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VII. The Ramakrishna Order and the Future of Humanity

1. Swami Vivekananda in the West¹

Swami Vivekananda was a man of spiritual insight, intellectual brilliance, personal charm, moral earnestness, a forceful speaker with deep religious feelings, and a genuinely universal man. He was one of the very first Indian teachers to travel to the West where among other things he created the Vedanta Society, the first Centers of Indian teachings and worship in the United States and England. His interest was in quality of dedicated followers rather than quantity of adherents. An important objective was to remove the prevailing misconceptions concerning Hinduism hitherto held by Westerners about his people and their customs. His audiences began to glimpse a new view of a spiritually creative ancient Indian civilization. He was the first Oriental who comprehensively interpreted India to the West, as a country capable of meeting and dealing with the intellectual and social challenges of the modern world. Not only did he eloquently explain Hinduism to the West, but in doing so he also made it understandable to his own countrymen. His success in preaching to the world the greatness of Hinduism gave his countrymen an added sense of dignity and pride in their own culture (Civilization).

He made Vedanta relevant to modern times, providing a framework of understanding through his new, unheard of presentation of Hinduism. Vivekananda taught the universalist message of Vedantic ideals to all people irrespective of class, age, and gender, in accordance

with their ability to assimilate them. The gift he brought from India to America was the religious tradition of centuries, the wisdom of the Eastern sages. This was more than a system of ideas; but a path of realization emphasizing the unity of all existence, the Divinity of the soul (self), and the harmony of religions. These universal ideals and principles are potentially attainable by all people. His goal was to universalize essential Vedantic concepts such as Brahman, Atman, Avatar, moksha, yoga, karma, etc. so they would be congruent with the prevailing ideologies of other societies. In his striving for universality and synthesis, he also opened himself up to receive Western ideas. For him, India's special mission in the modern world is to preach spirituality and the great teachings of the Vedanta to all, to revive the spiritual indigenous wisdom not only of India but also of the entire world. Hopefully, this will create a new type of civilization and person. Following the structural-functional approach, if in the future Vedanta produces changes in religion, this will also bring about beneficial modifications in other aspects of the social system. According to the "Functional Theory of History," that innovation survives that best meets the needs of society. For example, in most countries democracy won out over monarchy because it was more successful and brought better results.

Swami Vivekananda credited England for creating the historical opportunity for Indians to spread the message of Vedanta worldwide, "Owing to English genius, the world today has been linked in such a fashion, as has never before been done. Today trade centres have been formed such as have never been before in the history of mankind, and immediately, consciously or unconsciously, India rises up and pours forth her gifts of spirituality, and they will rush through these roads till they have reached the very ends of the world."² A new global awareness has arisen due to modern technology and many other factors. Consequently humanity is not as cultural bound as it used to be, and people are free to accept ideas that have arisen in other cultures. Ideological and conceptual (rather than geographical) globalization implies people will become less reductionistic and will view things from

more than a single perspective so that for example, there will be a harmony between science and religion, and one religion and another, etc.

In order to fulfill its national destiny, Vivekananda considered it imperative that India make contact with the other nations of the world. Indians must learn from other nations, particularly those of the West: their organizational abilities, pragmatic orientation, work ethic, and scientific and technical knowledge. "I am thoroughly convinced that no individual or nation can live by holding itself apart from the community of others, and whenever such an attempt has been made under the false ideas of greatness, policy, or holiness--the result has always been disastrous to the secluding one."³ Furthermore, he firmly believed that Westerners could gain an objective understanding of Indian religion and philosophy, though they have been brought up in a different ideological culture, tradition, and sociocultural environment.

Vivekananda's message could not have been understood and well received had the people of the West not been prepared for it. Reception requires a historical preparation. The teacher is dependent on the way his message is received, according to the nature of the recipient. There is a correlation between knowledge given to others and the historical situation. Vivekananda came to a people that had some preparation to receive his teachings. This was largely due to the citizens of the United States and England being well-educated, living in a society where there are a wide variety of available ideas, and the freedom to select whatever beliefs that appealed to them. This is a sattvic form of secularism that prepares people for the sacred. As the German-American Protestant theologian Paul Tillich (1886-1965) stated, "If you want to speak meaningfully with someone, there must be a common basis of some mutually accepted ideas.... If they have nothing in common, no conversation is possible."⁴ Theories cannot be externally imposed upon the other person, but must be accepted from within as a fulfillment of their own basic needs. Vivekananda remarked, "In England the Vedantic ideas have been introduced by the most learned men in the country, and there are a large number among the upper classes in

England who are very thoughtful. So you will be astonished to hear that I found my grounds all prepared.”⁵ He was careful to use religious ideas and symbols and language and categories that would speak to modern people and motivate them.

It must be cautioned that many people of the West were prepared to appreciate Vivekananda’s ideas, but only a small number to become his followers. Considering historical time, this process will take many years.

At present we are living in a transition period, an age of preparation where gradually more and more people are being made ready for a spiritually oriented life. They are gaining new understanding, acquiring specific skills, and self-motivation, being involved in new activities that are preparing them for the world of the future. These are “the signs of the times.” The leaders of this movement live in many countries and represent all of the major religions of the world.

Some preparation for Vivekananda’s message came from the Transcendentalist movement of Emerson and Thoreau (Franklin Sanborn); Theosophy (Leon Landsberg, E. T. Sturdy, and Henrietta Muller); Christian Science (Sister Christine and others), the lectures of Mohini Chatterjee (Sarah Bull and Julia Ward Howe); and the translations of the *Bhagavad Gita* (Josephine MacLeod and Mrs. Betty Leggett).

Mary Baker Eddy’s (1821-1910) greatest contribution to the Vedanta Movement was indirect, in that she had a disciple named Mrs. Emma Curtis Hopkins (1849-1925) who was a fulltime editor her *Christian Science Journal* (1884-85). Mrs. Hopkins “the teacher of teachers” broke off from Christian Science in 1885, becoming the founder and guru of the first organized association of the modern New Thought movement. Students who attended the Emma Hopkins College of Metaphysical Science, many of whom were women included Vivekananda supporters like Annie Rix Miltz and Harriet Rix (founders of the Home of Truth in 1899), Paul Miltz, Ella Wheeler Wilcox, and Charles and Myrtle Fillmore (founders of the Unity School of Christianity in 1891, the largest New Thought Church in the West today). Another of

her students was Malinda E. Cramer (co-founder of Divine Science). Many Home of Truth people joined the Vedanta Society including Alice (Shanti) Hansbrough, Ida Ansell, and several other lifelong Northern California devotees. William Walker Atkinson (1862–1932) the editor of New Thought magazine promoted Indian ideas and also wrote under the name of Yogi Ramacharaka. New Thought spread to Japan under the name of Seicho-no-Ie. During April 1913, Swami Abhedananda was the only Asian to receive a cordial invitation to present an address at the National New Thought Alliance Conference held in Detroit, Michigan. The list of invited participants to this event included friends of Vedanta like Rose Ashby, Charles Brodie Patterson, Charles Fillmore, Orison Swett Marden, Edwin Markham, Annie Rix Miltz, Reverend Benjamin Fay Mills, Reverend R. Heber Newton, Ralph Waldo Trine, and Ella Wheeler Wilcox. New Thought taught that God is Infinite Intelligence, eternal, omnipotent, and omnipresent. We should love each other unconditionally since all people are spiritual beings in which divinity dwells. Divinely attuned thought is a positive force for good and better health.⁶

There are a number of similarities between New Thought and New Age since both movements have women in leadership roles, accept reincarnation, believe in a good God, and that every person is part of God or have at least a spark of the Divine in them, are religiously tolerant of other religions, realize the value of meditation, search for alternatives to orthodox medicine, and are philosophically idealistic. They differ is that New Age is more interested in the occult than New Thought and the latter relied more on spiritual healing than does the former.⁷

The year 1893 was eventful for the making of modern India. In the month of February, Sri Aurobindo (1872-1950) returned to India after having been a student in England. Near the end of May representing a law firm, a young Mahatma Gandhi (1869-1948) arrived in Port Natal, South Africa. There he began his life long mission of freeing Indians from external injustice. And on July 25, Swami Vivekananda landed in

Vancouver, Canada unknown and unheralded, on his way to the World's Parliament of Religions.

It is significant that Vivekananda spoke at the Parliament of Religions during the Columbian Exposition, marking the four hundredth anniversary of Christopher Columbus' discovery of America in 1492. This event four centuries earlier marked the beginning of the long process of developing a new world civilization with a strong secular foundation (For Secularization of the Earth, see Chapter 1). In spite of its many accomplishments, the historical process of extreme secularization (materialism) brought about a despiritualizing of the world and many mental problems. Sri Ramakrishna and his disciples came to modify the materialistic trend by initiating a new spiritual era.

Vivekananda had to face many challenges when presenting his message in the West. For example in April 1894 a symposium followed his public address in Northampton, Massachusetts. Martha Brown Fincke relates, "To our house came the [Smith] College President [Laureus Seelye], the head of the philosophy department, and several other professors, the ministers of the Northampton churches, and a well-known author [George Cable].... I have a strong impression that it [the conversation] dealt mainly with Christianity and why it is the only true religion.... As his imposing presence faced the row of black-coated and somewhat austere gentlemen, one felt that he was being challenged.... How could one expect a Hindu from far-off India to hold his own with these masters ... To texts from the *Bible*, the Swami replied by other and more apposite ones from the same book. In upholding his side of the argument he quoted English philosophers and writers on religious subjects. Even the poets he seemed to know thoroughly, quoting Wordsworth and Thomas Gray.... I only know that I felt triumphant with him."⁸

One indication that Vivekananda was making a strong impression on the Western intellectuals is in 1897 after returning to India for the first time, Vivekananda received a letter signed by Charles Everett, William James, John Henry Wright, Josiah Royce, James Lough, and Arthur Lovejoy all of Harvard University. In three separate sentences,

this group of highly respected educators specifically made a request that their “Dear Friend and Brother” return to the United States as a teacher.⁹

Jean Herbert (1897-1980) was a close friend of Romain Rolland (1866-1944) and a prodigious French writer, editor, and translator, primarily of Indian texts. He wrote and/or translated numerous works by or on Ramakrishna, Vivekananda, Aurobindo, Shankara, R. Tagore, M. Gandhi, R. Maharshi, the *Upanishads*, and *Bhagavad-Gita*.¹⁰ Evaluating Swami Vivekananda’s message to the West in 1938 he ascertained, “He is, if not the first, at least one of the first among the Hindus who had a profound personal experience of India and its spiritual traditions and also at the same time a direct knowledge of our conceptions, our techniques, our science and our mode of thinking, reasoning and understanding; he was thus one of the first who could directly bring to us the fruits of the spiritual quest of India. Until then, we had known them either through those who, coming from India, had heard others speak of these researches without having practiced them and hence had no authority, or through the Orientalist, who were valuable scholars, no doubt, but who had studied only the exterior.... After that first contact, Swami Vivekananda travelled much and stayed for a long time in the United States and Europe. He delivered many lectures before Western audiences, in which he gave a direct exposition of what he knew thoroughly, and which he could explain in a style and a form of thought we could understand.... He has given us the authentic conceptions of the great Hindu masters expressed in a way very comprehensible to us.”¹¹

On this subject Professor Norman R. Adams, of Westminster College indicated, “Vivekananda carried the truths of Vedanta (philosophy of monism) to the West and thus brought the enlightenment of Indian philosophy and religion to a materialistic civilization. His famous appearance at the Chicago Parliament of Religions in 1893 and the enormous attention given him throughout the United States and in Europe during the next four years might indicate the validity of that claim. Vivekananda did introduce Hinduism

to the Western world and in doing so gave it a new understanding and appreciation of Eastern religion. For the first time many Americans and Europeans learned that there was another side to the sad story of India most missionaries came home to describe, and newspaper accounts of the Swami's triumphal lecture tours show the surprise which his brilliant appearances elicited."¹²

Charles Carroll Bonney (1831-1903) was the originator, manager, and president of the Auxiliary of the World's Congresses. As a member of the Swedenborgian faith, Bonney believed that the religious doctrines of Emanuel Swedenborg (1688-1772) were "the fundamental truths which made a World's Parliament of Religions possible; upon which rested the whole plan of the religious congresses of 1893, and which guided the execution of that plan to a success so great and far-reaching that only the coming generations can fully comprehend and estimate its influence." Bonney added, "During the organization and conduct of the World's Congresses of 1893, I was led to feel that all my life had been a preparation for this work; and that in a thousand ways provisions had been made for its extraordinary needs."¹³ Vivekananda stated that Charles Bonny "originated the plan of the Parliament of Religions." According to a Detroit newspaper report of February 18, 1894, Vivekananda mentioned in the course of a lecture, "Swedenborg seemed like a European successor of an early Hindoo priest, clothing in modern garb an ancient conviction ... Every individual has in himself perfection."¹⁴

Frank J. Alexander (1887/88-1917) an American devotee adds, "He was the first Oriental who patriotically and comprehensively interpreted India to the Occident. He swept aside the wholesale, prevailing superstitions concerning Indian life and customs that had crept into the mind of the West through intentional or unintentional misinterpretation. His life spoke constantly of the greatness of the race from which He sprang, and His thought and His voice tended everywhere and at all times to exalt, to the highest rank in the public opinion of the West, the dignity and greatness of the Indian nation."¹⁵

His teachings came as a complete surprise to many people who instinctively assumed that the West led the world in every field of accomplishment, that her civilization, culture, customs, ideals are the standard after which the rest of the world should model itself.¹⁶ Because of the ethnocentrism found at times in the West he had to face a great deal of opposition from those people who held all kinds of mistaken ideas concerning Indian thought. When people criticize another religion or group of people often motivated by a Superiority Complex, it is usually the case that they know little about them. Vivekananda brought out this point in the following incident. "A striking illustration of what in another case would be termed insularity of outlook was brought to view by a noted Hindu when addressing a vast audience at the World's Congress of Religions in America, in the city of Chicago, in 1893. Pausing in the midst of his discourse, the speaker asked that every member of the audience who had read the sacred books of the Hindus, and who therefore had firsthand knowledge of their religion, would raise his hand. Only three or four hands were raised, though the audience represented, presumably, the leading theologians of many lands. Glancing benignly over the assembly, the Hindu raised himself to his full height, and in a voice every accent of which must have smitten the audience as a rebuke, pronounced these simple words, 'And yet you dare to judge us!'"¹⁷

On this subject Grayson Kirk (1903-97), the distinguished President of Columbia University in New York City commented, "In this country, his great personal charm, his intellectual brilliance and his spiritual profundity made such a great impression that he was listened to with respect when he sought to dispel some of the strange notions hitherto held by Americans about his people and their customs. They began to glimpse a view of a rich, complicated and ancient civilization quite unlike the India they had read about in Kipling or Henty."¹⁸ Diane Collinson, Kathryn Plant and Robert Wilkinson, each Lecturer's in Philosophy at Open University mention Vivekananda's presence in the West, "In 1893, the distinguished representatives of the world's leading religions met at the World's Parliament of Religions in Chicago. A

young Swami named Vivekananda, only 30 years of age, electrified this audience by his direct, forceful and moving oratory, and almost single-handedly began a movement to make the world aware of modern Hinduism, a movement which has lasted to this day.

