowledge of this book, in 1823 Professor Henry Ware (1794-1843) of the Harvard Divinity School in the United States wrote to Rammohan, asking him if an American Unitarian Mission in India would be successful.

In order to carry out his many reforms and promote his original religious ideas Rammohan and others established the Brahmo Samaj (Society of Brahma (God), then the Brahmo Sabha) in 1828. The fundamental religious tenets of the Brahmo Samaj were a strict monotheism similar to the Unitarian faith in the West that rejected the Christian Trinity, held respect for other religions, subjecting religious scriptures to the test of reason, opposition to polytheism and image worship, and an emphasis on social reform. In England if something was

wrong (e.g., slavery, unjust laws), there would be a political-social reaction and something would be done about it.¹⁰ So to make improvements in India at that time, there was a definite need for significant effective social criticism that Rammohan Roy brought. The Brahmo Samaj remained a relatively small religious group of educated followers with 4,050 members in 1901, compared to 92,000 for the Arya Samaj. When the reforms they advocated were put into law, the Brahmo Samaj tended to fade since they had performed their service to Indian society.

The policy of the British government was not to antagonize the Indian people by interfering with their social and particularly religious tradition and customs. Thus, it was extremely important that a person like Raja Rammohan Roy came forth to persuade the British to bring about necessary social reforms. In 1823 Rammohan sent a very courteous letter on English education to Lord Amherst (1773-1857) the Governor-General stating, "As the improvement of the native population is the object of the government, it will consequently promote a more liberal and enlightened system of instruction, embracing mathematics, natural philosophy, chemistry, anatomy, with other useful sciences, which may be accomplished with the sums proposed by employing a few gentlemen of talent and learning educated in Europe and providing a college furnished with necessary books, instruments, and other apparatus." Due to his campaign to abolish suttee (which he said is not found in the traditional Shruti or Smriti religious scriptures), Vivekananda tells us Rammohan, "succeeded in obtaining the support of the Government in suppressing it."¹¹ Rammohan would campaign for the social reforms and the Englishmen influenced by the Utilitarians would carry them out. Consequently, his friend and supporter Governor-General William Bentinck (1774-1839) brought suttee to an end in 1829. The English were willing to make reforms if the issue involved "universal morality," something broader than the morality of a particular country like England or India. Roy passionately campaigned for the introduction

of English forms of education to meet the contemporary needs of Indian society. In addition, Rammohan worked hard for social reforms such as: opposition to caste rigidity, reforming Hindu laws, making it easier for Indians to join the British Civil Service, less stringent tax collection laws, and he led a protest against restrictions on the Indian press. He also vehemently championed the equality of women, their right to education, and to receive an inheritance; the abolition of child marriage; and he supported widow remarriage. He always remained a firm believer in the greatness of Indian culture.¹²

Rammohan Roy was the first educated Indian to depart on a voyage to England in 1830, where he pleaded the cause of Indian social reform, and then passed away three years later in Bristol, leaving a small group of dedicated followers. When Jeremy Bentham greeted Rammohan in England, he referred to him as "his intensely admired and dearly beloved collaborator in the service of mankind." Bentham wanted Roy to become a member of the British parliament.¹³ We do not know how much influence Roy had on Bentham and the Utilitarians, but this is important because it was in 1835 that Thomas Macaulay and Governor-General William Bentinck under the influence of Bentham were instrumental in bringing Western education to India. Bentham believed societies could be reformed by adopting proper laws. During this time (1830-41), the Whigs were bringing about many social reforms in England of which the reforms in India were an extension.¹⁴

b. Jeremy Bentham (1748-1832), Governor-General William Bentinck (1774-1839), and Lord Thomas Macaulay (1800-59): Bentham the founder of the Utilitarian Movement in England was a great humanitarian who advocated individual freedom for all, equal rights for women, animal rights, legal reforms, expansion of education among the non-wealthy, the "common and equal utility of all nations;" and the abolition of slavery, the death penalty, and physical punishment for children among other things. Bentham taught, "The greatest happiness

of the greatest number is the foundation of morals and legislation," providing a basis for moral judgments based on practical results. Emphasis is on happiness for society not for ones self. Utilitarianism is a form of Consequentialist ethics that holds that the rightness or wrongness of an act is determined by its consequences. An act is morally right if it produces a good outcome.¹⁵ Bentinck and Macaulay were under the benevolent influence of the social philosophy of Bentham who had urged Bentinck to spread education and useful knowledge in India. In 1828 Lieutenant General William Bentinck the new Governor-General of Bengal (in 1833 of British occupied India) wrote to Bentham, "I shall govern in name, but it will be you who will govern in fact." Bentinck stated in a letter dated June 1, 1834, "General education is my panacea for the regeneration of India." The Torys opposed some of the Utilitarian ideas in England, so India was the place to demonstrate the virtues of their reform policies. As it turned out English education was a big boom to the Modern Hindu movement and nationalism in India that centered around the centers of higher education, and consequently after approximately 1875, there was a decline in conversions to Christianity. It provided an educated leadership, introduced modern science and political ideas to India, and a common language of communication. Because of this cross-cultural contact, Hinduism became more compatible with modern ideas before Buddhism outside of Japan, or Islam did.

Many Englishmen upheld the "Tabula Rosa" epistemological doctrine first developed by the philosopher John Locke (1632-1704). That is at birth the human mind is a tabula rosa (a blank slate or tablet) without innate ideas. Thus, if Western education is implanted on the mind of Indians, they thought when they are young they would quickly think accordingly. They did not understand that people are born with samskaras (mental impressions on the mind) due to the pre-existence of the self, and consequently the change to a new way of thinking takes much longer than they thought. Without a prior fund of knowledge

coming from prior births the learning process would take longer. Also, they did not realize that English education would prove to be a big boom to the revival of Indian tradition and aid in bringing about a new all-India (rather than regional) consciousness that was initiated by the Indian National Congress in 1885.¹⁶

Two years after Rammohan Roy's passing his wishes were fulfilled. An extremely important event took place that greatly affected the future history of India. It was the passing of the "English Education Act" of 1835 to "promote a knowledge of European literature and science" in India. English was made the primary language for teaching in higher education in India, exposing Indian scholars to Western secular ideas bringing about a renaissance regarding religious and philosophical thought. This brought in India new thought forms, concepts, and a way of life. English became the language of political administration and of the higher law courts. The British now controlled nearly half of India. Anglicist favored English education since it would produce more capable Indian functionaries to aid the British in running the country, and would make the country more prosperous. They also had the support of the religious Evangelical missionaries such as the Scottish Alexander Duff (1806-78), who believed the assimilation of English education, language, culture, and institutions by the Indians would be a boon to the Christianization of India. This meant from the six years of schooling onward government funds would be reallocated from traditional Hindu and Muslim education, to supporting a Western curriculum with English as the language of instruction. In the discussion leading up to the Act, a committee was created with the British-Scottish liberal historian and bachelor Thomas Macaulay serving as its President. Two Hindu gentlemen were on the committee, the scholar Raja Sir Radhakanta Deb Bahadur (1784-1867) and Rossomoy Dutt of Calcutta, along with the Mohammadan Nawab of Bengal. They received the support of Governor-General William Bentinck who passed the resolution on March 7, 1835.¹⁷ The Indian Penal Code, the official criminal law code of India

came into force in British India during the early British Raj period in 1862. It was drafted in 1860 on the recommendations of the first law commission of India established in 1834 under the Chairmanship of Macaulay.

Macaulay correctly considered higher education for the upper class as the panacea for the regeneration of India that would create a wealthier and orderly society. It gave more Indians access to English education and modern forms of professional employment. This policy was designed to create an elite group that would aid in the colonial administration. After this selective process, there would then be a downward filtration of ideas vertically from a higher to the lower strata of society. The result was the creation of an elite upper class that emerged to undertake the project of modernizing Hinduism. This was an extremely important event in transmitting the Western ideological culture of meanings, values, and norms to India. The major drawback is that the majority of Indians did not receive formal education. In addition, the government was greatly aided in the dissemination of Western education by the missionaries who established Protestant and Roman Catholic schools. They were more religiously than politically motivated.¹⁸

As a result of the Act, more English speaking Indians were employed by the British both as teachers and in other government capacities. English authors became prescribed reading in the schools and the students learned more about modern science and technology, and social-political concepts such as individual liberty, self-government, democracy, national unification, and equality. Soon English replaced Persian as the official language of government business and the higher courts of law as advocated earlier by Rammohan Roy.¹⁹ In addition, the enlightened Lord Bentinck brought about an end to suttee, suppressed the Thugs (Thuggees an organized gang of criminals), created Indian judges to carry out Western legal principles, established Calcutta Medical College in 1832 offering Western medical education, and

reformed the court system. Due to this policy, feelings of nationalism, a desire for social reform, respect for tradition, and cultural identity were reinforced among the Indian people.²⁰ The British realized that if they went too far in their reforms, they might antagonize the Indian people. The Muslims tended to live inland and the Hindu's in the seaport areas, thus gaining more advantages from modern education and commerce. Christian missionaries supported western education because they felt it would bring more converts to their religion. The spread of English as an all-India language made it possible for ideas to be transmitted from one part of India to another, and to and from other countries. This made it more difficult for Indians to isolate themselves from Western culture in order to preserve their traditional way of life. By 1857 Western Universities had been established in Bombay, Calcutta, and Madras.

Unknown to Macaulay the "English Education Act" would become a major factor in the formation of an emerging intelligentsia that would eventually oppose British rule. In the forefront were lawyers like Gandhi, Nehru, and Muhammad Ali Jinnah; and intellectuals like Aurobindo and Radhakrishnan; and other Modern Hindus. Fifty years later the formation of the Indian National Congress in 1885 was a significant factor in this process. This movement also benefited the Ramakrishna Order by providing Western education to Swami Vivekananda and many of his brother disciples. This was its latent function. It was an advantage particularly for Vivekananda that their schooling was in the English language, which aided him in communicating his ideas when he traveled to the United States and England. In time the ideological elements were adopted in the behavior of the people and objectified through material objects. Once the Indians were educated in Western ways of thinking, resistant to foreign ideas broke down and they became far more congenial in accepting them. First, the diffusion of ideas proceeded horizontally from the educated class of the British to the Indians, and eventually filtered down vertically from the higher to the lower strata within India. In this process, Western and Eastern ideas were combined

due to immanent causation and the self-determination within the Indian culture. The greatest drawback of the filtration theory is that only a relatively small portion of the Indian society benefitted from it. Western education was offered only for the higher social classes and would reach the rest of the people only in a trickle-down manner.²¹

Macaulay served on the Supreme Council of India while living in the country between 1834 and 1838. Formerly he recommended the formation of Sanskrit College in 1824. Besides being a key person in the introduction of English education in India, he chaired the first law commission that prepared a greatly improved draft of the Indian Penal Code based on the law of England. Unfortunately, due to delays it did not come into effect until 1860. In England Macaulay's humanitarian activities included being an Abolitionist opposing slavery of Africans, favoring the abolition of civil disabilities against the Jewish people; and supporting the annual government grant to Maynooth College in Ireland that trained young men for the Catholic priesthood, for which he lost his seat in Parliament.²² After returning to the West Macaulay wrote *The History of England from the Accession of James II* (1848-55) where he stressed British political history as a progression towards ever-greater liberty and enlightenment culminating in constitutional government, personal freedoms of belief and expression, and scientific progress.²³

It is most unfortunate that partly because of his ethnocentric remarks in preferring Western to traditional Indian intellectual culture, Macaulay (and Bentham and Bentinck) did not receive the credit they deserved for their great achievements that greatly benefited the India of the future. Macaulay and the Anglicists did believe in the capacity of non-Europeans to attain a high level of civilization through the assimilation of British ideas and values.