Vivekananda combined in one personality an unusual range of qualities: the intense spirituality which has attracted him to the path of the Hindu *sannyasin* or renunciate, counterbalanced by real concern for social reform in his native India; great philosophical competence, especially with regard to the ideas of Shankara, combined with insights gained from yogic, religious experience; and added to these enormous energy, powers of persuasion and oratorical skill. Vivekananda believed with absolute sincerity that the Hindu's outlook had much to offer the world, and devoted much of his short life to a brilliantly successful attempt to make these ideas known to the West."¹⁹

Swami Vivekananda's distinguished biographer in the West, Sister Gargi (Marie Louise Burke, 1912-2004) made these insightful statements about his future influence of Vedanta in the West, "The Swami had deep feeling for the American people. He spoke to them in their own cultural language, he understood their needs, he scolded them for their faults, he admired them for the greatness of their ideals and character, for their vitality and initiative, and he felt they were worth giving the best years of his life to. 'They loved me, and I love them a great deal,' he once said. 'I felt I was one of them.' Surely a country that has been loved and blessed by so great a prophet can never really decline: surely the spiritual energy that he charged it with will suddenly surge forth. In fact, I believe this is beginning to happen—and none too soon!"²⁰

She adds, "He manifested Divinity to an extraordinary degree such as in our present state of existence we cannot even begin to comprehend. We are stunned when we learn that he could enter into samadhi at a moment's notice, that sometimes he had to make an effort not to enter into samadhi; we are awed by his power, by his ability to alter the thought currents of an entire nation, to bless people and to profoundly transform them; we are deeply moved by his same-

sightedness, his vastness of heart, his unconditional compassion. Such characteristics as these, which spring directly from his knowledge of Brahman, are, to be sure, the most important things about Vivekananda, if he did not possess them, we would not be thinking about him at all."²¹

2. Spiritualizing the World

Swami Vivekananda expressed his views on the historical importance of spiritualizing the world, "This I know for certain that millions, I say deliberately, millions in every civilised land are waiting for the message that will save them from the hideous abyss of materialism into which modern money-worship is driving them headlong, and many of the leaders of the new social movements have already discovered that Vedanta in its highest form can alone spiritualise their social aspirations."²² To Swami Prakashananda he said, "Great Ones will come out of the West." Likewise, "Swami Trigunatita firmly believed that America was destined to be a great spiritual land, second only to India."²³

After touring the United States and England for over three years, lecturing constantly, he received a hero's welcome on his return to India in 1897. Vivekananda made the following five affirmative statements during his triumphal tour of India at that time.

"Hence again must start the wave which is going to spiritualize the material civilization of the world. Here is the life-giving water with which must be quenched the burning fire of materialism which is burning the core of the hearts of millions in other lands. Believe me, my friends, this is going to be."

"Political greatness or military power is never the mission of our race; it never was, and mark my words, it never will be. But there has been the other mission given to us, which is to conserve, to preserve, to accumulate, as it were, into a dynamo, all the spiritual energy of the race, and that concentrated energy is to pour forth in a deluge on the world whenever circumstances are propitious. Let the Persian or the

Greek, the Roman, the Arab, or the Englishman march his battalions, conquer the world, and link the different nations together, and the philosophy and spirituality of India is ever ready to flow along the new-made channels into the veins of the nations of the world. The Hindu's calm brain must pour out its own quota to give to the sum total of human progress. India's gift to the world is the light spiritual."²⁴

"India's contribution to the sum total of human knowledge has been spirituality, philosophy. These she contributed even long before the rising of the Persian Empire; the second time was during the Persian Empire; for the third time during the ascendancy of the Greeks; and now for the fourth time during the ascendancy of the English, she is going to fulfill the same destiny once more. As the Western ideas of organisation and external civilisation are penetrating and pouring into our country, whether we will have them or not, so Indian spirituality and philosophy are deluging the lands of the West."

"Spirituality must conquer the West. Slowly they are finding out that what they want is spirituality to preserve them as nations. They are waiting for it, they are eager for it. Where is the supply to come from? Where are the men ready to go out to every country in the world with the messages of the great sages of India? Where are the men who are ready to sacrifice everything, so that this message shall reach every corner of the world? Such heroic souls are wanted to help the spread of truth. Such heroic workers are wanted to go abroad and help to disseminate the great truths of Vedanta. The world wants it; without it the world will be destroyed. The whole of the Western world is on a volcano which may burst tomorrow, go to pieces tomorrow. They have searched every corner of the world and have found no respite. They have drunk deep of the cup of pleasure and found it vanity. Now is the time to work so that India's spiritual ideas may penetrate deep into the West. Therefore young men of Madras, I specially ask you to remember this. We must go out, we must conquer the world through our spirituality and philosophy. There is no other alternative, we must do it or die. The only condition of national life, of awakened and vigorous national life, is the conquest of the world by Indian thought."

"We can teach the world only what it is waiting for. The whole of Western civilisation will crumble to pieces in the next fifty years if there is no spiritual foundation. It is hopeless and perfectly useless to attempt to govern mankind with the sword. You will find that the very centres from which such ideas as government by force sprang up are the very first centres to degrade and degenerate and crumble to pieces. Europe, the centre of the manifestation of material energy, will crumble into dust within fifty years if she is not mindful to change her position, to shift her ground and make spirituality the basis of her life. And what will save Europe is the religion of the *Upanishads*."²⁵

After visiting Europe in 1900, Vivekananda wrote of "the possibility of a dreadful war" which he described as a "catastrophe" occurring after the death of the Austrian Emperor Franz Joseph (1830-1916). Joseph lived longer than expected. It is interesting that Vivekananda mentioned Franz Joseph who unwittingly started the First World War in 1914, when Austria-Hungary declared war on Serbia. This was not his intention since he issued his ultimatum for war because he mistakenly thought other nations would not intervene. Vivekananda also mentioned that, "In the present times a huge wave of nationalism is sweeping over Europe, where people speaking the same tongue, professing the same religion, and belonging to the same race want to unite together." As an example, "Germany will surely try to absorb the German-speaking portion of the Austrian Empire." Due to the events of the First World War and its aftermath, Germany was not able to accomplish that task until 1938.²⁶

Vivekananda prophesied, "The next great upheaval which is to bring about a new epoch will come from Russia or China."²⁷ He is probably referring to the communist revolution which took place in 1917 in Russia and in 1949 in China. Many conflicts occurred during the Cold War between the United States and the Soviet Union (Russia), which began in 1947 and lasted until 1991. The Soviet Union did away with Communism in 1991 but still has retained an authoritarian government combined with low levels of religiosity.

From a positive standpoint, according to the "Doctrine of Manifest Destiny," a group of people have special virtues and it is their mission in life and moral responsibility to spread these ideas and institutions to people of other countries, for their benefit. Manifest destiny is a general concept involving a complex of ideas, policies, and actions rather than a specific detailed policy. The constructive aspects of Manifest Destiny have been expressed in the spread of democracy, equality, universal education, and religion to other countries.

It is well-known that Vivekananda possessed great self-confidence that he was born for a mission to which he was totally dedicated. When he travelled to England in 1895, Professor Robert Watson Frazer (1854-1921) who penned four books on Indian history noted, "In private conversation he always maintained a quiet confidence that 'Indian thought, philosophical and spiritual, must once more go over and conquer the world.'" This was confirmed by T. W. Rhys Davids (1843-1922) the well-known British Buddhist who remarked that Swami Vivekananda was "gifted by an unshaken confidence in his own solution to the problems of life."³⁰

Many years later in 1963, the Italian Orientalist, Giuseppe Tucci (1894-1984) mentioned the vital importance of the message of Ramakrishna and Vivekananda in today's world, "I feel this [Vivekananda] Centenary is of essential significance in this moment. In fact, our troubled world needs now, more than ever, to be informed with the teachings of such Masters as Swami Vivekananda, who have brought a message of peace and goodwill to all men, irrespective of the country of their birth; the aims you are pursuing, and the efforts you are doing for spreading his words as far wide as possible, deserve the support and encouragement of all who have not surrendered to the sways of materialism and technology."³¹

Vivekananda's importance today was also expressed by the Director of the Institute of Oriental Studies in Moscow, E. P. Chelisev (Chelyshev, b. 1921). He informed Swami Lokeshwarananda (1909-98) that, "The name of Swami Vivekananda is very popular in Soviet Russia and he is held in high esteem by our countrymen. Soviet people respect

him as a great democrat, humanist and patriot who contributed immensely in the development of national consciousness and the anti-colonial liberation movement in India. They also consider that his message and the message of Sri Ramakrishna, which are really one, are absolutely necessary for the survival of the human civilization which is now in great danger due to the menace of the devastating nuclear war."³²

Robert Charles Zaehner (1913-1974) was for many years the Spalding professor of Eastern religions and ethics at Oxford University in England. His books included *Mysticism Sacred and Profane* 1957, where he differentiates between monistic (nondualistic) and theistic (dualistic) mysticism; and *Hindu and Muslim Mysticism* 1960, in which he shows Shankarian influences on Iranian Sufism. In his 1962 volume titled *Hinduism*, he made the following important point concerning Vivekananda at the World's Parliament of Religions in 1893, "Here for the first time he was able to present Hinduism to the world as a universal faith; and Hinduism, so long on the defensive against Muslim and Christian attack, for the first time went over to the offensive.... Vivekananda performed the extraordinary feat of breathing life into the purely static monism of Shankara. In Europe and America he proclaimed from the housetops the absolute divinity of man ... Man is by nature free (*mukta*), his liberation is permanently with him, and it is he, no other, who binds himself in illusion: he has within himself the power to cast off his chains ... He still believed that Hindu spirituality was supreme—for it alone proclaimed the great Advaitin Truth and the means by which it could be realized, but since the revelation he had received at Cape Comorin he realized that this must be allied to practical service to the needy and to the Western scientific techniques which make that service possible. Thus in India the Ramakrishna mission concentrated on the performance of good works."³³

The distinguished author of the classic cultural-historical textbook, *The Wonder that Was India* (1954), A. L. Basham (1914-86) of the University of London, in 1968 insightfully foretold of Vivekananda's future place in world history, "The passing of the years and the many

stupendous and unexpected events which have occurred since then suggest that in centuries to come he will be remembered as one of the main moulders of the modern world, especially as far as Asia is concerned, and as one of the most significant figures in the whole history of Indian religion, comparable in importance to such great teachers as Shankara and Ramanuja.... I believe also that Vivekananda will always be remembered in the world's history because he virtually initiated what the late Dr. C. E. M. Joad once called 'the counter-attack from the East.' Since the days of the Indian missionaries who travelled in South East Asia and China preaching Buddhism and Hinduism more than a thousand years earlier, he was the first Indian religious teacher to make an impression outside India."³⁴

Sister Gargi (Marie Louise Burke) provides us with a very interesting theory that the Divine Incarnation-Avatara and their disciples, with their powerful spiritual vibrations working at a deep level are able to change the thought current of a society. She theorizes, "As I see it, the Swami's gigantic mission was to alter at its deepest source the whole thought-current of the Western people, and this without in any way disturbing their inherent greatness—their long-evolving capacity for rational thought, their powers of scientific analysis, their innate ability to invent and explore, to brave any storm and hurdle any obstacle, their passion for freedom, their capacity for compassion, their yearning for truth. Vivekananda knew there was only one way to save these priceless, long developing human qualities from erosion, and that was to root them in the unshakable, adamant rock of Advaita Vedanta."³⁵ She continues, "This, in essence, was Sri Ramakrishna's message to the Western world. It was Swami Vivekananda's mission in America to give that message in all its ramifications. But more than that, it was his mission to *enable* the people to absorb it and put it into practice. His primary mission in America (as I understand it) was to *spiritualize* the deep mind-currents of the American people, to turn their freedom-loving, equality-asserting nature toward the Spirit. Who can say how this is done? One can say only that it must be a 'process' involving the mind-ocean of which individual minds are the visible

waves. Only those who can plumb those depths can know what goes on down there. And yet, can we doubt that Swami Vivekananda's thought and personality, indeed, his very presence, were powerful enough to churn that mind-ocean and change the direction of its deep-lying currents? We cannot doubt it if we agree that such churning is precisely the function of a Divine Incarnation and his great apostles."³⁶

Sister Gargi mentions changing the "thought-current of the Western people." Beneath the physical plane is the subtle plane and even deeper is the causal plane of existence. According to Vedanta all causation begins at the causal level, then enters into the subtle (mental) plane, and then finally manifests at the physical level. It is like a minute seed beneath the ground that later manifests as a large tree. Since we evaluate things at the physical level, our understanding of the underlying causality is limited, making it difficult at times to forecast future events. Divine Incarnation-Avatara through their intense spiritual natures and practices, have the ability to work at the causal level and to bring about major changes in human existence. But it is a long timely process involving decades or even centuries before these seeds manifest first on the mental plane of existence and then on the physical. Vivekananda explains, "There is one fact more to learn about this rising and falling. The seed comes out of the tree; it does not immediately become a tree but has a period of inactivity, or rather, a period of very fine unmanifested action. The seed has to work for some time beneath the soil." Adrishta (in the Vaisheshika philosophy) and apurva are the name of the unknown and invisible force or potency caused by an act, which determines future events and is the dynamic source of the Law of Karma.³⁷

The goal is to create a positive and enlightened world karma, which comprises the sum total of all national and group karmas that we all share in. Since there are group karmas there are also group samskaras, i.e., common ways of thinking that the group members tend to share in common. All attempts should be made to create a good national and world karma. Outstanding examples of the United States creating good national karma include: the generous General Marshall

Plan (1948) designed to rebuild the economy of Western Europe, the Peace Corps formed in 1961 through an Executive Order by President John Kennedy, taking the lead in the Internet and computer hardware and software, a high percentage of Nobel Prize winners, making intellectual contributions in many areas of study, providing university education for over 700,000 Asian students in 2019/20 with over half coming from China and a quarter from India, the American involvement in the global humanitarian movement of the International Rescue Committee (IRC), Americans producing a vaccine for Covid-19 that other countries are benefitting from, and American business in China that is raising the economic standard of that country. These efforts focus on improving the level of health, education, economic wellbeing, and human rights throughout the world. Also there are outstanding American philanthropists like Andrew Carnegie, John D. Rockefeller, Henry Ford, Warren Buffett, and Bill and Melinda Gates who have donated a large portion of their wealth to charities worldwide.³⁸ Was Andrew Carnegie the first person in the world to do this or was it done in the past? This is the type of renunciation that a wealthy person can be engaged in, with the added satisfaction that they are helping other people and making it a better world. Following the "Functional Theory of History," the dominant countries in the world are often those that are the most beneficial to human society.

In the middle of the twentieth century Americans considered China to be the number one threat to nuclear war, even greater than Russia. Since that time American business has invested in China greatly expanding the wealth of their country and now the relations between the two countries are far better than before. Prosperity in China occurred because they are able to produce quality products at a lower price thereby cutting down on inflation in other countries. Indian born Sadhguru (b. 1957) mentioned in poor countries the United States should spend money on feeding the children and on medical supplies. This would create the most favorable relations with these countries.

To give another positive example of attempts to better the world, the Legatum Institute is a think tank based in London, UK seeking to

transform national and international political, social, and economic policies. It is run by Philippa Stroud (b. 1965) who has devoted her life to reducing poverty, social justice, and the transformation of society. The Legatum Prosperity Index programmed by Stephen Brien uses 66 policy-focused elements measured by nearly 300 country-level indicators to rank 167 nations of the world. The nine key sub-indices are: "Economic Fundamentals—an economy that provides opportunities for the creation of wealth; Entrepreneurship and Innovation—an environment friendly to new enterprises and the commercialization of new ideas; Education—an accessible, high-quality educational system that fosters human development; Democratic Institutions—transparent and accountable governing institutions that promote economic growth; Governance—an honest and effective government that preserves order and encourages productive citizenship; Health—the physical well-being of the populace; Personal Freedom—the degree to which individuals can choose the course of their lives; Security—a safe environment in which people can pursue opportunity; and Social Capital—trustworthiness in relationships and strong communities and legitimate leadership is a key determinant of prosperous nations."³⁹

3. Obstacles in the Way

Because Vivekananda was writing not only to his contemporaries but also for people many centuries in the future, it will take time for his message to be thoroughly understood. Vivekananda wrote to Alasinga in September 1894, "It will take a long time for the Westerners to understand the higher spirituality. Everything is £.s.d. to them. If a religion brings them money or health or beauty or long life, they will all flock to it, otherwise not."⁴⁰ In 1894 he wrote to Swami Ramakrishnananda, 'I am careering all over the country. Wherever the seed of his power will fall, there it will fructify—be it today, or in a hundred years" and the following year to Swami Brahmananda, "Now I have laid the foundations firm here and in England, and nobody has the power to shake them."⁴¹ In a letter dated April 11, 1906 to Josephine

MacLeod, Sister Nivedita (1867-1911) informed her, "You see, when we who understood Vivekananda and remembered him are dead, there will come a long period of obscurity and silence, for the work that he did. It will *seem* to be forgotten, until, suddenly, in 150 or 200 years, it will be found to have transformed the West."⁴² Sri Ramakrishna said more than once, "When the ashwattha tree is a mere sapling, it must be enclosed by a fence; otherwise the cattle will eat it. But the fence may be taken away when the trunk grows thick and strong."⁴³ Similarly, during the early stages of the Vedanta Society in the West it must be kept small and dedicated until it is ready to take on a larger number of people.

The adoption of a new religion such as Vedanta by the West is at first ideological (ideas and meanings) and then behavioral, and material when the religious philosophy begins to be practiced and applied in the material culture. Looking over the pages of history it took possibly nearly a couple of hundred years for Christianity in the Roman Empire; and Buddhism in India, China, and Japan to get a firm foundation and sometimes nearly another century before the religion became widespread. Why did it take so long for the truth that they conveyed to be accepted by a large number of people? Two major reasons for a slower rate of diffusion are as a generalization, *ceteris paribus* (all other things being equal); the more fundamental and deep-rooted the new paradigm is, the larger its scope as a vast supersystem, and the more it deviates from the present paradigm (which includes all aspects of society besides religion), the longer it will take before it is accepted.⁴⁴ It must coordinate with the other aspects of society and culture. Another reason is that Buddha, Christ, and Ramakrishna did not teach an easy religion; they teach what the Christians call a "tough Gospel." They did not lower their teachings in order to attract more adherents. The first step is to convert a select a group of highly disciplined adherents who create a puritanical organization. Quality is far more important than quantity. In time they attract the elites who gradually win over the majority of people.

Vivekananda provides a highly original explanation of the process,

“Every new thought that we have must make, as it were, a new channel through the brain, and that explains the tremendous conservatism of human nature. Human nature likes to run through the ruts that are already there, because it is easy.... that is why we find that in the practice of Yoga (it being an entirely new set of thoughts and motives) there is so much physical resistance at first. That is why we find that the part of religion which deals with the world-side of nature is so widely accepted, while the other part, the philosophy, or the psychology, which deals with the inner nature of man, is so frequently neglected.”⁴⁵

Miss Mary Elizabeth Dutcher for days was not able to attend some of Vivekananda’s lectures at her home in Thousand Island Park. Vivekananda explained, “Don’t you see this is not an ordinary illness. It is the reaction of the body against the chaos that is going on in her mind. She cannot bear it.”⁴⁶ Vivekananda’s statement is verified by the fact that most of the tributes he has received from Western intellectuals concern his lecturing success in America, establishment of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission, and his desire to help and educate the masses in India. On the other hand, most of his profound religious, philosophical, and psychological ideas have not gained the attention in the West they deserve.

Another reason for the slow acceptance of new ideas, is that a persons understanding and analysis of new ideas are not free from the restraining effects of their own prior experience, theoretical and practical presuppositions, personal values, expectations, culture, and historically determined situatedness (e.g., their religious group, political-social environment, socioeconomic class, etc) as the German Hans-Georg Gadamer (1900-2002) has stated. According to the philosophical hermeneutics (interpretation) school of Gadamer human understanding is a “historically effected consciousness,” conditioned by the particular history and culture that shaped the person’s thinking. To understand a new system of beliefs, attitudes, and ways of thinking, a person’s response and evaluation are based largely on their own particular pre-existent intellectual-social-cultural background that

determined their belief system (Positionalism). The person interprets the data based on their own prior experiences, thought categories, and concepts. This creates limitations in their comprehension and acceptance of new concepts. A person is prejudiced (a type of maya) if they think only their limited paradigm is correct.⁴⁷

Conceptualization the forming an idea about something is done to get a better understanding of things. It is based on motivational state, emotional state, and personal experiences. Conceptualization is not only the passive receipt of ideas, but is determined by the person's prior learning and concepts, memory, expectations, and restorative and selective mechanisms.

A personal paradigm is the thought structure of all the ideas, ideals, and values in a persons mind. It is centered around the predominant themes that motivate a person to think and act in certain ways.

In the Global-Integral Age it is necessary to accept paradigms that differ from ours. What we conceptually conceive of (idea, interpretation), is a combination of a) the idea-in-itself, fact-in-itself, or value-in-itself (truth, foundation), and b) our conceptual apparatus. All other factors being equal, the more rational, truthful, and selfless the person is the closer 'b' will be to 'a.' A mindset is a set of ideas, attitudes, and methods held by one or more people or a group of people, which create a powerful incentive to adopt or accept certain new behavior patterns and choices. Vivekananda said, "The mistake is that we want to tie the whole world down to our own plane of thought and to make our mind the measure of the whole universe." "What right have you to say, 'here is my standard, and the whole universe must be governed by my standard?' What right have you to say that every truth shall be judged by this standard of yours?"⁴⁹

Holding rigidly to a paradigm is a primary factor in the "Confirmation Bias," the tendency to search for, interpret, and recall information that supports one's pre-existing beliefs, while ignoring or undervaluing whatever contradicts them. Cherry-picking data involves selecting specific pieces of information that support a particular

argument while ignoring data that contradicts it. The bias is stronger for emotionally charged issues and for deeply entrenched beliefs. Many people want to minimize the psychological stress caused by being uncertain about something.⁵⁰

This bias is found even in scientists and well-educated people. An example would be a police detective who identifies a suspect early in an investigation, and then seeks confirming rather than disconfirming evidence. Belief perseverance continues when not giving up an idea after it has been disproven. People sometimes think ambiguous evidence supports their position. Even if two individuals have the same information, the way they understand it can be biased. They are apt to misinterpret what other people believe, thinking it is in line with their ideas when it is not. A person might resort to illusory correlations by mistakenly perceiving an association or connections between two unrelated events or situations (apophenia). This bias is noticeable in social media, with the tendency to convey information that supports their position, while misrepresenting the opposing view. In judging other people they are evaluated positively or negatively depending if they support their point of view or not. This process is often unintentional rather than the result of deliberate deception. It can effect the memory process resulting in "selective recall." Confirmatory thought seeks to justify a specific point of view while exploratory thought neutrally considers multiple points of view and tries to anticipate all possible objections to a particular position. These findings have been substantiated by innumerable psychological studies and experiments.⁵¹ There is the danger of eisegesis, the process of misinterpreting text based on one's own presuppositions, agendas, and biases. One seeks to force the text to agree with their ideas.

An interesting psychological theory that relates to Vivekananda's experiences was proposed by the theologian Paul Tillich. Most people "reject and attack the prophetic minds, not because they really disagree with them, but because they sense the truth of their words and cannot receive it. They repress it in themselves."⁵² If a new idea conflicts with a presently held view, it can produce a psychologically unpleasant feeling

which the person tries to avoid by disagreeing with it. According to Leon Festinger's (1919-89) "Theory of Cognitive Dissonance" (1957) an inconsistent contradictory belief system can cause unpleasant tension, psychological stress, information overload, and irrational behavior depending upon how much importance is ascribed to it. As a reaction in order to maintain a consistent belief system the person may avoid the situation, reject the new idea, praise one side and criticize the other, attempt to see the similarity in the new ideas with their own rather than their differences, add on more similar cognitions, reduce the importance of the belief, or pursue another "dissonance reduction" approach. Modern scientific studies have proven that cognitive dissonance has some effect on neural activity in the brain.⁵³ Some people perform acts or hold on to beliefs that are irrational in order to maintain a homeostatic level that is free of contradictions. Cognitive Selectivity involves screening out conceptions that are not compatible with the basic ideas of the person. It is a necessary defense mechanism that prevents the self-system from being overwhelmed by foreign ideas.

In the past every great thinker was limited by the thought structure of his/her own culture. This applies to religion and every other area of thought. In the Global-Integral Age we have the advantage that we can learn of ideas coming from a wide variety of cultures and paradigms.

Due to the limitations of their own personal paradigm individuals cannot fully empathize with others, being unable to see the world as the other person does. When studying something new the investigator may be motivated by a pre-existent desire to agree or disagree with the statements being stated. They might go into an agreement or disagreement mode. Consequently, when we hear something new, we can only interpret, understand, judge, and evaluate it in terms of our pre-existent vocabulary, ideas and values.⁵⁴ This is particularly a problem if the new ideas are in opposition to and in conflict with our previously held belief system, which means learning might involve the unlearning of old ideas. Without the right samskaras (mental

impressions based on past thoughts and actions), the learning process is apt to be slow. Hence to have an in depth understanding of Ramakrishna-Vedanta, most often a person must be a member of the Ramakrishna Vedanta religious and philosophical culture for many years in order to develop the correct samskaras.

To give an example, Willard Quine (1908-2000) rated as the fifth most important analytic philosopher in the world over the past two centuries, more than once stated that the Greek gods never existed. How does he know this, he never proved it? Does this idea contradict any proven assertion? First, he assumed his denial of the Greek gods as a self-evident fact without challenging it, because this is what the intellectual culture he was brought up in taught him (a form of indoctrination). Secondly, Greek gods do not fit into his limited ingrained "world of ideas." Everyone has their own preconceived paradigm (defining the term broadly), a limited thought structure in their mind and theoretical framework by which they understand and judge the world. Their understanding and interpretation of things is pretty much determined by their samskaras, the fund of knowledge in their mind. Paradigms exist because a portion our ideas are interconnected into a "web of beliefs." So any change in an idea has some effect on the other ideas in that web. Personal paradigms vary as to their quantity, scope of ideas, logical consistency, degree of coherence, comprehensiveness, compatibility, correspondence with empirical events, and practical functional utility. In order to maintain a "Sense of Certainty" and stability people are apt to stick with their limited outlook on life. The paradigm of a genius is better organized and of a larger scope than that of ordinary people. The well-adjusted person has a better-organized thought system than the neurotic. Only an omniscient Being possesses a paradigm that includes everything. But due to the finitude of the human mind all personal paradigms are of a limited scope.