Indian historian K. M. Panikkar (1895-1963) formerly of the University of Calcutta offers this very positive evaluation of Macaulay's efforts, "He was India's new Manu, the spirit of modern law incarnate.

The legal system under which India has lived for over a hundred years and within whose steel frame her social, political and economic development has taken place is the work of Macaulay. An examination of his *Minutes* which have recently been edited will show how even those elementary principles of law which we now take as axiomatic, e.g., that the accused is to be considered innocent unless proved guilty, had to be fought for and established by him against the opinion of his colleagues. The establishment of the great principle of equality of all before law... The imposing and truly magnificent legal structure of India under whose protection four hundred million people live is indeed a worthy monument to Macaulay's genius.... A no less important contribution to the development of Indian life which Macaulay made was his, famous *Minutes on Education*.... its main thesis of an education based on the New Learning and through the medium of English was, in the circumstances of the time, the most beneficently revolutionary decision taken by the British government of India.... In pursuance of Sir Charles Wood's Dispatch of 1854, Indian Universities were established in Calcutta, Bombay, and Madras Universities in 1857 imparting education through the medium of Indian languages."²⁴

c. Debendranath Tagore (1817-1905): The pious Bengali Debendranath Tagore father of the world famous Nobel Laureate Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941) and a leader of the educated Bengalis was well respected throughout Bengal for his scholarship, saintly character, and social position. A cofounder of the Brahmo Samaj (The Society of God), he broke with the Advaita Vedanta philosophy of Shankara and wrote his own interpretations of the *Upanishads*. He prayed to Brahman (God) for illumination and as a result, "By His mercy my heart was instantly enlightened.... Thus by the grace of God, and through the language of the *Upanishads*, I evolved the foundation of the *Brahma Dharma* from my heart." The *Brahmo Dharma* embodied the basic themes of the Modern Hindu movement, the fundamental

principles of monotheism and rationality; and the rejection of scriptural infallibility, the necessity of priestly mediation between Brahman (God) and man, caste distinction, and idolatry. He also endorsed widow remarriage, female education, and temperance. Two of the basic tenets of the Brahmo Samaj were, "In the beginning was the One Supreme alone. He made the universe," and "Love towards Him, and performing the works He loves, constitute His worship."²⁵

Sri Ramakrishna very much wanted to meet Debendranath Tagore because he was told that he "thinks of Brahman (God)." So he asked Mathur Babu (1817-71) to take him there, where they held a long religious discussion. Years later Ramakrishna remarked, "Debendranath is infinitely greater than other worldly men, who are sunk in their worldliness. They can learn much from him."²⁶

As a young man Vivekananda "went with his friends to see Maharshi Devendra Nath Tagore, the leader of the Adi Brahmo Samaj. On that occasion the Maharshi cordially received them, gave them much good advice, and asked them to meditate on God every day. Addressing Narendra, Tagore said: 'The signs of a yogi are visible in you. If you practice meditation, you will soon experience the results recorded in the yoga scriptures.'" Tagore also told him he has "Yogi's eyes." Narendra had a deep reverence for the Maharshi because of his pure and noble character.²⁷

d. Arumuga (Arumuka) Navalar (1822-79): A Northern Sri Lanka (then Ceylon) Shaivite, Navalar published a book in 1854, to counter the criticisms of the Christian missionaries regarding the religious practices of the Hindu Shaivites (worshippers of Lord Shiva). He had acquired a thorough and detailed knowledge of Christian scriptures during the period from 1841 to 1848, when he assisted the Methodist missionaries from Great Britain with the translation of the King James Version of the *Bible* (1611) into the Tamil language. After 1848, this outstanding religious reformer devoted his life to the revitalization of the Shaivite

religion among the Tamils. Navalar established an organization of Shaivite preachers, an educational system and curriculum, a printing press to publish his own writings and Tamil religious books, and a supporting lay organization. His efforts brought about a transformation among the Tamils that prevented large-scale conversions to Protestantism.

In his brilliant classic, *The Abolition of the Abuses of Shaivism* (1854), he confirmed that the worship of Shiva is in many ways akin to the worship of God, as prescribed in *the Old Testament* and later practiced by Jesus. A Methodist missionary described the book as, "Displaying an intimate and astonishing acquaintance with the *Holy Bible*. [The author] labors cleverly to show that the opinions and ceremonies of Jehovah's ancient people [in the *Old Testament*] closely resembled those of Shaivism." Jehovah (Yahweh) commanded Moses to initiate many of these procedures, and repeatedly said they should be followed by all future generations up to this day, which the Shaivites were doing in their own way. Navalar indicated that, "Shiva takes up residence in the linga when he is invoked with mantras in accord with the rites. Even though Shiva pervades the entire manifest universe, he bestows grace through the delimited icon of the linga when he is worshipped and served there."

Navalar cited a large number of *Biblical* (primarily *Old Testament*) passages demonstrating scriptural support for the following modes of worship that are very much akin to Hindu forms of worship. Some of these religious practices are mentioned in the *Rig Veda*, *Laws of Manu*, and the *Satapatha Brahmana*.²⁸ In the *Old Testament*, The Ark of the Covenant which possessed great power is venerated by the waving of incense and ritualistic services are conducted by the priests. The Holy of Holies is "the innermost room in the sacred tent of Yahweh," and "the inner sanctuary or shrine of the Temple." In that location they kept the Ark of the Covenant and a vessel for burning incense. "No one ever entered the Holy of Holies except the high priest, and he only on the

Day of Atonement." God was worshiped three times each day, in "Evening and morning and at noon." The people "fell on their faces" and knelt before the Lord. Incense was burnt before the altar; and "sacred anointing oil" (Ex. 30:1, 22-33/Indian: RV 3:59.1) was used to consecrate and sanctify the tabernacle, the altar and all its utensils, a large basin used for ablutions, and the priests. A lamp was burnt continually in the tabernacle. Food offerings to the Lord at the Passover and the Lord's Supper included the use of unleavened bread and wafers, cake, cereal, and liquids. These offerings took place on the Sabbath and special days, at the consecration of priests and kings, and at sacred places, with the sounding of trumpets at communal feasts.

Other *Old Testament* religious practices (similar ones were followed by the Hindus) mentioned by Navalar included: touching auspicious holy objects such as sacred bones, blood, and ashes, and "The seal of God upon their foreheads," each used for protection, purification, and remission of sin; at communal assemblies and feasts a variety of musical instrument were played and people would joyfully sing psalms of praise to the Lord, speak of His wondrous works, and rejoice in His holy name; bodily purification techniques such as being washed with water and dressed in clean clothes before being anointed as priests; or washing garments, hands, and feet when entering the tabernacle or for a person who became unclean after touching a corpse; certain objects were considered to be auspicious, like "tassels on the corner of their garments" as a reminder of "all the commandments of the Lord"; sacred locations included mountains (Horeb, Zion, Gibeathelohim), rivers (Jordan), cities (Jerusalem, Bethlehem), along with sacred Temples (one built by King Solomon) and days (Sabbath, Passover); Holy days were observed for holding spiritual celebrations and for offering burnt offerings to the Lord, including the "Lord's Passover," "feast of unleavened bread," "the day of atonement," and the Sabbath; and a hereditary priesthood (Levites) was established.²⁹

Additional similarities of the Vedic sacrifice with those of *Biblical*

worship are: a relationship with the Divine realm (SB 1:1.1.4); which are performed for receiving benefits (RV 1:54.9; 7:32.5; 9:49.1), purification and remission of sin and its penalty (RV 1:24.9, 14; 2:28.5; 5:85.7-8; SB 2:3.1.6; 2:5.2.25; 12:3.1.1; 12:8.1.16; LM 8:105; 11:227), immorality (SB 2:2.2, 8-14; 4:6.9.12; 13:35.1), liberation and salvation (SB 2:3.3.15), and a hereditary priesthood (RV 9:112.1). They involve a sacrificial meal to attain communion, participation, and fellowship with Brahman (God).³⁰ Indian musical sounds summon or symbolically represent the forces of the universe. Drums, conch shells, bells, gongs, and brass plates were played concurrently to awaken the deity. Vedic chants consisted of repeating the sacred texts, praising Brahman (God), sacrificial prayers and mantras.³¹

As Navalar pointed out, for the Shaivites in India religious practices are undertaken, "only after the body has been purified and while wearing clean clothes." Similar to the Indians, the Hebrews practiced various forms of bodily purity to avoid pollution. For example, The Lord told Moses, "You shall bring Aaron and his sons to the door of the tent of meeting, and shall wash them with water, and put upon Aaron the holy garments" of a priest (Ex. 40:12-13, 16, 31-32/Indian: LM 2:53, 176; 5:76-78, 85, 87; 11:224). So also in India pollution came from touching a corpse and is cleansed by bathing (Num. 6:9-12; 19:1-22/Indian: LM 5:64-65, 85).³² Navalar believed that the Hindus did a better job of preserving ritualistic practices in many ways similar to those of the *Old Testament*, than those Christians who rejected them.

e. Pundit Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar (1820-91): He was a man of great strength of character, known for his intelligence, high morals and compassion. He devoted his life to helping other people by nursing sick cholera patients, taking unclaimed dead bodies to the crematorium, dining with untouchables, and walking miles to deliver urgent messages to people. As a leader of the Bengal Renaissance, he simplified Bengali prose and reconstructed the Bengal alphabet. Originally a Professor of

Sanskrit at Fort Williams College in Calcutta (Kolkata), he became the Assistant Secretary at Sanskrit College and then the Principal in 1851. Against opposition, Vidyasagar opened the doors to men and women students of all castes; and added Western science, mathematics, and philosophy to the curriculum. He established 20 model Bengali language schools, and unaided by the British government the Metropolitan School in Calcutta under Indian management with all of the professors being Indians. Originally he faced Orthodox opposition but in time they passed on, and the younger generation was more liberal. The judgment of history favored the reformers since they won out in the long run. Nevertheless, the Orthodox must be credited for preserving and defending the ancient and medieval Indian tradition and spiritual culture. They offered a resistance to being overwhelmed by Westernization and many of their ideas were accepted by the Modern Hindus.