Just because an idea does not fit into a person's limited mental paradigm (e.g., Quine and the Greek gods) is not good reason to reject an idea unless good evidence is provided to do so. Such a person is apt

to be right in what they affirm, but wrong in what they deny. According to at least one study, the ancient Greeks had a higher percentage of geniuses in relation to their population size than any other country in the known history of the world, and many of them believed in the gods. In addition on occasion the gods (perhaps deities is a better word since there is only one God) have ways of making their presence known to their devotees. This can occur in a realistic dream or through temporary materialization. God is omnipotent while the god's have limited specialized power. Since Quine could not disprove the existence of the Greek god's, he should have taken an agnostic stand on the subject. Max Müller referred to the denial of the existence of the god's as adeism (rather than atheism). Another idea was offered by Max Planck (1858-1947) in relation to quantum physics. "A new scientific truth does not triumph by convincing its opponents and making them see the light, but rather because its opponents eventually die, and a new generation grows up that is familiar with it."⁵⁵

A great discovery of the 20th century is that many personal beliefs are not reached by pure reason alone. People are apt to think that because they use reason to defend their ideas that they originate from reason alone. Other determinants of the formation of peoples ideas and beliefs are ego defense mechanisms and personal life experiences (S. Freud), the pleasure principle (believe what is pleasant, and brings happiness) (S. Freud), practical-pragmatic interests including group loyalties and affiliations (W. James, J. Dewey), social origin of ideas (E. Durkheim, K. Mannheim), cultural and historical background and education (M. Heidegger, H. Gadamer), the social support one receives by holding commonly held beliefs (T. Kuhn), language (E. Durkheim, L. Wittgenstein), and public indoctrination found in all societies to various degrees (many writers). People's reactions are often instinctive coming from the unconscious mind and not rationally thought out.

Traditional Hinduism teaches that all people have to some extent similar duties concerning their vocation and social class (varna-dharma); stage of human life, student, householder, and ascetic (ashrama-dharma); specific individual nature (sva-dharma), and other aspects of

their life. These duties determine not only how people act, but also how they think in terms of their attitudes and the decisions they make. And of course there is the fund of knowledge (samskaras, mentioned above) already in a person's mind, which determines how people will interpret and react to events and ideas.

Successful adaptation to a group that teaches new ideas, behavior patterns, and attitudes can be achieved in many ways. The desired goal is to retain psychological well-being, self-esteem, personal identity, satisfaction with life, and a sense of belonging. This is accomplished by attaining a new psycho-social identity gained by altering one's personality, behavior, and group identification; openness to new ideas by acquiring additional knowledge, skills, attitudes, norms, and perceptions; adopting new roles to facilitate functional integration; and friendship and personal contact with significant others in the new group.⁵⁸

Arthur Schopenhauer (1788-1860) made the distinction between men of talent who enjoy popularity during their lifetime, and of men of genius (like Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda) who have a lasting influence on humanity, "Mere men of talent always come at the right time; for, as they are roused by the spirit of their age and are called into being by its needs, they are only just capable of satisfying them.... But to the next generation their works are no longer enjoyable; they must be replaced by others and they do not fail to appear. The genius, on the other hand, lights on his age like a comet into the paths of the planets, to whose well-regulated and comprehensible arrangement its wholly eccentric course is foreign. Accordingly, he cannot go hand in hand with the regular course of the culture of the times as found; on the contrary, he casts his works far out on to the path in front.... Talent is able to achieve what is beyond other people's capacity to achieve, yet not what is beyond their capacity of apprehension; therefore it at once finds its appreciators. The achievement of genius, on the other hand, transcends not only others' capacity of achievement, but also their capacity of apprehension; therefore they do not become immediately aware of it. Talent is like the

marksman who hits a target which others cannot reach; genius is like the marksman who hits a target, as far as which others cannot even see."⁵⁹

At one time, the secularist "Doctrine of Progress" was very popular among intellectuals in Western Europe. They began to realize that significant people could change society for the better and assumed that through economic and technological growth, and universal education the problems of society would gradually dissolve. The French Marquis de Condorcet (1743-94) optimistically prophesized, "The progress of the race, in every respect, is without limit; and it will result in equality of material comfort, and security of livelihood, as well as moral and intellectual perfection, universal peace, and political liberty. Industry by the aid of the sciences will make the soil capable of yielding support without limit.... The equality of the sexes, which progress will certainly bring with it, will make this consummation more easy of fulfillment. Progress in the art of medicine will so prolong life, that death will be the exception rather than the rule. Persecuted philosophers may console themselves by looking away from the present to this glorious future." His disciple, Count Claude Henri de Saint-Simon (1760-1825) added, "The golden age is not behind us, but in front of us. It is the perfection of social order." The theory of evolution made progress a necessary law of nature and applied to human society giving the doctrine a practical scientific form. As society evolved, Herbert Spencer (1820-1903) prophesized in the 20th century there would be greater individualism, altruism, and co-operation. The idea of the 18th and 19th century European thinkers being, in the future with increased affluence, education, and longevity people will be happy since all of their physical needs will be fulfilled, and crime and wars will become unnecessary and consequently nonexistent, and sorrow greatly diminished.⁶⁰

These utopian dreams did not pan out, because their advocates did not realize the shortcomings of secularism. It is obvious today that the many benefits of secularism have their limits and additional factors are necessary to bring happiness to humanity. The success of secularism (thesis) in terms of material development has also generated

a number of social and psychological problems, thereby creating an impending need for a spiritual way of life (antithesis). Negative characteristics include an increase in destructive power, ecological problems, and psychological difficulties such as addictions, anxiety, and alienation from life and nature. It is one thing to fulfill a person's physical needs and another their psychological need to acquire large sums of wealth that they will never spend for their personal use. For one thing, the restriction of the joys of secularist sensual pleasures is pointed out by the "Law of Diminishing Utility." For example, if a person is hungry then a good meal will bring pleasure. But as additional increments of food are consumed the pleasure lessens and eventually too much food can make a person ill.

As Georg Hegel (1770-1831) correctly pointed out the need for an antithesis is due to the internal contradictions (the negative aspects) within the thesis (secularism) itself and not to external factors. Concerning the future Vivekananda remarked, "We take away pain from the physical plane, and it goes to the mental one."⁶¹ This is all part of the "Law of Balance" and Law of Karma.

4. The Crisis of Our Age

Three prominent thinkers of the 19th Century made prophecies concerning the coming influence of Indian religious thought in the West. First, in his book *On the Language and Wisdom of the Indians* (1808 in German) Friedrich von Schlegel (1772-1829) a leader of the German Romantic school proclaimed, "The study of Indian literature requires to be embraced by such students and patrons as in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries [the Renaissance] suddenly kindled in Italy and Germany an ardent appreciation of the beauty of classical learning, and in so short a time invested it with such prevailing importance, that the form of all wisdom and science, and almost of the world itself, was changed and renovated by the influence of that re-awakened knowledge. I venture to predict that the Indian study, if embraced with

equal energy, will prove no less grand and universal in its operation, and have no less influence on the sphere of European intelligence."⁶²

In 1819, in Germany Arthur Schopenhauer made this historical forecast, "The *Upanishads*, is in my view the greatest advantage which this still young century has to show over previous centuries, since I surmise that the influence of Sanskrit literature will penetrate no less deeply than did the revival of Greek literature in the fifteenth century [the Renaissance]; if I say, the reader has also already received and assimilated the Divine inspiration of ancient Indian wisdom, then he is best of all prepared to hear what I have to say to him.... We find the direct presentation in the *Vedas*, the fruit of the highest human knowledge and wisdom, the kernel of which has finally come to us in the *Upanishads* as the greatest gift to the nineteenth century.... Indian wisdom will flow back to Europe, and will produce a fundamental change in our knowledge and thought." Vivekananda adds, "At the beginning of this century, Schopenhauer, the great German philosopher, studying from a not very clear translation of the *Vedas* made from an old translation into Persian and thence by a young Frenchman into Latin, says, 'In the whole world there is no study so beneficial and so elevating as that of the *Upanishads*. It has been the solace of my life, it will be the solace of my death.'"⁶³

Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803-82) the famous American essayists, transcendental philosopher and poet had a great admiration for Indian ideas and culture. He learned of Indian thought primarily from reading English language versions of the *Bhagavad Gita*, *Laws of Manu*, *Vishnu Purana*, *Bhagavata*, and a few other translations. In his book *English Traits* (1856) the American Transcendental philosopher made this remarkable prophesy, "By the law of contraries, I look for an irresistible taste for Orientalism in Britain. For a self-conceited modish life, made up of trifles, clinging to a corporeal civilization, hating ideas, there is no remedy like the Oriental largeness. That astonishes and disconcerts English decorum. For once, there is thunder it never heard, light it never saw, and power which trifles with time and space. I am not surprised to find an Englishman like Warren Hastings, who had been struck with the

grand style of thinking in the Indian writings, depreciating the prejudices of his countrymen while offering them a translation of the *Bhagvat [Gita]* (*Essays*, V:258-59)."⁶⁴

Schlegel, Schopenhauer, and Emerson predicted the future success of Indian thought in the West. But, it is the combination and interaction of Indian and Western thought that will bring about new insights and an expansion in knowledge. Both sides have been studying the same problems, but from different prospective.

In addition to the three prophesies, Max Müller (1823-1900) the German-British Indologist stated in a lecture at the University of Cambridge and wrote in 1883, "If I were to look over the whole world to find out the country most richly endowed with all the wealth, power, and beauty that nature can bestow—in some parts a very paradise on earth—I should point to India. If I were asked under what sky the human mind has most full developed some of its choicest gifts, has most deeply pondered on the greatest problems of life, and has found solutions of some of them which well deserve the attention even of those who have studied Plato and Kant—I should point to India. And if I were to ask myself from what literature we, here in Europe, we who have been nurtured almost exclusively on the thoughts of Greeks and Romans, and of one Semitic race, the Jewish, may draw that corrective which is most wanted in order to make our inner life more perfect, more comprehensive, more universal, in fact more truly human, a life, not for this life only, but a transfigured and eternal life—again I should point to India."⁶⁵

Vivekananda wrote to his brother disciples in 1894, "Always remember that Shri Ramakrishna came for the good of the world." The following year in an epistle to Brahmananda he added, "From the day Shri Ramakrishna was born dates the growth of modern India and of the Golden Age. And we are the agents to bring about this Golden Age."⁶⁶ This corresponds to the Christian idea of pre-millennialism, i.e., that the Divine Incarnation comes at the beginning not the end (post-millennialism) of the Golden Age. Statements like this help us to understand "The hidden plan of Brahman-God."

By "Golden Age" Vivekananda does not hold the utopian idea that the world will become a heaven or a svarga. He means among other things that the Esoteric Age has been replaced by an Exoteric Age since now most spiritual ideas and practices are available to almost everyone in the world regardless of their nationality, social class, or gender. Previously throughout the world these ideas were the property of a small elite group of people. Since these ideas and practices are open to all and people are far better educated than they were in the past, they can do far more good now than they did previously. Religious pluralism is on the increase. Consequently, Vivekananda lectured to the people on the sublimest religious philosophical topics rather than giving his audience watered-down material.

In addition, the world has become a golden age of knowledge in almost every academic field including religion. This process has been aided by the Law of Large Numbers, being that today there are a vast number of scholars and professors writing on and studying every possible area of knowledge. Most of the great ideas of the world can now be found in university libraries or on their computers since they purchase academic databases. General knowledge is quickly available on a home computer using the Internet and search engines like Google.

Also compared to prior centuries, it is a golden age of wealth, power, and technology though of course not shared by all, life expectancy has greatly increased, and the percentage of deaths from war is declining. With the vastly improved educational system far more people can contribute to the welfare of society, which is quite noticeable in the return of the great civilizations of China and India.

Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900) the atheist philosopher expressed the idea that "God is dead ... And we have killed him," meaning not God had died but our idea of one had. After the Enlightenment (c. 1637-1800) the prevailing idea in Europe was that of a universe operating by physical laws and not Divine providence, government was not due too Divine right but to the consent of the governed, and moral theory did not require the existence of God. Nietzsche thought this outlook could lead to a pessimistic nihilism of despair and meaninglessness, and to a

rejection of morality. This runs counter to his life-affirming philosophy, so he tried to develop a system of thought stressing the value of this world. In this sense Nietzsche was a forerunner to Existentialism that places importance on understanding the meaning of human existence.⁶⁷

During the latter part of his life the French Jewish sociologist, Emile Durkheim (1858-1917) came up with the concept of "The Death of the Gods" (1912) in European society, and what this means for the future of Western civilization. This idea relates to the social disintegration of European society brought about by the process of modernity. Durkheim taught that medieval religious institutions created a moral, stable and peaceful community. Unfortunately this is no longer the case since former beliefs and practices have become of little importance. As a result, contemporary society as a whole has lost its former cohesion, unity, and solidarity, and people are having difficulty finding meaningful attachments to social groups. There is an increase in normlessness (anomie) that "denotes the situation in which the social norms regulating individual conduct have broken down or are no longer effective as rules for behaviour. People rely more often on their own judgment than on institutions of authority such as the churches and other social institutions. Consequently, the collective force so vital for the life of a society is no longer being generated to provide meaning, direction, and goals for the individuals. People lack a guiding measure for truth and a way of understanding the world. Society is unable to create the necessary collective force that supports a religious life and system of beliefs. Thus, Europeans no longer feel the presence of God in their lives. With the lack of faith in God also came a rejection of religious morality and metaphysics. Their replacement is ideas of justice and modern science. In sum, the social milieu that supported religion disappeared, leaving religious faith, values, and thinking without any social foundations to give them life. No new gods and institutions have been created to replace the old ones. Individuals have become increasingly detached from group obligation, while traditional rules have lost their authority. People act out of self-interest with a

weak sense of morality lacking norms to guide them (anomie). One result is a higher suicide rate because individuals now see life as meaningless and without purpose. These feelings arise because the bonds integrating the individual to society have weakened."⁶⁸

Unfortunately, after Durkheim wrote this, things got worse in Europe. For many people Scientism replaced religion, but it lacked a comprehensive system of morality. Religion fulfilled important social, psychological, ethical, and emotional functions. As the status of the religion lessened, new movements arose to fulfill these needs as functional alternatives. In the first half of the twentieth century new secular gods and institutions were created to replace traditional religions. When Europeans lost faith in traditional religions the void was replaced by highly destructive secular pseudo-religions like Fascism and Nazism. They provided a new form of secular cohesion, unity, and solidarity to overcome the normlessness (anomie) that had arisen in Europe. Like traditional religions they offered a meaning of life, an absolute standard to judge events and actions, and a moral responsibility to serve the country and organization. These pseudo-religions had their scriptures, ideology; ritual, large ceremonies, music, parades, holidays, celebrations, festivals; sacred organization, messiah, prophet, apostles, clergy, elect, group loyalties; salvation from evil, eventual paradise; satan-devil, punishment of evildoers; visual images like flags, symbols, bodily gestures, sacred phrase; and forecasted a millennial view of history ending in a Golden Age. Their goal was to take over every form of culture and to support that which served their purpose.⁶⁹ Great harm was done in taking over control of the various realms of knowledge, deciding what could be taught and what could not. This brought on intellectual stagnation and regression in these countries. Even the kings of the past often allowed the intellectuals the freedom to pursue their course of study. Many people in these countries felt it was in their best interest to support the irrational regimes.

The nature of these violent revolutionary movements can be better understood by an earlier book, *The Crowd: A Study of the*

Popular Mind (1895), authored by the French sociologist Gustave Le Bon (1841-1931). The crowd is a group of people united by a common idea, belief, or ideology. Their ideologies are not created by the members of the crowd, but by their leaders. Members of the crowd are generally people of average intelligence who are not capable of understanding these ideas in their original form. So they must be simplified to be accepted and stimulate revolutionary action. To motivate the crowd the leaders sometimes use a three-word phrase. At that time the crowd member ceases to act as an individual, but becomes susceptible to other peoples sentiments and acts that are contagious. This mentality has the possibility of unleashing primitive destructive instincts that lie dormant in the person. The crowd is not aware of the defects of their leader. Being in a crowd gives the person a sense of anonymity so they can get by with aberrant behavior that they could not get by with on their own. They feel they are working for a high Ideal and not for their own self-interests. Freed from the sense of their own insignificance and powerlessness, they are possessed with a feeling of immense strength. Le Bon tended to emphasize the negative aspects of the crowd and overlooked the fact this process has at times been used to stimulate positive action.⁷⁰ In this mental state there is no fear. At times before a battle the Roman Legions would shout a war chant as a rallying call to put the soldiers in this state of mind. An example would be when we are immediately stimulated and motivated by group vibrations when in a crowd we are witnessing a sporting event.

In his review of Le Bon's teachings, Sigmund Freud (1922) interprets crowd behavior as that of throwing off the repressions of the unconscious instincts, with the conscious personality being replaced by the unconscious personality. The normal control mechanisms that regulate an individual (social norms, values, ethics), are broken down, allowing the group to act in ways that are markedly different to how the members of the group would act individually. Though the people in the crowd are apt to differ in their life-style, occupation, level of intelligence, etc. in the crowd they form a collective mind. They feel,

think, and act quite differently in a crowd than they do individually. In a crowd, they become a creature of instinct, being impulsive, with a feeling of power, lacking doubt or uncertainty, being gullible and open to influence without a critical faculty, not able to distinguish between truth and untruth. The leader must have a strong and imposing will, since the group, has no will of its own.⁷¹

Le Bon and Freud are considering only one type of crowd. For example, there are unorganized crowds of people who just happened to be at the same location for different purposes. There are many different kinds of organized crowds such as those that at a sporting event, a political rally, religious celebration, etc., each with a different purpose and with the attendants demonstrating behavioral patterns. According to Convergence Theory these individuals gather at one place intentionally to achieve certain goals and objectives.⁷²

This phenomena can also be explained by the transmission of vibrations by minds that are oscillating in a similar manner. Individual vibrations combine and synchronize to produce powerful group vibrations. The members of the Crowd (or any other group) are influenced by the unperceived thought vibrations that are active in subtle matter and energy. The more potent the vibrations, the greater their effect.

In a 1966 interview the influential German philosopher Martin Heidegger (1889-1976), expressed the view that the modern technological civilization is recreating humanity and redefining human values no longer in terms of justice, freedom, or equality. It has taken the meaning out of our lives and instead replaced it with the main instrumental values of advanced capitalism such as utility, profit, power, wealth, efficiency, and productivity. We have rejected all transcendental principles by which things are to be judged. There is no longer anything above and beyond my decision to define something as this or that. A new meaning, a new purpose for the betterment of the human condition is needed to save the world. The modern technological civilization is global, not geographically or historically localized to a particular culture. "Philosophy will not be able to bring about a direct

change of the present state of the world. This is true not only of philosophy but of all merely human meditations and endeavors. Only a god can still save us. I think the only possibility of salvation left to us is to prepare readiness, through thinking and poetry, for the appearance of the god or for the absence of the god during the decline; so that we do not, simply put, die meaningless deaths, but that when we decline, we decline in the face of the absent god... We cannot get him to come by thinking. At best, we can prepare the readiness of expectation ... keeping oneself open to the arrival or absence of the god. The experience of this absence is not nothing, but rather a liberation of human beings from what I called the 'falseness into beings' in [the book] *Being and Time* [1927]... The role of philosophy in the past has been taken over today by the sciences." We might add, many of the roles of religion been taken over by the sciences. As expected a Eurocentric Heidegger thought a future change would not come from "Zen Buddhism and other Eastern experiences." "I am convinced that a change can only be prepared from the same place in the world where the modern technological world originated [the Greek-European Civilization]... Thinking will only be transformed by a thinking that has the same origin and destiny."⁷³ Conversely, as a historical precedent, Jesus Christ a person from an altogether different type of society and culture made a tremendous impact on Europe beginning a couple of thousand years ago.

The celebrated English historian Arnold Toynbee (1889-1975) in 1970 made the following insightful statement considering India's role in contemporary and future history, "Today we are still living in this transitional chapter of the world's history, but it is already becoming clear that a chapter which had a Western beginning will have to have an Indian ending if it is not to end in the self-destruction of the human race. In the present age, the world has been united on the material plane by Western technology. But this Western skill has not only 'annihilated distance;' it has armed the peoples of the world with weapons of devastating power at a time when they have been brought to point blank range of each other without yet having learnt to know

and love each other. At this supremely dangerous moment in human history, the only way of salvation for mankind is an Indian way. The Emperor Asoka and the Mahatma Gandhi principle of non-violence and Sri Ramakrishna's testimony to the harmony of religions: here we have the attitude and the spirit that can make it possible for the human race to grow together into a single family—and, in the Atomic Age, this is the only alternative to destroying ourselves."⁷⁴

Arnold Toynbee taught that the decline of a civilization is generally not caused by lack of control over the physical environment or an external attack. It is due to the deterioration of the "Creative Minority" that eventually ceases to be creative and degenerates into a "Dominant Minority." They attempt to maintain power by force and the inherited privilege that they cease to merit. The majority then is apt to conservatively idealize the past or radically idealize the expected future. Civilizations continue to grow only when they respond correctly to the challenges they face ("Challenge and Response"). Growth occurs when a "Creative Minority" find solutions to the challenges the civilization faces, and inspire rather than compel others to follow their innovative lead.⁷⁵

The secular Sensate Age was initiated on a worldwide basis in 1492 when Columbus came to America and in 1498 when Vasco da Gama landed in Kerala, India. Great technological acceleration occurred after the Industrial Revolution in the second half of the 18th century. In the West during these centuries, a cultural lag occurred between the dominant secular culture and the lagging spiritual culture. What's more, the expanding secular culture (particularly its ideology and value system) brought about to some extent a breakdown in the spiritual cultural, resulting in a multitude of personal psychological and national sociological problems. This need not be the case, since the spiritual culture can and should be the pacesetter exerting a positive influence on the beliefs, ideals, and morals of the secular culture.⁷⁶

A cultural lag occurs when one aspect of a culture changes at a faster rate than another, resulting in a disruption of the integration and equilibrium of the culture. The concept was developed by William Ogburn (1886-1959) a professor at Columbia University in 1922. In

modern industrial society Ogburn considered the material culture, through rapid advances in technology and science, to develop at a much faster rate than the non-material culture. Technological progress is the force behind social progress resulting in the modification of institutions, organizations and ideologies. He stated that due to an "interdependence of parts, a rapid change in one part of our culture requires readjustments through other changes in the various correlated parts of culture." The lag might last for many years. He believed in modern societies there "is a tendency for changes in the political, educational, family, and religious institutions not to keep pace with technological changes." It is more difficult to make alterations in these institutions that tend to resist change than with physical entities. Often people will accept new physical items much quicker than a new system of beliefs, ideals, values, and norms.⁷⁷

5. The Future of World Civilization

A persons experiences and behavior concerning who they are and how they develop are determined by three levels of social involvement. They are that of 1) individual personal and family relationships, 2) group membership in organizations and institutions, and 3) cultural-societal influences which Sorokin emphasizes.

While living in Russia, Pitirim Sorokin (1889-1968) was jailed three times both by the Czarist regime and by the Communists, and was later forced to leave the country. In 1922, Sorokin was one of 160 prominent intellectuals in Russia who were expelled from the country, because they did not support the communist regime. Needless to say the rising Russian intelligentsia that flourished during the late Czarist period quickly disintegrated. The list of those expelled included N. Berdyaev, Father S. Bulgakov, S. Frank, and N. Lossky each of whom held ideas akin to Vedanta. Sorokin later became a Professor of Sociology at Harvard University where he taught that the history of Europe has been dominated by three cultural mentalities that affect every aspect of life: the Ideational (Sacred), Sensate (Secular), and the Idealistic-Integral that

combines the prior two.⁷⁸ He attempted to explain the social-political-ideological system of Europe with a single comprehensive theory. This is an example of nomothetic history that is concerned with the discovery and development of general scientific laws. The goal is abstract generalizations that combine many specific events and individual facts. This differs from idiographic history, which is descriptive and deals with the presentation of historical facts and processes.⁷⁹

According to Sorokin, Europe went through the Idealistic-Integral age during the 13th and 14th centuries. But there are many important differences between their way of life and where we are heading. For example, the technology, political structure, and degree of internationalism of modern society differ considerably from that of 13th and 14th centuries. Also, Sensate societies differ considerably from one another; one may be totalitarian, nationalistic, with low levels of technology and another democratic, international, with highly developed technology.

The Ideational culture predominated during the Middle Ages in Europe and Asia. According to Sorokin, "Ideational truth is indeed the truth revealed by the grace of God through His mouthpieces (the prophets, mystics, oracles, and founders of religion), disclosed in the supersensory way through mystical experience, direct revelation, Divine intuition, and inspiration.... Ideational science, philosophy, and religion are concerned primarily with supersensory reality and values. The basic truth of the ideological system is that of religion ... It is engrossed in the supersensory world, dedicated to the eternal varieties, in contradistinction to the temporal truth of the senses."⁸¹ Ideational society consists of sacred: behavior, buildings, Deities, history, holy persons, language, locations, music, objects that are venerated, pilgrimages religious scripture, ritual, time, and holy days, tradition, and worship. It gives meaning to life determining one's standards of behavior and general attitude toward life.

By contrast the Sensate (Secular) cultural mentality is predominate in Europe and most of the world today. "The [Active] Sensate reality is thought of as a Becoming, Process, Change, Flux, Evolution, Progress,

Transformation. Its needs and aims are mainly physical, and maximum satisfaction is sought of these needs. The method of realizing them is not that of a modification within the human individuals composing the culture, but of a modification or exploitation of the external world.... It seeks the consummation of its needs and ends mainly through the most 'efficient' modification, adjustment, readjustment, reconstruction of the external milieu." For the Sensate personality type, "reality and values are sensory and largely material"; the transcendental and spiritual is not recognized. The key values of the Sensate mentality are materialism, an ethics of happiness (more than of love or principles), secularism, empiricism, relativism, nominal's, temporalism, and scientism (sensory empiricism).⁸²

As a middle path, Sorokin refers to the Integral (Idealistic) culture mentality. "This is the only form of the Mixed class which is—or at least appears to be—logically integrated. Quantitatively it represents a more or less balanced unification of Ideational and [Higher] Sensate, with, however, a predominance of the Ideational elements. Qualitatively it synthesizes the premises of both types into one inwardly consistent and harmonious unity. For it, reality is many-sided, with the aspects of everlasting Being and ever-changing Becoming of the spiritual and the material. Its needs and ends are, both spiritual and material, with the material, however, subordinated to the spiritual. The methods of their realization involve both the modification of self and the transformation of the external Sensate world: in other words, it gives *suum*^[SEP] *cuique* [to each its own] to the Ideational and the [Higher] Sensate. Each of them it views as real, as a mode or aspect of the Supreme Reality. Its face is simultaneously otherworldly and of this world. Recognizing the Ideational values as supreme, it does not declare the Sensate world a mere illusion or of negative value; on the contrary, as far as the Sensate is in harmony with the Ideational, it possesses positive value."⁸³ "The major premise of Sensate culture must be replaced by the broader, deeper, richer, and more valid premise that true reality and value is an infinite manifold possessing not only sensory but also supersensory, rational and superrational aspects, all harmoniously reflecting its

infinity."⁸⁴ This is a form of "Ideological Pluralism" that accepts the best of the sacred and the secular views of life. Unlike most historians, Sorokin is not dealing primarily with historical events, people, or political-economic forces, but with cultural ideals and values.

Sorokin's terms such as ideational culture or sensate culture are what Max Weber (1864-1920) the German sociologists referred to as "Ideal Types." In developing this methodological technique, Weber is referring to the conceptual world of ideas, which is an approximation of empirical reality. These "ideal types" are idea-constructs that help to explain an aspect of society. Weber writes, "A great many diffuse, discrete, more or less present and occasionally absent concrete individual phenomena, are arranged according to those one-sidedly emphasized viewpoints into a unified analytical construct." Emphasis is placed on certain elements common to most (not all) cases of the given phenomena. By facilitating generalization, certain aspects of reality are focused on and others are ignored. They are a great aid in describing, analyzing, interpreting, and systematizing the empirical social and historical reality, and are subject to testing and revision.⁸⁵

Generalization is also used to determine the parts of a whole by establishing their similarities (e.g., cooperation, competition, and conflict as being forms of social process). Verification is required to determine whether a generalization holds true in any given situation. After arriving at a generalization one can consider the exceptions to the rule.