In addition, Vidyasagar wrote books for children with an emphasis on secular subjects. From the sizable income derived from the sale of schoolbooks, he donated money on a steady basis to hundreds of young men to sponsor their education, and to hundreds of widows to meet their daily needs. He took the initiative by proposing and helping push through the Widow Remarriage Act of 1856. Michael M. Dutt (1824-73) the popular Bengali poet and dramatist described him as having, "The genius and wisdom of an ancient sage, the energy of an Englishman, and the heart of a Bengali mother."³³

Consequently, Ramakrishna longed to visit Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar. Since Mahendra Nath Gupta the recorder of the *Gospel* was the headmaster of Shyambazar School founded by Vidyasagar, the Master asked him, "Can you take me to see Vidyasagar?" During his five-hour visit on August 5, 1882, Ramakrishna spoke many words of spiritual wisdom to Vidyasagar that occupies more than eleven pages in the *Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*. Among other things the Master told him, "Your activities are inspired by sattva. Though they are rajasic, they are

influenced by sattva. Compassion springs from sattva. Though work for the good of others belongs to rajas, yet this rajas has sattva for its basis and is not harmful. Shuka and other sages cherished compassion in their minds to give people religious instruction, to teach them about God. You are distributing food and learning. That is good too. If these activities are done in a selfless spirit they lead to God. But most people work for fame or to acquire merit. Their activities are not selfless. Besides, you are already a siddha.... The activities that you are engaged in are good. It is very good if you can perform them in a selfless spirit, renouncing egotism, giving up the idea that you are the doer. Through such action one develops love and devotion to God, and ultimately realizes Him.... By these philanthropic activities you are really doing good to yourself. If you can do them disinterestedly, your mind will become pure and you will develop love of God. As soon as you have that love you will realize Him."³⁴

Vidyasagar established a branch of the Metropolitan Institution in Calcutta, which Narendra (Vivekananda) attended between age eight (1871) and sixteen (1879). Around May 1885, Narendra was appointed headmaster of the school, a position he held for three or four months. Thirteen years later Vivekananda would tell enjoyable stories about Vidyasagar "the hero of widow remarriage and of the abolition of polygamy."³⁵

f. Pandit Swami Dayananda Saraswati (1824-83): This Hindu sannyasin and reformer founded the Arya Samaj in 1875, gaining adherents in Western India, and particularly in the Punjab. His central message was the infallibility of the *Vedas* the ultimate authority on the Hindu religion, which he translated from Sanskrit to Hindi. According to Dayananda, the meaning of the original Vedic revelation has not been preserved and that is the cause of most of India's modern problems. Consequently, he re-established the ancient Vedic sacrificial rites, while opposing what he considered to be post-Vedic accretions in religion

such as polytheism and image worship of the *Puranas*, and the other-worldliness of Advaita Vedanta. They have obscured the true Vedic meaning of monotheism and mastery over the secular world. He believed that human knowledge and civilization were originally derived from the *Vedic Samhitas* and taught to other people such as the Europeans.³⁶ An effective leader in social reform, Dayananda and the Arya Samaj successfully supported equal rights for women particularly in education, and widow remarriage. He criticized the caste system and opposed early marriages, untouchability, and suttee. Ramakrishna went to see Dayananda while he was living in Bengal prior to the time he had formed the Arya Samaj. Ramakrishna referred to him as "a great scholar," but also mentioned he was "discussing the scriptures day and night. However, he used his knowledge of Sanskrit grammar to distort the meaning of many passages in the scriptures."³⁷ Vivekananda agreed with Dayananda stating, "Modern caste distinction is a barrier to India's progress. It narrows, restricts, separates. It will crumble before the advance of ideas."³⁸ One problem is that the members of a lower caste are taught to accept their subordinate status as legitimate.

g. Keshab Sen (1838-84): The Bengali religious leader and social reformer published *An Appeal to the British Nation* (1858) for the promotion of mass education in Indian cities and villages. Three years later he organized a relief fund for famine victims, along with supporting women reforms such as widow-remarriage. Keshab broke with Debendranath Tagore, after he introduced Christian practices into the Brahmo Samaj. He then established his own Brahmo Samaj of India in 1866. In 1870, he journeyed to England where he remained for six months delivering over seventy lectures before a sum total of 40,000 people, winning them over with his impressive English and musical voice. In England he met celebrities like John Stuart Mill, ex-Prime Minister William Gladstone, Queen Victoria, and Max Müller at Oxford. A schism took place in the Brahmo Samaj in 1878.³⁹ Keshab Sen did

advocate modern themes such as sending Indian missionaries to England to teach the truths of “the sages of Aryan India,” carrying out philanthropic work, “the domain of a new dispensation, that of faith and science harmonized,” He wrote, “Between God-vision and the spirit of science in the nineteenth century, there is no discord, but rather concord. The scientists of the present ardently love unity,” and “the philosophy of God-vision in modern times. It is a vision in which Divinity and heaven are realized together.”⁴⁰

In March 1875, the Divine Mother prompted Ramakrishna to meet with Keshab. He became so endeared to the Master who would explain profound religious topics using simple language that he often came to visit him at Dakshineswar, and he in turn invited him to his residence in Calcutta. Using his influence he brought public attention to Sri Ramakrishna. After being acquainted with Ramakrishna, Keshab’s religious views gradually underwent a change and he began taking the Brahma Samaj of India in a new direction. Inspired by Ramakrishna respect for all religious faiths, Keshab in 1880 established the “New Dispensation” teaching, “I believe in the Church Universal which is the deposit of all ancient wisdom and the receptacle of all modern science, which recognizes in all prophets and saints a harmony, in all scriptures a unity and through all dispensations a continuity, which abjures all that separates and divides, always magnifies unity and peace, which harmonize reason and faith, yoga and bhakti, asceticism and social duty in their highest forms and which shall make of all nations and sects one kingdom and one family in the fullness of time.”⁴¹

Under Ramakrishna’s influence whom he considered to be the living embodiment of spirituality, Keshab gained more knowledge of the deeper truths of religion and desired to practice them on his own. His devotion to the Divine Mother deepened and he made great spiritual progress through the Master’s grace. Swami Saradananda (1865-1927) tells us, “He deeply believed that the human mind could ascend to more subtle and higher strata of the spiritual realm with the help of external

rituals such as performing fire sacrifices, taking ceremonial baths, shaving one's head, wearing ochre robes, and so on, and he adopted them all to greater or lesser degrees. He felt that Buddha, Gauranga [Chaitanya], Jesus, and other great teachers were ever-present in their subtle bodies and that each one of them existed in the spiritual realm as a perennial spring expressing a particular mood. So, with the intention of realizing the spiritual moods that they embodied, he would from time to time meditate deeply on one or another of them." Like Sri Ramakrishna, Keshab would talk to the Divine Mother and laugh and cry. Over eleven pages in the *Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* are devoted to the boat trip Keshab arranged for Ramakrishna and his Brahmo devotees on the Ganges on October 27, 1882. An additional six pages describe their last meeting on November 28, 1883.⁴²

The influential Congregational minister Joseph Cook (1838-1901) of Boston visited India during January-March 1882. Being a conservative Christian, Cook's theological views differed radically from those of Keshab. For one thing Cook was an ardent opponent of Unitarianism (the belief that only the Father is God, not the Son or Holy Spirit), an idea held by Keshab. Yet, Reverend Cook was completely overwhelmed by Keshab's spiritual presence and personality. There is no doubt that Keshab's association with Ramakrishna greatly enhanced his spiritual life. In his travelogue dealing with his trip to the Orient, Cook devotes over twenty-five pages to Keshab Sen paying him the following tribute, "It was Mr. Burlingame, I believe, who said that in Asia there are at least ten thousand Emerson's. The characteristic type of mind in India is the intuitive and not the philosophical. Mr. Sen speaks through his lofty moral feelings. He sees religious truths through his conscience, rather than through mere reason.... He is not an Occidental; he is a thorough Oriental, and feels the touch of God within him, as the Oriental always has done at his best. He listens to the Inner Voice with the devoutness of one of the best of the Quaker mystics. He instinctively believes in Providence. He is perpetually inculcating the duty and blessedness of

prayer and of self-surrender to all the loftiest impulses of conscience, which, as he teaches, are really supernatural touches of God upon the spirit of man.... He has a splendid physique, excellent quality of organization, capacity of sudden heat and of tremendous impetuosity, and lightning-like swiftness of thought and expression, combined with a most iron self-control. You cannot throw him off his balance before any audience, with manuscript or without one. He is unquestionably the most eloquent Asiatic I have ever heard. He speaks English as perfectly as any man in this assembly.... He usually fascinates everyone who comes near him, and he has a strange ascendancy over his immediate followers, several of whom are men of high intellectual endowments and finished education.... The news from the Ganges that Keshab Chunder Sen is dead overwhelms me with a more profound sense of personal bereavement than I can now remember to have felt before at the departure of any public man. Keshab Chunder Sen was not a reformer and orator merely; he was also a religious seer. When his influence over his followers is closely analyzed, it will be found that his deep communion with the unseen world was the chief source of the authority he was allowed to exercise among his friends and disciples⁴³.... He depends for his knowledge of religious truth on religious exercises continued through three, four and sometimes five hours a day. I thoroughly believe him to be an honest and devout man. My feeling is not that he should pray less, but that he should study more."⁴⁴

h. Bankim Chatterji (1838-94): Born in a Bengali village, he worked in government service for thirty-two years as Deputy Magistrate, retiring in 1891. At the same time he was a famous Bengali writer, a brilliant storyteller, being the author of 14 well-read novels with political, historical, and social themes. For Bankim, the foundation of Hinduism is preached by Lord Krishna the ideal man in the *Bhagavad Gita*. Krishna is both Brahman (God) and the embodiment of human perfection who harmonizes knowledge, action, and devotion. With other people religion

is only part of life. For the Hindu their entire life is religion, since for them the spiritual and the secular are not distinguishable. There can be no worship of Brahman, without a love for humanity, and "Love for the Motherland is the highest of all dharmas." As a nationalist and patriot he composed *Vande Mataram* the National Song (Anthem) of India. It is a hymn to the Goddess Durga, identified as the national personification of India. His doctrine of the "New Dharma" as being an aspect of religion, extended beyond traditional duties to the family, caste, and local community, to loyalty to the country (svadesha-priti), and even to the entire world (manushyatva). This Dharma is both social and political in nature. Bankim received inspiration from Western social writers like Bentham, J. S. Mill, A. Comte, and H. Spencer. William Hastie sent a series of letters to the Calcutta *The Statesman* in 1882, which criticized Hindu image worship. Writing under a pseudonym, Bankim Chatterji a well-known Bengali novelist, Modern Hindu theorist, and social reformer, replied at length. He expressed the view that in spite of their knowledge of Sanskrit and the *Vedas*, no European scholar adequately understands the fundamental doctrines of the Hindu religion.⁴⁵

Sri Ramakrishna met Bankim on December 6, 1884 at the house of Adhar Chandra Sen. Their long discussion occupies over ten pages in the *Gospel*. Bankim wanted Ramakrishna to visit his home, but a few days later the Master sent Girish and M to his Calcutta residence instead.⁴⁶ It is most interesting that when the leading Modern Hindu's, D. Tagore, Dayananda, K. Sen, Vidyasagar, and Bankim met Ramakrishna they appeared to have no idea that he was a historical person who would influence future generations. Ramakrishna and Vivekananda were able to provide the long-range solutions to the problems that these five gentlemen were working on. In his own humble way, Ramakrishna had no desire to let them know he had these capabilities. For more on Ramakrishna's encounters with D. Tagore, Dayananda, K. Sen, Vidyasagar, and Bankim see: *Sri Ramakrishna and Western Thought*, Ch. 1, Section 6. Holy Men and Women, and Religious Leaders He Met.

i. Indian National Congress: A great service to India was provided by Allan Octavian Hume (1829-1912) a Scottish Theosophist who founded the organization in 1885. He worked in India as a British civil servant (1849-82) and later served as the first General Secretary of the Congress (1884-91). As a social reformer he was particularly interested in education and agriculture, and was highly critical of British rule in India. In addition he was the "Father of Indian Ornithology" authoring many volumes on birds in India.⁴⁷

With the approval of Viceroy Dufferin, the Congress convened once a year as a voice of public opinion for the Indian people. From different parts of India, 72 representatives gathered in Bombay in 1885, and the next year at Calcutta. Part of its success lay in the fact it was an all-India movement unlike the contemporary social reform. The original purpose was to support legislative reforms in India, for educated Indians to obtain a greater share in all branches of government activities, and to oppose the levying of taxes on India to finance the British military campaign in Afghanistan.