As a critique the French philosopher Henri Bergson (1859-1941) pointed out that rationalistic intellectual knowledge deals with abstract generalizations rather than concrete particulars. It is based on the researcher's point of view and the symbols that are used, which are external to the object under study. The symbols are a translation of the empirical reality and not what it actually is. This analysis tells us what the object or event has in common with other things, not its unique individual characteristics. This procedure reduces the entity to what is already known, being the elements common to it and other objects. The entity is interpreted as a function of something other than itself. As

parts, the concepts are combined to form an artificial reconstruction of the original object. The whole process is arbitrary. What we are left with is an incomplete symbolic representation of reality, an imperfect copy and not the actual thing. The result is often many competing intellectual systems that disagree with each other. It is part of a larger circle in which it is enclosed and can in the future be examined from a broader perspective that will show its limitations.⁸⁶

Since Sorokin's attempts to explain the entire social-political-ideological system with a single comprehensive theory, his ideas certainly represent a form of "Grand Theory." For example, in a sensate age every area of thought and culture is affected by it, be it physical, social, or behavioral science; philosophy, religion, literature, or art. A shift from ideational to sensate culture changes every aspect of life. This differs from "Theories of the Middle Range" that seek more modest goals by concentrating on more limited aspects of the social world.

In 1963 Pitirim Sorokin provided evidence that the 'Crisis of Our Age' is a widely held idea among a number of intelligent thinkers. After offering a detailed analysis of the historical and macrosociological theories of N. Berdyaev, A. Kroeber, F. Northrop, J. Ortega, W. Schubart, A. Schweitzer, A. Toynbee, and others, he concluded, "The theories examined unanimously diagnose our^[L] time as the time of the greatest crisis, as the end of the epoch^[L] of domination of the Sensate-theoretic-secular-Promethean-^[SEP]scientific-technological culture dominant during the last four^[L] or five centuries and as a transition period toward a now^[SEP] emerging messianic-Integral-new medieval-aesthetic-theoretic^[SEP] prototype of civilization or culture. Although they differ in^[L] detail, all the theories are in perfect agreement on this point.... Practically all the theories accept, in the culture to come, a reunification of the supreme values of Truth, Beauty, and Goodness."⁸⁷ An increasing number of people are questioning the established values of modern society and are searching for alternatives. An Integral system of truth incorporates empirical, rational, and supersensory modes of cognition. Sorokin adds, "Development of such a genuine Integral system of truth and cognition can greatly help mankind in enriching, deepening, and enlarging

human knowledge of total reality, in eliminating the mutually conflicting claims of science, religion, philosophy, and ethics through reconciliation and unification of their real knowledge into one Integral system of truth, in stimulating man's creativity in all fields of culture and social life, and in the ennoblement and transfiguration of man himself."⁸⁸ It must be kept in mind we are dealing with "Historical time," where events often take several decades and even centuries to manifest.

Sorokin predicted that since Sensate culture had lost its vitality and creativity it would come to end, which is questionable. During the 20th century, there was no doubt some switch of talent from an elite to a popular-mass culture that some people interpreted as a decline. Hopefully Sensate culture has reached a limit in terms of a sensuous hedonistic lifestyle; crime and war, violence; an excessive intellectual skepticism, relativism, anti-foundationalism directed as a criticism of religious, metaphysical, and introspective forms of knowledge (e.g., deconstructionism); cynicism and nihilism. The West has developed nuclear weapons that could bring about not only the end of Western society, but the Indian civilization also. So the Indians must do their best to educate the people of the world in a sane moral philosophy that will prevent this event from occurring.

One important factor Sorokin undervalued, which was later developed by the British sociologist Anthony Giddens (b. 1938) is the notion of "Reflexive Modernity" that societies are becoming increasingly more self-aware, self-reflective, self-correcting, and hence reflexive. We are not passive agents at the mercy of the various social forces. One of the virtues of modern society is its high level of reflexivity, whereby economic, political, social, and psychological experts study every aspect of modern life and make alterations to reverse negative trends. We live in a society where with increasing societal-awareness, the objective understanding of experts and a constant flow of information allow groups and individuals to analyze and reflect on the consequences of their own actions. Economic depressions, wars, crime, divorce rates, poverty, and religious bigotry,

etc. are human created and can be modified to bring about positive changes. For example, if there is an economic recession; or an escalation in the magnitude and numbers of wars (as in the first half of the 20th century), ethnic prejudices, in the crime and divorce rates, or in ecological problems; this can be corrected to some extent by re-educating the people and making significant social-political changes.⁸⁹ There is no need for radical and destructive changes.

The development of Reflexivity to solve social, political, and economic problems is one of the greatest innovations of the twentieth century. Global reflexivity began with organizations like the League of Nations that was formed in 1920 to bring peace to the world though it failed in its attempt. Far more successful after World War II the people of the world were re-educated to prevent a future catastrophe. Another example, after a long period of economic prosperity the world depression suddenly and unexpectedly hit in 1929 and at that time most people had little idea how to combat it. Fortunately in 1936 John Maynard Keynes (1883-1946) published a book explaining how fiscal and monetary policies of government could mitigate an economic depression. Today we have the economic knowledge to prevent an economic recession from becoming a depression. In the United States there was an acceleration in the crime rate up to the early 1990's. Many inter-religious groups have been formed to end religious bigotry. These trends were reversed due to intelligent reflexive responses.

Also, on the individual level compared to the past, in modern individualized societies people have more means and opportunities to make self-improvement, by working through self-development culture and self-help literature and services. The prevailing cultural belief is that lifelong human development is possible, desirable, and even mandatory. Compare this to a traditional village society where people are locked into a specific and limited lifestyle. In Vivekananda's day world literacy rates were low and the majority of the people of the world were concerned primarily with economic and physical survival. Today particularly in North America and Western Europe the majority of people are relatively well educated and once employed their basic

economic needs are met. Consequently, the World Value Survey has discovered that their system of values has shifted from Survival values to Self-expression values. Among other things, this means more interest in non-economic values such as self-improvement techniques. This includes the practice of yoga that people undertake to become healthier, happier, and better people.⁹⁰

Many social theorists believe that modernity is the most changing epoch that humanity has ever known and that the events of the open-ended future history of modernity are to a large extent unpredictable. Of course, these future events can be forecasted in only a general way, since to some extent "Future history is a mystery" and the comprehensive laws of history are yet to be discovered.

In a 1957 banquet held in Boston at Swami Akhilananda's Vedanta Center to observe the Birth Anniversary of Sri Ramakrishna, Sorokin made this prognosis, "A successful growth of Sri Ramakrishna and of the Vedanta movements in the West is one of many symptoms of two basic processes which are going on at the present time in the human universe. One of these changes is the epochal shift of the creative center of mankind from Europe to the larger area of the Pacific-Atlantic, while the other consists in a double process of continued decay of Sensate [Sensual, Secular] culture and society and of the emergence and growth of the new—Integral [creatively integrating Sensate and Ideational] or Ideational [supersensuous, sacred]—socio-cultural order."⁹¹ Sorokin knew of Ramakrishna and Vivekananda from the conversations he held with Swami Akhilananda. Sri Ramakrishna is the living embodiment of the Ideational personality. Yet Sorokin apparently had no idea they are the catalyst that will lead the way in bringing about a transformation in Western society that he to some extent predicted.

According to Sorokin, the Hindu-Brahmanic culture (not the entire culture of India) has remained predominantly Ideational over the centuries. His "learned friend" Professor Benoy Kumar Sarkar (1887-1949) author of *The Positive Background of Hindu Sociology* (1937), wrote that Sorokin and other Occidental thinkers do not recognize the

secular Active Sensate elements that have formed part of the Indian culture (Civilization) throughout history.⁹² This includes their discoveries in mathematics, astronomy, physics, grammar, epistemology, literature, and other subjects, briefly discussed in Ch. VI, Section 10.

Over the last five centuries the major achievements of the Secular (Sensate) culture include: a rapid expansion in science and technology bringing about a much higher standard of material living and longevity, democracy, political freedom, universal education, an amazing growth of knowledge in the physical, social, and behavioral sciences; along with greater equality in the realms of socio-economic class, gender, ethnicity, and religion; and a global way of thinking. This world has become kind of a svarga (lower heaven) of knowledge. Many of the problems in the Western nations today are caused by adopting hedonistic (that happiness is primarily derived through the five senses in relation to physical objects) and egotistical self-centered habits that result in crime, brutal wars, various psychological problems, alcoholism, drug addiction, etc. When the upper class begins to imitate the lower and the highly cultured the less cultured, a decline in culture is quite possible. The values of the lower culture become dominant in ethics, literature, art, philosophy, fashions, manners, and customs.⁹³ The adoption of Integral and Ideational spiritual values would undoubtedly bring about a major reduction in these afflictions.

Sorokin's prognosis of the next stage in world history as being an Integral culture that combines the highest sacred and secular values is in agreement with what Vivekananda taught. As Vivekananda stated, "This is the Oriental type [Sacred]; the other is the Occidental type [Secular]. Each of these types has its grandeur, each has its glory. The present adjustment will be the harmonizing, the mingling of these two ideals. To the Oriental, the world of spirit is as real as to the Occidental is the world of senses. In the spiritual, the Oriental finds everything he wants or hopes for; in it he finds all that makes life real to him.... But the oriental ideal is as necessary for the progress of the human race as is the Occidental, and I think it is more necessary.... Therefore it is fitting that, whenever there is a spiritual adjustment, it should come from the

Orient. It is also fitting that when the Oriental wants to learn about machine-making he should sit at the feet of the Occidental and learn from him."⁹⁴

A newspaper reporter in Memphis, Tennessee recoded this statement of Vivekananda in January 1894, "I believe that the Hindu faith has developed the spiritual in its devotees at the expense of the material, and I think that in the Western world the contrary is true. By uniting the materialism of the West with the spiritualism of the East I believe much can be accomplished."⁹⁵ Three years later Vivekananda told some Pundits in Calcutta, "The more advanced a society or nation is in spirituality, the more is that society or nation civilised. No nation can be said to have become civilised only because it has succeeded in increasing the comforts of material life by bringing into use lots of machinery and things of that sort. The present-day civilisation of the West is multiplying day by day only the wants and distresses of men. On the other hand, the ancient Indian civilisation, by showing people the way to spiritual advancement, doubtless succeeded, if not in removing once for all, at least in lessening, in a great measure, the material needs of men. In the present age, it is to bring into coalition both these civilisations that Bhagavan Shri Ramakrishna was born. In this age, as on the one hand people have to be intensely practical, so on the other hand they have to acquire deep spiritual knowledge."⁹⁶ If we call this "Post-Modern" (unlike the present definition of the term) its emphasis will be on constructive (not deconstructive), integrated, and comprehensive action and thought.

Vivekananda inspired as many people as possible to follow the Ascetic [Contemplative] Ideationalism and Active Ideationalism described above. But for the majority of people who could not attain these ideals, Vivekananda was working to establish a new world culture that resembles, at least to some extent the Integral (Idealistic) culture. The goal is to combine the spirituality and mysticism of the Ideational, with the best of the Higher Sensate [Secular] culture, while rejecting the Lower Sensate hedonistic values and moral corruption. To replace the atheistic, agnostic, relativistic, nihilistic, cynical, anti-foundational,

bigoted, and skeptical philosophies and systems of ethics with more positives ones. Spiritual and secular knowledge should be viewed as complementary and not in opposition to one another. Integral culture represents a harmonious synthesis of the two polar types, sacred and secular, with the Ideational being foundational. Vivekananda stated in an interview, "I would say, the combination of the Greek mind represented by the external European energy added to the Hindu spirituality would be an ideal society for India.... India has to learn from Europe the conquest of external nature, and Europe has to learn from India the conquest of internal nature. Then there will be neither Hindus nor Europeans--there will be the ideal humanity which has conquered both the natures, the external and the internal. We have developed one phase of humanity, and they another. It is the union of the two that is wanted."⁹⁷

Before coming to America at age 30, Vivekananda practiced to some extent what Sorokin refers to as, "Ascetic [Contemplative] Ideationalism. This seeks the consummation of the needs and ends through an excessive elimination and minimization of the carnal needs, supplemented by a complete detachment from the Sensate world and even from oneself, viewing both as mere illusion, nonreal, [SEP]nonexisting. The whole Sensate milieu, and even the individual 'self,' are dissolved in the superSensate, ultimate reality."⁹⁸

After coming to the West in 1893, Vivekananda followed the path of what Sorokin calls, "Active Ideationalism [Integralism]. Identical with general Ideationalism in its major premises, it seeks the realization of the needs and ends, not only through minimization of the carnal needs of individuals, but also through [SEP]the transformation of the Sensate world, and especially of the sociocultural world, in such a way as to reform it along the lines of the spiritual [SEP] reality and of the ends chosen as the main value. Its bearers do not [SEP] 'flee from the world of illusion' and do not entirely dissolve it and their own souls in the ultimate reality, but strive to bring it nearer to God, to save not only their own souls but the souls of all other human beings."^{[SEP]99}
Vivekananda's brother monastics also followed the path of active

workers rather than devoting all of their time to the ascetic contemplative life-style.

With great acumen, Pitirim Sorokin explains a basic social phenomenon that is presently occurring in the Western countries, during the shift from a Sensate to a more Integral culture. According to his "Principle of Polarization," "The overwhelming majority of the population in normal times is neither distinctly bad nor conspicuously virtuous, neither very socially minded nor extremely antisocial, neither markedly religious nor highly irreligious. In times of revolution this indifferent majority tends to split, the segments shifting to opposite poles and yielding a greater number of sinners and saints, social altruists and anti-social egoists, devout religious believers and militant atheists.... Negative polarization usually prevails in the first or destructive period, whereas in the second phase the positive polarization increases and the negative declines." During the present period of transition in the West as compared to a century ago, more people are living a spiritual meditative life (positive) and others a more a hedonistic life style (negative). The number of social altruists has increased, along with antisocial criminal type people. The mean and median level of spirituality appears to be about the same, but the variance has increased over the last century.¹⁰⁰ One exception to this trend is a decline in the number of monastics.

Following the logic of Sorokin's "Principle of Limits," no sociocultural process proceeds forever continuously along the same trend. In time it reaches a limit, and then there is a change in direction. He cites three thinkers from the past to explain why the Sensate trend must reach a limit, a terminal point since it cannot go on continuously. According to Aristotle, all change is between two contraries (like hot and cold) (or in our example between the Ideational and the Sensate, the Sacred and the Secular) or contradictory terms. Rectilinear motion cannot be everlasting, since the changing or moving object eventually reaches one of the antithetical poles and then must cease to exist or changes its direction. As Isaac Newton's Law of Inertia tells us uniform and rectilinear motion is not possible, if it is acted upon by an external

force, which causes a change in direction. All sociocultural phenomena are to some extent under the influence of external forces. In Hegel's dialectical method any concept contains within itself its own negation (seeds of destruction), in the process of unfolding it generates its own antithesis that works against it and brings it to an end.¹⁰¹ In this way there is a continual process of change since the status quo (thesis) is constantly being challenged. Another reason is that the entire sociological structure is continually changing, and one aspect is replaced because it no longer coordinates with the rest of the systems. But we cannot accept the fact that the synthesis is always greater than the thesis, since not all change is progressive.

Sorokin continues, "The theory of a permanent linear trend of biological evolution or sociocultural progress is hardly tenable on either logical or empirical grounds. In virtually every sociocultural process there are limits for a linear trend. Within a limited time and a limited segment of the process some linear trend is possible, but it is scarcely possible for an unlimited period or for the entire process... sociocultural phenomena. They are subject to the constant operation of physical, biological, and sociocultural factors. No systems or congeries exist in a vacuum, isolated from the forces of the environment... the principle of immanent change would preclude the possibility of limitless linear trends in the change of sociocultural systems and congeries. These logical reasons are well corroborated by factual evidence."

Along these lines in opposition to the concept of unending linear trends Vivekananda wrote, "There is no such thing as motion in a straight line. Every motion is in a circle," and "Everything progresses in waves. The march of civilization, the progression of worlds, is in waves. All human activities likewise progress in waves—art, literature, science, religion."¹⁰²

Looking over the history of the Western world we discover a continuous line of 5-6 century phases beginning with the Greek-Roman (600-0 B.C.), Christian-Roman (0-500 A.D.), Dark Ages (500-1000), Middle Ages (1000-1500), Modern (1500-2000), and now the Global-

Integral Age (2000-). The Modern era can be divided into the mercantile-agricultural (1500-1750), the capitalist-industrial stage (1750-2000) brought on by the Industrial Revolution. There is a sizable transition period from one Age to the next, so it is not that in a single year that we move from one era to the next. This classification system is related to historical development with emphasis on goals, purposes, consequences, and values. The years 1945-1999 represented a transition period to the information oriented Global-Integral Age discussed below. We are now living in the historical period of "late modernity" according to Sociologists Zygmunt Bauman and Anthony Giddens. The idea of 500-600 year phases provides a classification system for the prior temporal sequence of Western history. It is an empirical generalization and not an iron law of history; we cannot say it will continue in the future. We do not profess Numerology that historical events are subject to a rigid law of numbers.

The Global-Integral Age involves a complex and multifaceted worldwide interaction and integration among cultures, nations, governments, and economies. Unlike the prior age, people show mutual respect for other peoples and cultures on a worldwide basis. With the rise of Russia, China, India, etc. the number of dominant political-economic centers is increasing. There is a significant decrease in the number of wars as the spirit of cooperation intensifies. The number of global institutions and movements are increasing along with multiculturalism and polyethnicity within nations. The Global-Integral Age involves practical matters like pluralism in religion, bringing people together to prevent wars (e.g., the United Nations beginning in 1945), and the end of racism (Martin Luther King in the 1950s and 1960s). Reality is investigated from every standpoint rather than dogmatically asserting that one approach is correct and all others are false. In its broader aspect it is characterized as being comprehensive, all-inclusive, all-encompassing, encyclopedic, and universal. Its pluralistic approach is witnessed in the participation of both genders; and all ethnic groups, social classes, and religions in the creative process. Following the integral approach the attempt is made to integrate a wide variety of

ideas into a meaningful whole.

For other purposes Pitirim Sorokin calculated the number of prominent Western thinkers in each century from 600 B.C. until 1900, which can be arranged in the following manner. In each period the first, peak, and last century are listed, giving the number of prominent thinkers) in each time period.

Greek-Roman: 600-500 B.C. (31 prominent thinkers), 400-300 (212), 100-0 (107);

Christian-Roman: 0-100 (89), 100-200 (196), 400-500 (94);

Dark Ages: 500-600 (62), 700-800 (13), 900-1000 (8);

Middle Ages: 1000-1100 (39), 1200-1300 (164), 1400-1500 (42);

Modern: 1500-1600 (152), 1800-1900 (1513).¹⁰³

Examining each of these five phases of Western history up to 1900 we see a cyclical pattern in the Greek-Roman, Christian-Roman, and Middle Ages, where there was first a rise in the number of prominent thinkers, a peak period, and then a significant decline. Once the phase has reached its limit of creativity, there was a falling off and the innovative thinkers sought new ways of seeking knowledge. In the Modern period there has been a continual increase in the number of prominent thinkers.

The dominant countries in any historical era are those that possess the traits that are most congenial to the spirit of the times. Based on the principle of functionalism and utility those societies and groups (religious, political, economic, etc.) take the lead because they are best equipped to meet the functional needs required at that time in the historical process. They are best able to contribute to the stability and growth of the prevailing system. This is why after World War II the United States became the most powerful and influential country in the world. At that time it was the best-qualified country to do the most good for the world. It possessed not only the power and wealth, but the right understanding and altruistic goodness to perform this task. This is the type of functionalism that does not emphasize maintaining the status quo, but acts for the improvement of a society.

Since India is an Ideational religious culture, Indians are well qualified for the present and upcoming worldwide spiritual revival. One of the reasons India is so well prepared for the forthcoming age, where more emphasis will be placed on spiritual values is because leaders like Vivekananda advocated retaining much of the ancient traditional culture (Civilization). As Professor Ninian Smart indicated about Vivekananda's teachings, "It was an effective ideology in that it enabled India to modernize and to retain her customs and traditions. Of all the major cultures, India did best in balancing modern effectiveness and older values." Another virtue is according to what you might call the "Law of Large Numbers," all other factors being equal, a country with a large population like India has the potentiality to become a significant force in the world.¹⁰⁴

The German sociologist Max Weber (1864-1920) employed the term "Elective Affinity" (1904-05, taken from chemistry) to mean a favorable originally unintended interaction of two or more components from different sociocultural systems and areas that coincide in such a way that is beneficial to all.¹⁰⁵ This is no doubt an important factor in world history. For example, the rise of Christianity was greatly facilitated by the philosophy of the Greeks and expansion of the Roman Empire that connected a vast geographical area that included Palestine, Western Asia, North Africa, and Europe. In the 17th century England there was an elective affinity between Puritan ethical norms and capitalist business practices that proved fortuitous. The fact that they coincided at that time proved to be of benefit for both of them. Similarly in the 21st century an elective affinity between two largely independent events; 1) the spiritual awakening brought about by Sri Ramakrishna and his disciples in India and other parts of the world (Sacred History), and 2) the development of a World Culture due to modern education, technological advancement in the areas of transportation and communication, and other factors in the West that are of great value to the global sociocultural system (Secular History). Presently the rapid communication of ideas, economic interdependence, migration, growth of international organizations, and other factors are combining to

produce a common World Culture and consciousness. It produces a universal way of thinking that makes it much easier for people from different cultures to interact with one another. An elective affinity between Indian and Western religious philosophical ideas could bring about a great intellectual development in this area. A chemical affinity is the property by which dissimilar chemical species are capable of forming chemical compounds.

A spiritual revolution would be a "Latent Function" of the development of modern technology and a world culture. A latent function, a concept that originated with the Anthropologists Bronislaw Malinowski (1884-1942) of the London School of Economics in 1923 and later developed by Robert Merton (1910-2003) a Sociologist at Columbia University, unlike a manifest function is unintended, not explicitly stated, and unrecognized until it has accomplished its task. It produces not only unanticipated consequences but also useful outcomes. For example, the British East India Company did not come to India to aid in spreading Vedantic ideas to other countries, yet indirectly they were a factor in the process. This is example of what often occurs in a person's life of unexpected results occurring that differ from the original intension of the act. Conversely, a Manifest Function is intended to contribute to the adjustment or adaptation of a person, subgroup, social or cultural system.¹⁰⁶

George Herbert Mead (1863-1931) of the University of Chicago is the founder of the Symbolic Interactionism school of Social Psychology. In addition, he taught that history is an evolutionary process in which events adapt to new situations. Human life involves a constant reconstruction of reality with reference to changing conditions and newly emergent situations. Historical consciousness is a way of comprehending and fostering the direction of change. The anticipated future is a major factor in directing our present conduct and in this sense human actions are teleological (goal oriented) rather than mechanical. There are ideal ends that operate as standards and goals for human conduct. Mead discerned that the ultimate formulation of this historical tendency is found in the ideal of the "Universal

Community," which is "the ideal or ultimate goal of human social progress." The goal of history is the establishment of "a society in which everyone is going to recognize the interests of everyone else," a society "in which the golden rule is to be the rule of conduct, that is, a society in which everyone is to make the interests of others his own interest." Each individual must "place themselves in the perspectives of others, to take their points of view." Contemporary culture is a world culture; we all affect each other politically, culturally, and economically. The historical ideal of the universal (global) community is to some degree "an abstraction," since, as it has not been actualized in the concrete world. This is particularly evident in political and social conflict, social forces that separate us as much as they unite us. Three historical forces: religion, the economic system, and the process of communication tend toward a universal community as an immanent process and not merely an abstract idea. The world of "thought and reason" that emerges out of the social act of communication tends toward the universal. Social organization and interaction require a commonality of meaning, a "universe of discourse," within which individual acts can take on significant meaning. "The thought world" created in significant human communication constitutes the most general of all human groups—the one that "claims the largest number of individual members." This universalizing tendency of language and reason comes closer to the realization of the ideal community than do religious and economic attitudes. We might add, the process of globalization is greatly enhanced by the "Ideological Universal" that people tend to think more alike both intellectually and culturally than they did a century or more ago. They are economically, politically, and culturally interdependent in many ways. In the modern world a common world of thought and values, constitutes the largest of all human groups, the one with the most number of members. It is this consensus of ideology that unites people and fosters a global spirit.¹⁰⁷

In agreement with Vivekananda, F. S. C. Northrop (1893-1992) a Professor of Philosophy from Yale University expresses the idea that both the East and West will benefit from their encounter. Learning from

each other, they will have a more comprehensive view of things becoming mutually compatible and harmonious. "They can meet, not because they are saying the same thing, but because they are expressing different yet complementary things, both of which are required for an adequate and true conception of man's self and his universe. Each can move into the new comprehensive world of the future, proud of its past and preserving its self-respect. Each also needs the other... It means that Western religious leaders with an adequate idea of the good and the Divine, will go to the East more to acquire its religion of intuition and contemplation than to convert the Easterner to the Western theistic religion of doctrine and reform; just as Easterners come to Europe and America to acquire Western science and its more theoretically grounded determinate economic, political and religious values. It means also that no claim to a completely perfect religion can be made in either portion of the world until the unique insights of the religion of the East and those of the West are combined."¹⁰⁹

Sri Ramakrishna and his disciples came to bring about a revolutionary change in world culture. Today we live in a relatively advanced secular society. In the future Ideational spirituality and mysticism will combine into a harmonious synthesis with the best of the higher secular culture creating a new worldwide Integral culture. We are now living in the early stages of a spiritual revolution. These events are occurring at this time in history, recognized by those people who have the insight to understand their development. It is opened to people of all religions and political persuasion in all countries of the world be they conservative, liberal, etc. A modern Ideational Culture would be superior to that of the Middle Ages because it would not be under the control of a single group of people (the clergy) and would not persecute non-believers.

There is a strong possibility for a future Golden Age of Religious Philosophy and Theology composed of an integration and cross-fertilization of: 1) the vast amount of prior religious and philosophical knowledge of the world that has been uncovered in the last couple of centuries; 2) the combined present knowledge of all of the religions of

the world; and 3) its correspondence to the enormous amount of secular knowledge that has been discovered in the last few centuries. For example, in the future Indian, Buddhist, Christian, Islamic, Jewish, and secular Western religious philosophy each a relatively independently derived system of thought; will come together and to some extent be synthesized into a higher and more intellectual unity of universal principles and practices. The goal is the most comprehensive system of religious philosophy that accepts all truths as part of a universal system. We want to expand our horizons, to be flexible open-minded thinkers; construction not deconstruction is the goal. There is an unrealized potential for growth, whereby ideas and principles that presently exist in partially developed form, possess the capabilities for further progressive development.

Vivekananda stated, "My disciples are all Brahmins!... in the West, one should be known as such by one's Brahmanya qualities... when he meditates on God or passes his time in conversation about Him, then he is a Brahmin."¹¹⁰ From this standpoint a Brahmin is a spiritually oriented person no matter what their occupation is. Consequently, the New Brahmin represents a much broader category than just the priest's class. They are the people that develop and teach the ideas, norms, and values by which people live by.

Today we are witnessing a rise in the prestige of the Brahmin class that includes university professors, cultural leaders, and writers. In modern times these thinkers have brought us a Golden Age of Knowledge. A virtue of the rise of the Brahmins in the East and West is that they are in many ways benefiting the other three classes rather than exploiting them. Going back a few centuries' most influential intellectuals carried weight with only a very small highly educated elite portion of society. Consequently, their ideas were limited in the good they could do to society. With the emergence of universal education, and particularly university education we are now seeing intellectuals having far more influence on secular society. The number of people attending universities is at an all-time high and these students are greatly influenced by what they learn from their professors. This

Brahmin class differs from that of the past in that most of them are centered around universities and secular activities. The Brahmin class of the past was the product of seminaries and monastic institutions. Sri Ramakrishna emphasized the monastic way of living, so in time they will produce more intellectual leaders.