Another key factor in the regeneration of modern India was the rise of an English educated new Indian middle class in the 19th century. These luminaries arose from the government and social worker, lawyer, journalist, teacher, administrator, doctor, engineer, and landholder (zamindars) occupations. This professional and commercial class of new national-liberal elites was united by a common language and nationalistic system of values. Their leaders were social reformers and political agitators.

They replaced the old monarchial-feudal aristocracy that had lost most of its creativity both in Europe and in India, which supported an ideology of the status quo. It became necessary for a new elite class to replace the old one. A nobility based purely on heredity is bound to decline in time as pointed out by Sir Francis Galton (1822-1911). According to his Law of Filial Regression (1886) there is a high probability

that the children of the most highly talented parents will be less skilled, though there are some exceptions. As the hereditary process continues over generations, there is a statistical tendency, with some exceptions, toward the mean and a loss of former talents. Because of Galton's Law, in the long run hereditary monarchy will produce mediocre people who are not qualified to run a country.

After 1800, beginning with Rammohan Roy the new middle class based largely on occupation produced the majority of distinguished people in India. Most of the leaders of the Indian National Congress belonged to this group, particularly lawyers, journalists, and schoolmasters. They supported liberal-human values, democracy, egalitarianism, nationalism, and industrialism. In addition, they wanted to maintain the traditional cultural identity of India, but to some degree in a new form.⁴⁸ This movement marked the rise of modern Indian political leaders and was the chief source of social reform. In an 1896 interview in London a British reporter asked Vivekananda, "Have you given any attention to the Indian National Congress movement?" He replied, "I cannot claim to have given much; my work is in another part of the field. But I regard the movement as significant, and heartily wish it success." In the next century, under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi (1869-1948) it was the most influential public organization in the Indian Independence Movement.⁴⁹

In India by the end of the nineteenth century, there was a shift away from the rule of the nobility, toward an emergent new middle class elite. At that time more than 50,000 English-educated Indians comprised the numerically small but culturally significant middle class, and within ten years 500,000 Indians were studying English. This group consisted of government employees, professional doctors, teachers, lawyers, and journalists; landowners, and small businessmen; with few being rooted in industry or trade. It was their historical mission to undertake the project of modernizing Indian and Hindu religion. They combined reform and tradition oriented revivalism within the areas of religion,

politics, and society. Centered in large cities they were an open class. Creating a pan-Indian intelligentsia, they defined themselves in terms of ideas and cultural practices, rather than caste relationships or various types of economic production. To accomplish their tasks they utilized modern innovations and technologies by employing rational techniques of persuasion, defending their ideas in print, forming voluntary associations to discuss and circulate their ideas, and seeking to construct a universal form of religion that would transcend parochialism and appeal to modern educated people.⁵⁰ It is significant that many of Sri Ramakrishna's monastic disciples came from this class.

j. Contemporary China: A movement in some ways similar to Modern Hinduism was inaugurated in China by Yen Fu (1854-1921) with the "breakthrough" generation flourishing between 1895-1905. They took up the study of Western culture with Yen Fu completing translations and commentaries on the works of Adam Smith, Thomas Huxley, John Stuart Mill, and Herbert Spencer. Other participants included Kang Youwei (1858-1927) and his student Liang Qichao (1873-1929) who favored changing the government from an Absolute to a Constitutional Monarchy.⁵¹

2. Swami Vivekananda and the Historical Situation

Eventually people will realize that Ramakrishna Vedanta has brought a revolution in world thought. Swami Saradananda tells us of the perplexing state of affairs in India when Ramakrishna and Vivekananda were living there, "The West brought about a radical change by influencing the fundamental ideals that had guided the individual and national lives of India from time immemorial... Indians gradually became convinced that Western ideas were valid. Relinquishing their previous life goals, which had been based on renunciation and self-control, they became eager for more material pleasures. Their ancient

system of education and training disappeared, and they became atheistic, fond of imitating the West ... Indians came to believe that the long-cherished beliefs they had held and practiced were completely wrong. They believed it was true that their traditions were primitive and semi-civilized because Western science had proved them to be so. Infatuated by earthly pleasures, the Indian people forgot their ancient history and glory. This failure of memory led to the ruin of discrimination, and thus India's, national identity was at stake."⁵²

Swami Abhedananda added, "During the 19th century materialism was deluging India. There was confusion in the minds of the Hindus regarding their religion. It was then that Ramakrishna appeared to awaken the eternal religion." "English education, on the other hand, has disturbed the minds of the people; has shaken their faith in their religion; has made its students advocates of atheism, agnosticism, and utilitarianism."⁵³

What Swamis Saradananda and Abhedananda discuss produced a type of Culture Shock being a cultural change that creates trauma. It shows some similarities with the more common variety of a person visiting a foreign country. Concerning the latter form of culture shock the Finish-Canadian anthropologist Kalervo Oberg (1901-73) proposed four stages in the process. First is the Honeymoon phase when a person is fascinated with the new events. Next is the Negotiation stage of development when the differences between the old and the recently developed culture create anxiety and an identity crisis accompanied by unpleasant feelings of frustration. Nostalgia develops to return to the original way of life of the past. Third is the Adjustment phase when the person becomes accustomed to the new culture and develops a routine form of behavior. New problem-solving techniques are worked out for dealing with the new life-style. With a positive attitude they gradually accept the culture's ways that makes sense to them. Lastly there is Adaptation and the person begins to participate fully and comfortably in the new way of life. Three responses come forth. The Rejecters never

proceed beyond stage two due to a transition shock by rejecting foreign influence and retaining their original life-style. Adapters integrate fully in the new culture and take part in it losing their former identity. Bicultural people adopt aspects of the new culture that they view as positive, while maintaining some of the original traits from their prior culture such as language, dress, and food habits.⁵⁴

Seminal Western thinkers of the 19th and early 20th century like A. Comte, K. Marx, H. Spencer, E. Durkheim, M. Weber, and S. Freud held to the "Secularization Thesis" that with the advent of the industrial society and scientific progress, the modernization process will bring about a significant decline in organized religion. The reasons being: 1) Human agency will replace the need for Divine intervention. With increasing secular knowledge, people realize that they can solve their problems through their own efforts. For example when an outbreak of malaria occurred the scientists came up with a new vaccine rather than seeking transcendental assistance. 2) Scientific reason and knowledge is replacing superstition and old myths (Weber). Secularization provides a new outlook on life with alternative explanations and values that are not integrated into a religious worldview. People receive a far better secular education today and there has been a tremendous growth in theoretical and practical knowledge readily available to all. More and more people are attending Universities so to some extent the professor is replacing the priests and ministers as a source of understanding the world. If a person has a serious mental or family problem they are more apt to go to a psychological or family councilor. 3) People have lost faith in the old religions (Durkheim) (See "The Death of the Gods" in Chapter VII, Section 4). 4) The government will take over the most important social functions formerly performed by religions such as education, healthcare, helping low income people (Durkheim). Institutionalized religions will become marginal to the functioning of the modern world. 5) Life's problems will decrease, so there will be less need to seek Divine intervention. 6) Secular pleasures will be more widely abundant making

life more joyful.⁵⁵ According to the "Privatization Thesis" religions have been progressively forced to withdraw from the modern secular state and capitalist economy, and thus have entered into the private sphere. Religion will be more and more centered on individuals and voluntary associations and will have less effect on the society as a whole.

Modern disbelief in the existence of Brahman-God takes a variety of forms. They hold that Brahman-God does not exist (atheism), Its existence cannot be proven or disproven (agnosticism, skepticism), nothing empirical can be known outside of the realm of the five physical senses (logical positivism), It is an imagined unreal ideal projection of the human psyche or of society (projectionism), ideas about It vary significantly from group to group (relativism), religious matters are of no value (materialism, apatheticism), and human society not Brahman-God should be deified (humanism, positivism).⁵⁶

Sri Ramakrishna, Holy Mother and their disciples came to offset the "Secularization Thesis" by setting up a counter force aimed at revitalizing the spiritual trend. The "Secularization Thesis" has failed to some extent in its prognosis of the future. In many areas of the world and particularly in the United States, religion has remained a major force in society. Secularism has not diminished the spiritual and to some extent the moral functions of religious institutions. Increased pluralism with a wide diversity of religious faiths provides far more choices for the religious seeker. Support for the theory comes from a decline of religion in Europe and China, and in monasticism almost worldwide, yet we cannot not be sure this trend will continue in the future. In the past there were many more religious choices in the pluralistic United States to select from, than in Europe where in many countries there was only one or two dominate religions. Thomas Jefferson (1743-1826) and others wisely favored multiple denominations. This allowed the citizens to find a religion of their choice.

Applying the theories anticipated by the Scottish-Canadian-American sociologist Robert Maclver (1882-1970) and later developed in

far more detail in the Structural-Functional System by Talcott Parsons (1902-79) of Harvard University the following conclusions were reached. A social-cultural system (such as Traditional Indian culture or any organization consisting of a system of ideas, norms, values, role-structures, institutions, and traditions) strives to operate in a manner congenial to its self-preservation and self-maintenance, with a relatively stable slowly changing equilibrium over time between its component parts (similar to the biological concept of homeostasis). A stable society changes gradually and slowly to allow for the adjustment of the other aspects of its social-cultural structure. At the macro-level, society is ideally (not necessarily empirically) a complex system whose parts strive to work together to promote solidarity and stability. Following the "The Principle of Inertia (Newton's First Law): A given process of action will continue unchanged in rate and direction [Traditional Indian society and culture (Civilization)] unless impeded or deflected by opposing motivational forces [Western society and culture]." Rapid changes can throw the social system off balance, unless and until a new equilibrium can be reached. When a disruptive external force intervenes (such as Western materialism and its repercussions), if the system's mechanism of control does not work adequately to stabilize the social-cultural system and its corresponding norms and values, it will be thrown off balance and entropy (degeneration) will increase. If the various aspects of the social-cultural system are not compatible with each other there will be a lack of harmony that brings about stress and anxiety. The system must to some extent change its nature or it will disintegrate. Because of the interrelatedness of the various components of a social system, when one element changes it causes alterations in other parts of the system. Consequently, due to this challenge from the West the Indians were forced to reverse the trend, by bringing about adjustments in their society in order to reestablish a stable dynamic equilibrium with an internally consistent structure. Success of the system components is based on, "The Principle of System-Integration: Any pattern element

(mode of organization of components) within a system of action will tend to be confirmed in its place within the system or to be eliminated from the system (extinguished) as a function of its contribution to the integrative balance of the system."⁵⁷ The various institutions of a society need to be integrated so that a harmonious society can emerge from their interaction. Methods that bring about societal integration are taught to the citizens through the educational, family, and religious systems. A society is made up of interrelated and interdependent parts that interact with its environment sharing some common goals, interrelated functions, boundaries, and an identity. Its citizens are continuously influenced by information and resources from the environment and react by modifying the environment to some extent. When progressive change occurs in any area of a society, it is due to creativity and innovation. In societies with high level of integration, a change in one part of the system brings a change in another part.

A social-cultural system is described in how it is put together (structure), what it does (function), and how it changes over time (dynamics). Concerning the latter, Parsons emphasizes gradual reform rather than abrupt changes like the Russian Revolution of 1917. During the Cold War the USSR claimed that their communistic society was the most highly developed. Talcott Parsons and other sociologists maintained the freedom and prosperity that existed in the United States proved a higher level of sociocultural evolution of its society. Many of these principles of the social-cultural system outlined by Parsons also apply to the Self-system of an individual person. Parson's writes of an interrelated social system where a change in one area necessitates a change in another. In Chapter VII, Pitirim Sorokin presents a more radical idea of a thoroughgoing alteration in the nature of the entire social-cultural system that effects each of its component parts. Sorokin goes further predicting this will occur in the not too distant future.

It must be cautioned that the level of system integration between the various components of a society is only partial. A change in one area

such as religion is only partially integrated with a change in another area such as the political, social, economic, etc. The correlation between the effect of events in one area on another is less than one. For example, when the stock market skyrockets this is a major event in the economic realm, but the corresponding effect in the religious area is apt to be much smaller.

The conflict between the ideas and value system of Western secularism and traditional Indian culture (Civilization), produced psychological stress that is today called Cognitive Dissonance. An inconsistent contradictory belief and attitude system can cause tension, psychological stress, information overload, and irrational behavior patterns both on the individual and at the group level.⁵⁸ Functionalism analyses social and cultural phenomena in terms of the functions they perform. Human society is composed of interrelated parts in which no part can be understood in isolation from the others. A change in any part results in an imbalance, requiring changes in other parts of the system to bring about a reorganization of the system as a whole. An important reason for there being changes in the religious dimension is because it is a part of the social-cultural system. If one part of the system changes its development might contradict the prevailing ideas of religion and an adjustment is required. So one reason that the religions of the world vary is because each is a part of a different socio-cultural system.

According to Parson's Sociologistic Theorem there is a strong tendency in any society for people to develop motivations that are congruent with the value system of the society. The stability of a social system depends on the degree of integration. Along this line Thomas Hault's "Principle of Sociocultural Compatibility" stresses that every mainline facet of society (religious, political, social, economic, etc.) of any given country strives to be compatible and maintain relative harmony with the other aspects of the society. Each sector aspires to hold complementary values, practices, and beliefs compatible with the

prevailing cultural norms and the established social structure and relationships.⁵⁹ This principle is more evident in a traditional society, than in a modern society where there is more heterogeneity and interest in change.

As the theologian Paul Tillich (1886-1965) ably stated, "Only if you encounter someone else are you able to reflect on yourselves. As long as you go ahead without resistance, you are not forced to look back upon yourselves. When you encounter resistance, you reflect."⁶⁰ For example, the traditional Indian thought system was challenged by modern Western secularism. Another important factor is that during the 19-20th century India and other Third World countries had to undergo rapid changes that it took Western Europe several centuries to work out. It would be like if the later Middle Ages, Renaissance, Reformation, Enlightenment, Industrial Revolution, rise of Democracy, and the many 19th century changes all occurred within less than one hundred years.

Religions change over time because the configuration and nature of the social-cultural system is always in a state of flux. A significant change in one aspect of the society is apt to have some influence on the nature of the religion. So the historical need of the time varies from one era to the next.

According to the "Challenge and Response Theory" (1934) of the British historian Arnold Toynbee (1889-1975), civilizations (such as the Indian) are at times forced to respond to a set of challenges of extreme difficulty that threaten the very survival of the social and cultural system. Multiple responses are possible. Whereby "Creative Minorities" (Sri Ramakrishna, Swami Vivekananda, their associates, and others) devise solutions that reorient their entire society. Their creativeness expressed itself by their penetration into the depths of Indian thought. Ramakrishna and Vivekananda realized that the responses should be flexible and not too destructive of the prevailing way of life. With their great insight, they were continually able to uncover new meanings that were hidden from the scholars and intellectuals, social reformers, and

political leaders. For this reason contemporary leaders of society sometimes were not able to comprehend and appreciate the profundity of their ideas. During this process, the challenge of the disruption of traditional Indian society was viewed negatively by the people because of all the problems it was causing. Yet, the challenge is also positive, since it brought about new energy and creativity, and a successful response that is allowing India to reach new heights and producing good national karma. The challenge has reinforced and accelerated the unfolding of India's immanent potentialities. Toynbee mentions, in this process there is a "Withdrawal and Return" whereby the creative individual (or individuals) (like Ramakrishna and Vivekananda) "withdraw from the common life of society, then work out, in seclusion, a solution for some problem with which the society as a whole is confronted, and finally re-enters into communion with the rest of society in order to help it forward on its road."⁶¹ This requires a rethinking and to some degree a reinterpretation of the fundamental characteristics and norms of the society.⁶²

In the second half of the 19th century, an incredible number of geniuses were born in India and the West, resulting in a transformation of human society. Most prominent in India was Swami Vivekananda (1863-1902) who was born and lived during a very critical transitional period of Indian history. During his withdrawal period between 1890 and 1893, in pursuit of his spiritual mission he traveled the length and breadth of India observing the conditions of the country. He was filled with an ardent love for his country, being devoted to the noble cause of awakening India. He endured the frustration of wanting to change things in India but was unable to do so. Buried in his own thoughts, he was free to seek the truth not bound by any obligations to family, society, or occupation. After the return period during the 1890s, Vivekananda continued to develop his system of ideas. After 1893, Vivekananda lived an itinerant lifestyle where he travelled around to different cities for the purpose of lecturing and informing people about the Vedanta

philosophy. This is in contrast to living in one community and location along with his brother monastics who owned most things in common.

His student Sarah Waldo described this period of Vivekananda's life thusly, "He traveled on foot all over India, walking barefooted thousands of miles, during many years, teaching and helping the people. In the snowy Himalayas, in the marshy plains of Bengal, amidst pestilence and famine, undergoing privation of every kind, he persevered in his loving ministry, bringing hope and comfort to thousands of disconsolate hearts."⁶³

Jules Bois (1868/69-1943) an author whom Vivekananda roomed with in Paris, France in 1900 revealed, "After a long silence, and in a voice that had fallen to a whisper my companion continued. He [Sri Ramakrishna] had called me Vivekananda, but after his death I was as though mad. I felt as if I had lost my soul. I became a sannyasin, throwing aside everything, even clothing. I traversed India on foot, covered with ashes, taking meals now with rajahs, now with the humblest peasants, sleeping on porches or in trees, bewailing the loss of my guru and vowing to render immortal the gospel I had received from him. When I felt morally strengthened by this sacrificial wandering, I set out for America."⁶⁴

After 1835 the spread of Western education, a better understanding of India's history and national character, a growing number of problems necessitating the need for a change, along with other factors brought about a new way of thinking in the educated classes. In India this was typified by the Indian National Congress (beginning 1885), Vivekananda's ministry in the West (1893), and Gandhi's work in South Africa (1893). There was a new national consciousness, a determination had to be made as to the type of society that would be developed in India, and their place in the community of nations.

The result of the process of a penetrating reflection on the Indian society and culture (Civilization) by Vivekananda and the Modern

Hindus brought about a new self-awareness, interpretation, and self-definition of the Indian tradition. In the words of German born Professor Wilhelm Halbfass (1940-2000) of the University of Pennsylvania, the leading Western thinker on the subject of the intellectual encounter of India with the West since 1500, this deliberation served "as means for a new self-understanding and opened up a new approach to [their] own tradition, specifically the Vedanta. Finally, it served [the] goal of cultural self-assertion, of redefining and defending [their] tradition in the face of the challenge from the West. This was the general situation of the Indian discovery of Europe in the nineteenth century: India discovered Europe by being discovered by the Europeans, through objectification, reaction and apologetics. This was also a rediscovery and reinterpretation of the Indian tradition by Indians; key-terms of traditional self-understanding were redefined and reasserted in response."⁶⁵

Halbfass adds, "The Indians began presenting themselves to the world in a new fashion. They took more distinctive initiatives to interpret their identity for the Europeans, and to defend and affirm it against them. They began to demarcate themselves against the foreign and to recognize the other in a new sense; but they also tried to comprehend and assimilate the Western ideas within the framework of their own tradition. They responded to the universalistic claims of Western thought with a universalism of their own. They opened, even exposed themselves to the West. But this very openness appeared as a confirmation and consummation of their own tradition, its potential of universality and inclusiveness.... British presence in India was not just another case of foreign invasion and domination, or of cross-cultural, interreligious 'encounter.' Instead, it was an encounter between tradition and modernity, i.e., an exposure to new forms of organization and administration, to unprecedented claims of universality and globalization, to the ideas of history and progress and human mastery of the earth, to rationalization, technology and a comprehensive objectification of the world. It also meant the advent of a new type of

objectification of the Indian tradition itself, an unprecedented exposure theoretical curiosity and historical 'understanding,' and to the interests of research and intellectual mastery. It was a presence which was much more pervasive, much more penetrating than any previous domination. It affected the very self-understanding of the tradition and turned out to be inescapable."⁶⁶ This process can be described as an encounter between India and Europe (or the West), or from another standpoint between a traditional and a modern society and culture. The prior Muslim conquest involved primarily religion, but the Western challenge encompassed every area of society and culture.

Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda are two illustrious examples of the "Great Man Theory of History." It was formulated by the Scottish historian, novelist, and essayist Thomas Carlyle (1795-1881) in the lecture series, *On Heroes, Hero-Worship and the Heroic in History* (1841), and later supported by Soren Kierkegaard (1813-55) and Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900). Carlyle summarized his ideas with the overstatement, "The history of the world is but the biography of great men." Following the logic of this theory, highly influential individuals due to their personal charisma, intelligence, self-confidence, and courage, utilized their power in a way that had a decisive impact on historical events. This is particularly evident in religion since without Buddha, Jesus Christ, or Muhammad it is unlikely that anything similar to their respective religions would have come into existence. These great souls descend from higher worlds to initiate these new religions. Great people have also influenced other areas of thought. This is certainly not to deny that social-political-economic-religious factors bring about historical changes, a view that is most often stressed in the literature today. And events like the 1969 Apollo spacecraft to the moon or the development of computer software involve the combined efforts of a team of a large number of specialized intelligent people not a single Great Man. We can call it, "The Influential People Theory of History," since it covers both genders. There are people (such as some

Presidents of the United States) whom on a smaller scale change historical happenings. Take them out of the equation and it is quite likely the historical event would not have occurred.⁶⁷

Vivekananda himself was an advocate of this theory particularly in the field of religion stating, "The history of the world is the history of a few men who had faith in themselves. That faith calls out the divinity within." "The men of mighty will the world has produced have all been tremendous workers--gigantic souls, with wills powerful enough to overturn worlds, wills they got by persistent work.... The gigantic will which Buddha and Jesus threw over the world."⁶⁸ They practiced what they preached having intense faith in themselves and in their hallowed mission.

There is another source for great men and women but it occurs very rarely. It was revealed by Sri Ramakrishna, "When God assumes a human body for the sake of His devotees, many of His devotees accompany Him to this earth. Some of them belong to the inner circle, some to the outer circle, and some become the suppliers of His physical needs." "They assume human bodies only to impart spiritual illumination to others."⁶⁹ They are members of Brahman-God's family, the companions and servants of the Lord. It is possible that the *Bible* supports the thesis that due to a special act of Divine providence, the Prophet Elijah was reborn as John the Baptist in order to assist Jesus in his earthly mission.⁷⁰ Occasionally, these great souls may descend to earth at some other time in history independent of the Avatara-Divine Incarnation, becoming sages or prophets. For example, according to the Indians, heavenly sages like Janaka incarnated as each of the ten Sikh gurus (1469-1708), and Madhva (1238-1317) the founder of Dualistic (Theistic) Vedanta was originally a Divine Being. These are examples of great men and women of history who were born for a special purpose and were able to achieve great accomplishments totally impossible for other people. From this perspective, it is possible that great religious philosophers of the West like Plato, Aristotle, Plotinus, and Thomas

Aquinas were incarnations of heavenly sages who descended to earth to teach new sublime truths. They created vast systems of thought that are highly original and have lasted for millenniums.

The most outstanding Western supporters of India who were not Indologists tended to be people who held extreme positions, The list includes: Edmund Burke (1729-97) the Irish founder of modern political conservatism, Lord Thomas Macaulay (1800-59) a Scottish humanitarian and utilitarian; Karl Marx (1818-83) the founder of Communism, Herbert Spencer (1820-1903) an advocate of laissez-faire Capitalism, Andrew Carnegie (1835-1919) a great philanthropist who gave away most of his wealth to charity, English born Jabez Sunderland (1842-1936) an American Unitarian minister, William Jennings Bryant (1860-1925) a politically liberal Christian fundamentalist, and George William Russell (1867-1935) a Theosophist.

3. Swami Vivekananda's Response

From my own personal standpoint the four great religious philosophers of synthesis each separated by five or six hundred years are Plotinus, Shankara, Aquinas, and now in the present age Vivekananda.⁷¹ Their thought is penetrating, clear and coherent. They were all to a large extent Nondualists though their approach to the subject differs. It is interesting that each had a unique way of understanding the subject demonstrating that Nondualism can be studied in many ways. They studied religion both through the spirit and the intellect. To approach religious issues through the intellect alone as some philosophers have done can lead to errors. While the other three completed their assignment and left little for their immediate successors to add on, Vivekananda lacked the time to fully develop all of his ideas and fortunately left a lot for future generations to contribute. In addition, there was an explosion in knowledge in every major field after

his passing in 1902. Also, today far more has been published and is known about the old systems of religious philosophy than at that time.

Swami Vivekananda and his brother disciples came to revive the Indian civilization. Every human society is shaped by its own unique set of circumstances. Each civilization has its own culturally-ingrained ideologies, customs, and cultural identity. Professor Wilhelm Halbfass explains Vivekananda's mission well, "Vivekananda became one of the leading figures of modern Hindu thought and self-awareness and an exemplary exponent of Hindu self-representation vis-à-vis the West. His appearance in the West, his self-understanding, and his activities within India are all interwoven in a peculiar way: During his first visit to the West, Vivekananda became the man who made history; the most influential shaper and protagonist of the Neo-Hindu spirit.... he is committed to propagating Hindu principles beyond the borders of India and to utilizing their international recognition in his efforts to regenerate Hindu self-awareness and self-confidence.... However, science is not the central issue in Vivekananda's rediscovery and reinterpretation of the Indian tradition. It is ethics, social commitment, and national identity itself, which he tries to draw from the sources of Hindu religious and metaphysical thought. The sense of identity and social initiative which he tries to awaken in his fellow Indians must not be a borrowed or derivative one. It must coincide with a sense of rediscovery and reacquisition of their own heritage ... They only have to readopt and transform into social action that which was always in their possession. Their Vedanta must become a 'Practical Vedanta.'"⁷²

Like Shankara, Ramanuja, Madhva, Jiva Goswami, and other Indian spiritual teachers that preceded him, Swami Vivekananda worked on two levels, the theoretical and the practical. The teachings of these seer-philosophers were more than academic, they taught a powerful spiritual message leading to liberation (salvation). For them Vedanta is primarily a spiritually liberating path and only secondarily a metaphysical description of ultimate reality. The first level is that of "pure reason,"

creating a body of theory, to supply new ideas concerning the nature of Brahman (God), the cosmos, the four yogas, etc. The second area is that of “practical reason,” to aid people in transforming themselves into better individuals. Their new vision of reality must be able to possess people’s minds and hearts, to exhibit a transforming power in their lives both in consciousness and behavior. Vivekananda came not only to describe the world (theoretical or pure reason), but to change it (practical reason).

Consequently, he often uses strong motivational language to inspire people. He wrote, “No amount of reasoning which I can give you will be proof to you, until you have demonstrated it for yourselves.”⁷³ “Describe and change the world” as theoretical ideal types are two separate concepts. But in empirical reality they interact with each other. Theoretical Religion or Pure Religion like Pure Science is devoted to the investigation of the pursuit of knowledge for its own sake. With its emphasis on philosophy it is problem-solving in the theoretical domain. By comparison Applied Religion like Applied Science is concerned with practical problems and their applications. It is problem-solving in the practical sphere. In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus said, “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God” (Math. 5.8). Most Christians take this to mean they will see God after they die. As an example of his practical approach Vivekananda emphasized that they should strive to see God in this life.

There are some differences between a motivational statement and a purely logical one. A perlocutionary act is a speech act used to persuade the listener to behave in a certain way. While in prior centuries the logical aspects of language were stressed, in the 20th century more attention is devoted to the pragmatic dimensions of language. This includes “attention to information about the context in which a speaker made the utterance and how those conditions allow the speaker to express one proposition rather than another. This strongly contextual element of pragmatics often leads to special attention to the goals that

a speaker might achieve by uttering a sentence in a particular way in that context and why she might have done so. Thus, what a speaker means in saying something is often explained by an emphasis on the speaker's intentions: to reveal to the hearer that the speaker wants the hearer to respond in a certain way and thus to get the hearer to respond in this way."⁷⁴ From a praxis point of view a statement should be understood in terms of the action-oriented intentions of the speaker.

The French Nobel Prize winning author Romain Rolland (1866-1944) made this statement about Vivekananda, "His words are great music, phrases in the style of Beethoven, stirring rhythms like the march of Handel choruses. I cannot touch these sayings of his, scattered as they are through the pages of books at thirty years' distance, without receiving a thrill through my body like an electric shock. And what shocks, what transports must have been produced when in burning words they issued from the lips of the hero!" In his speeches and writings Vivekananda transmitted the highest spiritual knowledge, in a way that it would do the maximum amount of good. Consequently, as one internalizes the Swami's thoughts, they become centres of power that have the ability to change the person's behaviour and perception of the world.

Vivekananda was constructive not destructive and consequently he introduced many changes into modern Indian religious thought. At the Parliament of Religions in 1893 Vivekananda stated, "To the Hindu, man is not travelling from error to truth, but from truth to truth, from lower to higher truth."⁷⁵ In the intellectual realm also a new creative idea often occurs as an expansion (not a full denial) of a prevailing idea by adding more elements to it to make it more compressive. In the realm of ideas what we often have is an approximation of the facts and with each discovery we get closer to the truth. All of the major religions of the world should not renounce their positive ideas from the past, but expand on them.

Traditional religion should be supplemented by an inspired

rational, scientific, innovative religion. He stated, "Why religions should claim that they are not bound to abide by the standpoint of reason, no one knows. If one does not take the standard of reason, there cannot be any true judgment, even in the case of religion." When interpreting Vedanta in new ways, Vivekananda was able to take advantage of the many centuries of accumulative knowledge that was discovered in India and the West between the Medieval period and the late nineteenth century. Vedantic ideas must be made compatible with this new knowledge drawn from other fields, and with the life events and situations that form a part of our modern world. Similarly, Shankara was influenced by religious philosophical ideas that were not known in the *Upanishadic* age. Rethinking these concepts, Vivekananda was able to provide a more comprehensive philosophical foundation for Vedanta. Most important Vedanta has been greatly expanded to become inclusive rather than exclusive. A complete explanation takes into account as many perspectives as possible and attempts must be made to integrate and synthesize them. In religion the mistake in the past was to reject too much and consequently work from too limited a perspective. In the Global Age the proper method is a spirit of cooperation and integral thinking, not dogmatic "Conflict Theory" where one set of ideas is considered true (viewed from a limited standpoint) and everything else false. Considering the relationship between the sacred and the secular: *tamas* is one of conflict, *rajas* of competition, and *sattva* of cooperation. Vivekananda stated, "If you want to help the world, do not condemn it. Do not weaken it more." "Some say that if man did not fight with man, he would not progress. I also used to think so; but I find now that every war has thrown back human progress by fifty years instead of hurrying it forwards."⁷⁶

In his lectures in the West, he tended to concentrate on the eternal principles, and generally had little to say about the details of contemporary, politics, sports, entertainment, etc. He knew most of this is temporary and quickly forgotten. Unlike most people Vivekananda

would study the same phenomena from many different standpoints. He was able to combine intuition (or inspiration) by means of a sudden, direct, and valid conception of a new idea; reason by a consistent logical process of inductive, deductive, analytical, and synthetic cognition; and verification through empirical evidence.⁷⁷ This is especially important in the Modern Age. Consequently, there is a tremendous scope to his teachings. World literacy rates were only 12% in 1820 and rose to 86% in 2016.⁷⁸ Vivekananda realized this future trend necessitates a more rational approach to religion.

In his writings and lectures he taught the highest philosophical truths to the people. Vivekananda made every attempt to make abstract religious philosophical concepts living realities, as clear, concrete and understandable as possible. This is just the opposite of some philosophers who make every effort to express their ideas in an abstract (and often ambiguous) language as possible. One problem Vivekananda wanted to avoid is that in some areas of study it is difficult for educated people in other areas to understand their new ideas. The reason being that they purposely create a highly specialized list of new terms that most people are not familiar with. Though he spoke and wrote on the highest level, to inspire people Vivekananda used a charming, easy to read, and delightful literary writing style, because he knew that dry intellectualism would inspire only a few people to change their way of life. His writings are deep and follow a logical order. This is the idea behind writing a successful textbook. It should convey the highest ideas yet be understandable to as many educated people as possible.

In relation to the study of Vivekananda's idea there are two levels of hermeneutics (interpretation). The first deals with the meaning of what Vivekananda said and wrote. The second analyzes the implications of his writings and how they relate to other peoples ideas and concepts. Following the latter approach, Vivekananda's thoughts possess the qualities and potentialities to develop into a vast ideological system that

is meaningful, practical, and important. They meet a genuine need on the part of modern world society embodying a universal and perennial reality and systems of values.⁷⁹ Furthermore, they are related to the higher universal meanings, values, and norms of humanity. The implications of his ideas will self-unfold even more when they are significantly related to other existing higher-order conceptions. His ideas are the foundation, but the added on superstructure will combine his theories with those already in existence. There will be a quantitative and qualitative accumulation of the unfolded meanings of the thoughts he presented. These strong and pregnant ideas are apt to come under attack from opposing forces. This will stimulate the unfolding of their potential by bringing into the open that which was hidden, and contribute to their development and growth. The result will be a system of ideas that are integrated, generalized, extended, and diversified. A multitude of specific ideas will expand into more highly generalized basic principles.⁸⁰ All forms of higher knowledge are always in process and unfinished, open to further discoveries.

T. K. N. Unnithan, Indra Deva, and Yogendra Singh relate that according to the Shastras tradition of India, "A scholar or a thinker did not claim that he was saying anything new; he only claimed to be interpreting the *Vedas* or some other works which themselves were supposed to be based on the *Vedas*. Thus, such a genius as Shankaracharya expounded his philosophy through an interpretation (bhasya) of the *Bhagavad Gita*."⁸¹ Since Vivekananda seldom claimed to be teaching anything new, the originality of his thoughts have sometimes gone unrecognized. For example, when he came up with an original thought he did not give the idea a special label as, "The Theory of" or "The Principle of" that would be attached to his name. Possibly, when an Indian discovers something new they tend to say it is an old idea, and when a Westerner discovers an old idea they claim it is new. Indian philosophers tend to emphasize tradition and continuity in creative and critical thought, while Westerners stress innovation and

new and novel ideas. Vivekananda wrote to Alasinga the editor of the *Brahmavadin* Journal on 12th January, 1895, "My name should not be made prominent; it is my ideas that I want to see realised. The disciples of all the prophets have always inextricably mixed up the ideas of the Master with the person, and at last killed the ideas for the person."⁸²

In many fields Vivekananda is a bold thinker who did not accept some of the prevailing Western ideas. To give some examples, in the field of history he vehemently criticized the "Aryan Invasion Hypothesis and that the then popular doctrine of linear historical progress is too optimistic about the future of life on earth. In psychology he rejected the ideas that the unconscious mind contains only negative thoughts; that most aspects of character are formed in childhood rather than in prior lives; and he emphasized the superconscious mind and importance of thought vibrations. In philosophy and religion he opposed the idea that the mind originates as a blank tablet, *creatio ex nihilo*, and that the world had a beginning in time; and taught that miracles are possible working through unknown laws of nature. In physics he presented a scientific pralaya theory that explains events before the singularity-big bang, implying that a total physical destruction of the universe does not mean that the universe or space and time are nonexistent at a subtler realm. In biology he criticized the inheritance of mental characteristics and taught that superior mental, personality, and character traits (giving the examples of Buddha and Jesus) could not be explained by heredity or environment.

As Reverend Hugh Haweis in England noted, "He seemed completely indifferent to money, and lived only for thought. He took quite simply anything that was given to him, and when nothing came he went without, yet he never seemed to lack anything; he lived by faith from day to day, and taught Yogi science to all who would listen, without money and without price."⁸³

If in his Second coming of Vivekananda chooses to be an intellectual, he will be aided by the fact that: 1) after he passed away in

1902 there was an intellectual explosion in every major area of intellectual thought, 2) after 1902 a great deal of ancient knowledge has been uncovered, and 3) some of the lectures (and new ideas) he presented were not recorded.

Four of Vivekananda's sources of knowledge are: First, what he learned from significant individuals. Swami Medhananda and Gayatriprana have pointed out that Sri Ramakrishna was the person who influenced Vivekananda the most. Ramakrishna personally trained him so he would be guided by his essential ideas. Second, Vivekananda sought out the prevailing ideas of the times by reading the available books and memorizing the encyclopedia. Third, Vivekananda acquired much knowledge from the environment. For example before he came to the Parliament of Religions he found out about the present state of India by traveling around the country, and in the United States he learned about the importance of organization. We have learned about the world from significant people in our lives, by studying the prominent ideas, and through our contact with the external environment. Vivekananda added a fourth way of acquiring knowledge mentioned by Sister Christine (1866-1930) in her memoirs, "He told us that usually before a lecture he heard a voice saying it all. The next day he repeated what he had heard."⁸⁴ This phenomenon was also indicated by Ida Ansell (Ujjvala, 1877-1955).

Synthesis of Indian and Western Thought

Most important, Vivekananda in his intercultural communication presented Vedanta using conventional Indian religious concepts such as Nirguna Brahman, Atman, moksha, the four yogas, karma, dharma, etc. He presented these ideas as clearly as possible. Working within Hinduism he faithfully conveyed the Indian beliefs in spiritual experience, renunciation, eternal truths, religious pluralism, freedom of religious thought, and universal cycles. These ideas arouse primarily out

of the internal evolutionary structural development of Hinduism and far less from the country's encounter with the West.⁸⁵ Though he took an interest in the teachings of Jesus, he appeared to show little interest in Christian theology. The Vedantic ideology consists in a coherent system of doctrines and ideas that follow a logical structure, enabling a person to understand the deeper meanings of the world; and a comprehensive ethical set of ideals and principles providing normative values that guide one's actions. All aspects of religion entail an ideology, whether or not it is an explicit system or not. An Ideology is a noun signifying a system of interdependent beliefs, traditions, doctrines, theories, teachings, ideals, principles, ethics, and morals held by a group of people. They serve as a logical and philosophical justification for a group's system of ideas, patterns of behavior, as well as its attitudes, and goals.⁸⁶

In the West (particularly Europe) one important reason for the growing atheism and agnosticism over the last few centuries is that people have been receiving the best secular education while the higher religious philosophical ideas have been taught to only a small percentage of the people. In the past using vague highly technical religious philosophical terms and making ideas over complicated, have slowed down their being understood by intellectuals in other fields and the general public. Swami Vivekananda realized this mistake and fortunately today there is a growing interest in the philosophy of religion. To this day, the Western intellectual class has never properly understood Vivekananda's metaphysical ideas. Their paradigm of understanding is too limited and they did not have the proper samskaras to comprehend his message. They did not realize the many profound implications of his teachings in relation to their prevailing ideas. He expressed his life work succinctly, "To put the Hindu ideas into English and then make out of dry Philosophy and intricate Mythology and queer startling Psychology, a religion which shall be easy, simple, and popular and at the same time meet the requirements of the highest minds—is a task which only those can understand who have attempted it.

The abstract Advaita must become living—poetic—in everyday life; out of hopelessly intricate Mythology must come some concrete moral forms; and out of bewildering Yogism must come the most scientific and practical Psychology—and all this must be put into a form a child can grasp. This is my life's work."⁸⁷ He used as many Western terms as possible. For example, since most Westerners at that time were not familiar with the term Atman he would use words like Soul or Self in its place.

One of Vivekananda's tasks was to make the apparent incommensurable Indian religious philosophical and Western scientific views commensurable. He accomplished this undertaking by developing a common vocabulary and conceptual framework understandable by both sides. Vivekananda was a master at translating Indian philosophical ideas into compatible concepts of the contemporary scientists. In some cases, he presents ideas that modern science has not yet arrived at. In his religious teachings he emphasized the modern democratic values of equality, freedom, individuality, mass education, and social welfare.

As a philosopher of synthesis Vivekananda, enlarged and unified the scope of Indian religion to show the compatibility of all three Vedantic systems, the four yogas, all of the major philosophies, and most of the religious practices and their relation to modern thought. The truth and usefulness of each aspect of the religion and perspective is appreciated rather than criticized. The opposite of synthesis is the either/or methodology, where one accepts one view and then must reject the other. A false dichotomy is created where the options are presented as mutually exclusive. This practice has often been followed in the past.

In some respects Vivekananda explained the Vedanta philosophy in ways that it had never been taught before. In doing so he laid down the cardinal tenets of modern Hinduism. How was he able to accomplish this task? By creatively relating Vedantic ideas to the most prestigious areas of modern culture that include the advanced scientific theories of

religion, philosophy, physics, biology (e.g., heredity and evolution), physiology, sociology, psychology, history, and other areas of thought. He had the creative ability to observe similarities, uniformities, and connections among ideas that were apparently disparate. In this way he was able to overcome the myth that Hinduism was "Wholly Other" from Western thought. He corrected many misconceptions about India and her religion held in the West. The age-old principles, the eternal truths remain the same, but in an act of genius he brought out new meaningful implications and relationships for these ancient ideas. Another of his characteristics is that at times he would make an impression on people by coming up with the unexpected. In this way he would shake people loose from their habitual ways of thinking and teach them something new.

Vivekananda had a very strong sense of history, which he emphasized. He went back and studied the *Upanishads*, the *Bhagavad Gita*, and *Patanjali's Yoga Sutras* to discover the Indian past. He realized that the answers he was seeking did not lie only in contemporary thought. So he wanted to discern what had they known in the past that had since been forgotten, and was missing from contemporary Indian thought. He knew it is a great mistake to reject the wisdom of the past. In addition, he had to pose new questions of the Indian philosophical tradition (questions the original thinkers had not asked), realizing their relation and relevance to the present situation. He derived new implications and relationships of old ideas that were in a state of potentiality in the ancient texts. Once he had retrieved the traditional Indian thought structure, he had to explain these ideas in a way that modern people could understand them. The past had to be recapitulated and transformed into a new beginning. For example, he compared Sankhya cosmology with that of late 19th century modern physics. This opened up new possibilities not known to the traditional Sankhya cosmologists. In other words, Vedanta in its Ideal Form is vast, while the limited expression of it in one period of time will be similar to,

but not identical to the way it is thought of and practiced in another century. From a historical standpoint, Vedanta is viewed as an internally evolving system of thought. As a living reality it is constant, but our interpretation of it varies somewhat from time to time. The same is true for other religions like Christianity, Islam, and Buddhism. Even Fundamentalism changes to some extent from one century to the next. Consequently, when a Divine Incarnation or great sage or prophet is born on earth, there is enough unsaid so that they can significantly expand on the prevailing religion. The escalation of ideas in other fields of thought can also be used to enlarge the religious idea base to some extent. The historical movement of human life is never closed but opened to new horizons. Similarly in the West, once Vedantic ideas are understood more appreciation will be given to the great Indian religious and philosophical thinkers of the past. He was also interested in uncovering the glories of ancient India emphasizing their discoveries in the physical sciences, philosophy, religion, and literature.

Professor David M. Miller of Concordia University in Montreal, Canada made the important point, in "Swami Vivekananda's speeches to the Parliament, he was the first to set the tone, to establish the direction and to provide the rhetoric that the dialogue of modernist Hindus with non-Hindus would take over the next one hundred years.... Vivekananda's presentation of Neo-Vedantic thought and action at the World's Parliament of Religions was an attempt, like the *Bhagavad Gita* and like Shankara before him, at a creative synthesis of the old and the new, in which, traditional and modern elements were in dynamic interaction."⁸⁸ In other words, we admire the teachings of Krishna, Shankara, Ramanuja, Madhva, etc. because they presented the Vedanta philosophy to some extent in a new and original way compared to their predecessors, as did Vivekananda. Western Indologists sometimes use the term 'Neo-Vedanta' which is questionable. For example, the original Protestant's of the 16th century referred to themselves as Christians not Neo-Christians.

As Rama Srivastava points out, the ancient religious thinkers and philosophers of the world lived in a more restricted intellectual environment than we do, and consequently their writings are more limited. Direct contact with Western thought proved to be very beneficial for Indian thinkers causing them to develop a synthesis between Eastern and Western ideas. After making a sound study of Western thought, they became more comprehensive in producing a broader outlook.⁸⁹ Since the time of Shankara there has been a vast accumulation of knowledge. It is possible to incorporate some of these ideas into Vedanta philosophy (which Vivekananda did) and increase its horizons. Vivekananda realized that a synthesis of Indian and Western thought would bring about a new universal form of knowledge that surpasses that of the past.

Vivekananda's goal was to transform a national religion limited to the horizon of one ethnic group of people into a universal one. A truly universal religion is opened to everyone regardless of any other factor (e.g., nationality, ethnicity, culture, gender, age, income, education, occupation, etc.). He stated, "The time is coming when these thoughts will be cast abroad over the whole world. Instead of living in monasteries, instead of being confined to books of philosophy to be studied only by the learned, instead of being the exclusive possession of sects and of a few of the learned, they will all be sown broadcast over the whole world, so that they may become the common property of the saint and the sinner, of men and women and children, of the learned and of the ignorant. They will then permeate the atmosphere of the world."⁹⁰ "Don't you see that the age for esoteric interpretation is over? For good or for ill, that day is vanished, never to return. Truth, in the future, is to be open to the world!" "My idea is first of all to bring out the gems of spirituality that are stored up in our books and in the possession of a few only, hidden, as it were, in monasteries and in forests--to bring them out; to bring the knowledge out of them ... I want to bring out these ideas and let them be the common property of all, of

every man in India."⁹¹ When Vivekananda opposes the idea of special privileges he not only means wealth and power but also knowledge. In the past the ruling class tended to keep knowledge for themselves and not to give it out to the mass of people. They thought an educated public might rebel against them and demand more benefits. The Exoteric Age is replacing the Esoteric Age.

He presented a universal religion that is very broad in its ideas and methods, encompassing as many paths to Brahman-God as possible. A narrowly focused sect will attract only a limited number of followers. Vedanta is a broad philosophy that accepts many Avatars and that it is the Divine Plan to have many religions existing at the same time. Members of other religions with different points of view are respected and inner religious dialogue is encouraged. He mentioned, "If there were no fanaticism in the world, it would make much more progress than it does now. It is a mistake to think that fanaticism can make for the progress of mankind. On the contrary, it is a retarding element creating hatred and anger, and causing people to fight each other, and making them unsympathetic. We think that whatever we do or possess is the best in the world, and what we do not do or possess is of no value."⁹²

Briefly stated, a) Vivekananda universalized the Vedanta religion opening it to the people of all countries of the world, and all social classes. This process has been greatly aided by the expansion of universal education. When two religious faiths meet he wanted it to be on a high spiritual and intellectual plane where they can learn from each other.

With the rise of universal education and modern communication, the division of labor in spreading Sri Ramakrishna's message is vast. Vivekananda realized this and encouraged Western Indologists like Müller and Deussen to work on their projects. This division of labor includes a wide variety of people representing many nations and occupations, both genders, monastics and lay members.

Combining Sacred and Secular

In the West, improvements in a country generally come from making political, economic, legal, and societal alternations. Conversely, Vivekananda placed more emphasis on creating a society with a strong spiritual foundation. One of the main functions of a society and culture is to develop a more spiritual, moral, and self-realized individuals. Changes in religion are required (religious determinism) in order to improve society, particularly in India. Religious virtues should be put into practice through universal education, democracy, creating a good life for the masses, and other humanitarian endeavors.

Vivekananda explains, "It is absolutely necessary for the vast majority of human beings to have a personal ideal; and no nation can rise, can become great, can work at all, without enthusiastically coming under the banner of one of these great ideals in life... Our heroes must be spiritual. Such a hero has been given to us in the person of Ramakrishna Paramahansa. If this nation wants to rise, take my word for it, it will have to rally enthusiastically round this name."⁹³ What a wonderful ideal, to have an entire country centered around the ideas of Sri Ramakrishna.

The ideal should never be lowered in order to attract people. Vivekananda always presented the truths of Vedanta in the loftiest and most sublime way. He stated, "The Vedanta preaches the ideal; and the ideal, as we know, is always far ahead of the real, of the practical, as we may call it. There are two tendencies in human nature: one to harmonise the ideal with the life, and the other to elevate the life to the ideal. It is a great thing to understand this, for the former tendency is the temptation of our lives."⁹⁴

Vivekananda expanded Vedanta to include secular knowledge of the physical, social, psychological, political, and historical sciences. The prior religious paradigms were overly restrictive, too limited in scope

needing expansion. He stated, "Science and religion will meet and shake hands. Poetry and philosophy will become friends. This will be the religion of the future, and if we can work it out, we may be sure that it will be for all times and peoples."⁹⁵ Vivekananda was probably the first person to show that the subtle realms of religion and philosophy are interrelated with the gross physical realm of physics and biology as presented by modern science. That the physical (gross), mental (subtle), and spiritual (causal) realms interact and are interrelated and unified. Representatives of each of these fields of learning are free to make valuable contributions to various aspects of Vedantic knowledge. He was also one of the first Vedantic thinkers to use the ideas of contemporary physics (e.g., matter, energy, thermodynamics) and biology (e.g., evolution, heredity) in defense of metaphysical ideas. He taught not only the harmony of religions but the harmony of the secular and sacred cultures and mentalities. Their conflicts in the past held back the development of new knowledge. With the spectacular expansion of new knowledge originating outside of the religious field, commentaries on scripture have been greatly enhanced.

He wanted to create a new understanding of religion that breaks down the barriers that cause the separation of Brahman-God (sacred) from the world and humanity (secular). So he emphasized the principle of the identity of It and the world. Meaning Brahman-God is here and now, present in the depths of everything. It is the creative ground and unity of everything.⁹⁶

Since the medieval period the basic institutions of society (political, social, economic, etc.) have gradually liberated themselves from religious authority. As a consequence, religion has become peripheral and not central in many modern secular societies and universities. Vivekananda wanted religion to regain its original importance by harmonizing it with the other institutions of society to produce a "Unity of Culture." He sought a new synthesis to overcome the gap between religion and modern thought. Religion would not

dominate over the other institutions, but it would become a more important vital factor and more integrated with the other aspects of people's lives. Vivekananda realized that when millions of people gradually change their frame-of-mind about specific issues or circumstances, then a natural shift will occur that creates a transforming effect on society.

Vivekananda noted, "Compare the great teachers of religion with the great philosophers. The philosophers scarcely influenced anybody's inner man, and yet they wrote most marvelous books. The religious teachers, on the other hand, moved countries in their lifetime."⁹⁷ He was not like the scholars writing only for a highly educated select elite group of individuals, but for as many people as possible who could grasp his message. In the past in Asia and Europe, philosophical and theological writings have been couched in a technical terminology (for example, Immanuel Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*) that few people could understand, and hence were the exclusive property of a very select group of erudite intellectuals. As a result, this knowledge did the world far less good than it could have. Even to this day, the most powerful political and business leaders of the world have a very limited understanding of the higher principle of religious philosophy. In most Western universities few classes are taught in this area at an advanced level and consequently most people have an inadequate knowledge of the subject. Only in modern times, primarily due to universal education and because of an expanded communication technology for the circulation of ideas, can this knowledge be transmitted to and learned in varying degrees by a large percentage of the world population irrespective of their position in society. This is an example of the sociology of knowledge, that social conditions (e.g., universal education, technology) have an effect on the knowledge taught (i.e. advanced religious ideas).

There have been great philosophical synthesizers like Plotinus, Shankara, and Thomas Aquinas who created comprehensive systems of

religious philosophy. A problem is that they were so thorough and complete that they tended to finalize the study, and there was not much left for philosophers of future generations to develop and work on (unless they disagreed with them). Following the "Principle of Limits" they reached a temporary conceptual boundary and thusly some stagnation followed. Since every ideological system is finite, it eventually reaches a theoretical limit beyond which (at least for the time being) no significant new modifications can be added to it. Since all religions are open to future conceptual development, there is the possibility that the ideological system will be reinvigorated if new discoveries in other areas of study can be incorporated into it.

Conversely, Vivekananda mentioned the lack of time to develop his ideas in detail. This leaves room for a future expansion of his thoughts by relating them to more recent discoveries in many fields. After his passing there was an explosion in knowledge in almost every field of study. Relating these new ideas with Vedantic teachings offers great potential for future study. He offered a vast number of suggestive ideas as part of a philosophical system that people in the future can work on and develop, thereby creating an open-ended rather than a closed system of beliefs. An intellectual tradition should have the ability to assimilate new material, while conserving its past principles and achievements. It is best if the tradition possesses unrealized potential for growth, whereby ideas and principles that presently exist in partially developed form, possess the capabilities for further progressive development. He left his ideas open to the spirit of the law, not the letter of the law. Hinduism like any other religion is a living tradition that must adjust to the times and find new expressions for the eternal truths.⁹⁸

In summary Vivekananda is "The sage of the Modern Age." His thinking is universal, deep, and profound expressing the highest ideals, clear and easy to understand, practical, original, modern and contemporary, and with room for expansion based on future

implications. It is accurate and free from error, precise, relevant, has breath covering a wide range of ideas, logically based on sound reasoning, and of significance and importance.

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