Following the "Filtration Theory," these ideas filter from the professors down to the general public. After the students leave school and enter the work force, because of their education they provide a large market for the reception of ideas put out by the outstanding thinkers. Following the social philosophy of Auguste Comte (1798-1857), contemporary professors might be considered as the priests of humanity who are striving to educate the people for the betterment of humanity. To give an example, Professor Albert Einstein was judged by *Time* magazine as the "Person of the Century," rather than a political, military, or business leader. Combined with a greater interest in meditation and living a spiritual life, this is bringing about a rise in the influence of the Brahmin (religious leaders and intellectuals) class. Of course, the egalitarian goal is that each of the four classes should contribute to society without exploiting the others.

Non-denominational meditation received a big impetus in the West in the 1960s due to the efforts of Maharishi Mahesh Yogi (1918-2008) and others. Maharishi taught a religion that placed the greatest emphasis on meditation for everyone, operating largely independent of one's religious affiliation and dogmatic beliefs. Maharishi was a disciple and personal secretary to Brahmananda Saraswati (1868-1953) the Shankaracharya of the Jyotirmath in the Himalayas. Due to his own volition, Brahmananda left his family and became a wondering sadhu at the age of nine. It is reported that he lived in a cave for forty years before becoming the Shankaracharya. Before his passing, the Revered Brahmananda charged Maharishi with the responsibility of travelling and teaching meditation (that he learned from his Master) to the masses.¹¹¹ Charismatic personalities and new ideas (principles) by themselves are not enough to motivate large numbers of people. Practices like meditation are absolutely necessary to prepare and

inspire people so that they are able to manifest a new spiritual consciousness. Since that time people like Deepak Chopra who was one of Maharishi's assistance, Sadhguru, and Eckhart Tolle have done a commendable job in getting people interested in meditation.

Another promising event is that in December 2014, following Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's recommendation, over 90% of the United Nations countries endorsed June 21 as International Yoga Day. The UN General Assembly felt practicing yoga would benefit the health of the world's population. At that time it was estimated that about 250 million people around the world practice yoga.

The number of Americans practicing yoga has risen amazingly from four million in 2001 to 20.4 million in 2012 and 36.7 million in 2016. It has entered the family system since 37% have children who also do yoga. Seventy-two percent are women and 74% are relatively new practicing it for five or less years, and 56% practice yoga for stress relief. Of the yoga practitioners 36% meditate, and for the overall population (including those who do not practice formal yoga) over 33 million adults meditate in the United States. In states like California, New York, and others over 20% of the adult population meditate.¹¹² Consequently, with the expansion of education and yoga, modern religion is placing more emphasis on mystical experience than in the past. In the United States the number of adults aged 18 and over practicing meditation increased more than threefold from 4.1% in 2012 to 14.2% in 2017.¹¹³ This means an increase in sattva which is needed in the world. The general trend we find today towards social individualism is resulting in religious practices that are more individualized and spiritually focused.

The success of the Indians who migrated to the United States has created a good impression of the people in the West. While worldwide monasticism is now on the decline. The fact that Sri Ramakrishna placed so much emphasis on monasticism, we can expect an acceleration of it in the future. Society has become morally inadequate and so there is a need for an adjustment.

Another positive feature is the Diaspora of 17.5 million Indians in foreign countries in 2019, with over half of them living in the United

States, United Kingdom, Canada, and Australia. Originally many of the Indian immigrants were laborers. For example, from 1838 to 1917, over half a million Indians were brought to the British West Indies as indentured servants due to the demand for labor following the abolition of slavery.¹¹⁴ Today it is altogether different since most of the Indians in the West are professionals in the fields of medicine, computers, business, engineering, and education. In the United States Indians are the wealthiest and most educated ethnic group and in Britain are the largest ethnic minority population in the country with the highest average hourly pay rate and the lowest poverty rate.¹¹⁵ Most important these people have created a good image of Indian people and have generated good karma by being productive, hard working, ethical, and law-abiding. According to the 2011 Census, India was composed of 79.8% Hindus, 14.2% Muslims being the third largest Muslim population in the world, and 2.3% Christians¹¹⁶ with Catholics outnumbering Protestants.

According to many we now live in a post-industrial society characterized by an Information Society where producing useful and knowledgeable ideas (a major function of the Brahmin class) is a major way for a society to prosper and the economy to grow. Information sciences and technologies are developed and implemented, bringing about an increase in the prestige of the intellectual class. In the Information society, the creation, distribution, integration, and manipulation of information are a significant aspect of economic, political, and cultural activity. It has been greatly aided by the computer with its capacity to store, process, and communicate information. Many people are employed in the processing, distribution, and use of information. The knowledge industry includes education, research and development, mass media, information technologies, and information services.¹¹⁷ A vast amount of knowledge is now quickly available on the Internet.

Gauged by the two world wars in the first half of the twentieth century there was a preponderance of warlike military societies. They maintained strong centralized control, using compulsion, force, and

repression, placing the good of the group over the good of an individual and rewarded loyalty, obedience, and discipline. The British sociologist Herbert Spencer (1820-1903) predicted a movement from the aggressively military to the industrial society, which later took place. Their goal is production and trade rather than war, one society interconnected with others through economic relations. They allow more individual and political freedom, while stressing the worth of the individual. Working through voluntary cooperation and individual self-restraint, they value initiative, independence, and innovation. Spencer's theory is correct but the timing was a little off because of the militarism of the first half of the twentieth century. Today the manufacturing industrial society is accompanied by the service sector comprised of administration, banking, trade, transport, healthcare, education, mass media, and science. Interests are in information technologies, long-term planning, and modeling future trends under the direction of educated specialists and scientists.

Vivekananda stated in 1895, "with the advance of science, fighting [wars] will grow less."¹¹⁸

During the period of the ascension of a society and cultural there is self-sacrifice and benefiting of the other three classes; during the period of decline there is self-gratification and dominance over the other three classes. In time the creative minority becomes stagnant. Vivekananda wrote, "That renunciation, self-control, and asceticism of the priest which during the period of his ascendancy were devoted to the pursuance of earnest researches of truth are on the eve of his decline employed anew and spent solely in the accumulation of objects of self-gratification and in the extension of privileged superiority over others."¹¹⁹ This idea was expressed by the Russian religious philosopher Nikolai Berdyaev (1874-1948) that cultural creativity and refinement of thought require an unselfish and somewhat ascetic way of life and a severe limitation of the "will to pleasure." An overly "happy and prosperous" life in time might lead to a decline in culture.¹²⁰

A major reason why many contemporary Western thinkers are not interested in Indian philosophy is because of their strong secular

orientation. Many great achievements were accomplished in Western philosophy during the 20th century, but most of it is of a secular nature. Partly because of their success in this realm and because of their desire to attract students, Western philosophers of the 20th century have concentrated on areas of study that relate to epistemology and the physical, social, and behavioral sciences.

6. Revival of the Philosophy of Religion Beginning in the 1960s

For a number of other significant reasons in the West religious ways of thinking gradually started to gain much ground after 1960. The main reasons for this phenomenon include the: passing away of many of the prominent atheists and agnostics who dominated the field; decline of logical positivism; new generation of religious thinkers brought a renewed interest in the philosophy of religion and philosophical theism; psychological realization that belief in God is not a neurotic impulse, but is supportive of mental and physical health; eventual global decline of atheistic political regimes; growth of Christianity and Islam in many areas of the world; many scientist who realized that religion has much to contribute, providing intrinsic meaning and purpose to all creation; scientific discovery of the very precise fine-tuning of the cosmos necessary for conscious life to come into existence; realization that evolutionary development did not occur randomly, but instead reflect a rational teleological process; need for a global ethic based on religious principles to preserve the human race; and a remarkable increase in religious pluralism and interest in the study of comparative religion.¹²¹ At that time the analytical philosophers also revived the study of the "unity of consciousness," which has become an area of significant interest and discovery.

The philosophy of religion deals with religious concepts, beliefs, terms, arguments, and practices. The conclusions reached are supported by ideas drawn from other areas of philosophy, theology, history, sociology, psychology, archeology, and the physical sciences. Important themes are: the nature of God and ultimate reality, the Divine

Incantation, proofs for the existence of God, relation of God to the world, Divine grace, scriptures, explaining the existence of evil and suffering, miracles, levels of tolerance, religious experience, faith, ethical behavior, meditation and prayer, and the purpose of human existence. With a major revival of the Anglo-American philosophy of religion in the 1960s, the trend switched to rigorous analytical detailed studies within specialized areas of religion by professors largely within philosophy departments and some in theology. They deal with many religious topics that have been traditionally associated with theology such as the: atonement, church, Divine incarnation, grace, Holy Spirit, resurrection, sacraments, sin, trinity, etc. They have introduced and discussed topic like cosmopsychism, counterfactual knowledge, decombination problem, the exclusivism, inclusivism, pluralism trichotomy, hard problem of consciousness, micropsychism, scientism, and skeptical theism.

These philosophers of religion apply the methods and resources of contemporary philosophy in their analysis of the traditional doctrines of Christianity. Fortunately they do not maintain a hard and fast distinction between philosophy and theology, and between one religious denomination and another.

This remarkable intellectual movement has benefited from the decline of Logical Positivism whose premises were not empirically verifiable. Like the Analytical Philosophy of Bertrand Russell and G. E. Moore, methodological emphasis is placed on narrowly focused discussions that probe a specific, isolated issue with precision, attention to detail, determining which arguments are valid, and logical and conceptual clarity. Religious topics are separated into their constituent parts (analysis) and later their findings are combined into a meaningful systematic theory (synthesis, Grand Theory). Because far more people are attending universities than in the past there are more professors that can take part in the specialization of knowledge process. In the 1960s many of the geniuses born in the nineteenth century were passing away such as Tillich, Barth, Jung, Sorokin, and Schrodinger. It was time for a new way of thinking, a new methodological paradigm.

This intellectual movement that is increasing our understanding of religious philosophy is beneficial to all faiths including Vedanta. Without knowledge of Vivekananda and coming from a Christian standpoint, they are discussing many of the religious ideas he spoke and wrote about.

Just as in human society and in the production of products, so also in the idea realm there is tremendous advantage in a division of labor which means a division of knowledge. As the quantity of knowledge increases, there is an enhanced separation of tasks so allowing the participants to develop specialized capabilities. Each scholar working in a limited area of study results in greater intellectual productivity than a single person covering a wide variety of tasks. Intellectuals working in specialized areas where they are best suited means increased productivity, greater job satisfaction, higher morale and self-esteem, and increased enthusiasm for their work. Working in a more restricted area of thought eliminates the long training period required to attain a wide variety of ideas. Specialization in knowledge and the division of labor foster a sense of unity and social solidarity resulting from individuals with a shared background, tradition, and values engaging in a similar activity.¹²² A major advantage of specialization is that it allows far more people to be involved in the creative process. Counter ideas are also expressed to emphasize the variety of possible positions concerning the matter.

Collective intelligence can involve a number of people who coordinate and work together on a specific problem. Or it can mean a number of separate individuals working independently of one another each trying to solve the same problem. Concerning the current revival of the philosophy of religion, it is the second definition that we are interested in here. It involves a diversity of expertise with a wide range of skills and a variety of perspectives, working in a specific area of study. Multiple voices are heard from and considered. It can involve a multidisciplinary approach if the contributors represent many fields of study such as religious philosophy, social thought, behavioral science, epidemiology, etc. This process requires the ability to aggregate and

synthesize information from various sources. What is required is effective communication between the participants and knowledge and information sharing through articles, books, and seminars. A feedback loop occurs when innovative ideas receive both praise and criticism. The result is an innovative and comprehensive solution to the problem that incorporates various viewpoints, with an enhanced problem-solving capacity. The goal is to foster a continuous learning environment where strategies and solutions generate a wide range of new ideas.¹²³

Early Analytical Philosophy of Religion studies such as John Hick's *Philosophy of Religion* (1963) and Alvin Plantinga's *God and Other Minds* (1967), helped to revive philosophical studies concerned with the existence of God. By the 1980s there was a highly impressive acceleration in these types of writings. Though the writers are intellectually productive as a group, they do not receive the prestige given to the grand theorists and system builders of the past, and sometimes are not professors at the most prestigious universities in the United States. They do a great deal of referencing and quoting and are more modest in claiming originality. Yet if you add up the contributions of all of these many specialists the results are outstanding. They have been able to add a great deal of valuable material to traditional religious philosophy, by incorporating the modern discoveries in many fields including metaphysics, epistemology, theology, and science. In addition, at that time many high quality textbooks came out on the history of Christian thought and the great religious works of the past were translated into the English language. Some might criticize the analytical philosophers of religion for working from too narrow a perspective and therefore lacking the unification of various ideas into a meaningful synthesis. This enterprise combines philosophy and theology into a single discipline. From a Christian standpoint and working independently of Vivekananda's writings, they discuss many of the religious topics he covered.

Due to a remarkable increase in higher education there are a vast number of researchers making new discoveries. Extraordinary genius

has been replaced by well-educated specialists who undertake detailed work in limited areas of study, resulting in a remarkable quantitative and qualitative expansion of knowledge. The number of people belonging to the "creative minority" has increased significantly. For example, in 1969 when they sent a rocketship to the moon as part of the Apollo space mission and when they developed modern computer hardware and software, this was accomplished by a large number of specialists and not by a single genius. Rather than the acclaim going to a single genius, this allows for a more egalitarian distribution of credit given to many people. Adam Smith in the *Wealth of Nations* (1776) mentioned the virtues of a specialized division of labor in producing commodities. Similarly a specialized division of labor is very useful in the production of ideas and the associated technology.

In the field of religious philosophy in the 19th and early 20th century, there were the "Grand Metaphysical Theory" system builders like Hegel, Schelling, Schopenhauer, Bradley, Husserl, Whitehead, and Heidegger in the West. Augustus Strong, Herman Bavinck, Paul Tillich, the Jesuit Frederick Copleston, and others produced outstanding works on philosophical theology. In the second half of the 19th century a large number of geniuses were born in all fields helping to develop a new level in technology and secular knowledge previously unknown in world history. Yet as Vivekananda correctly predicted, "There will be a great distribution of ordinary education, but extraordinary geniuses will be less and less."¹²⁴ This has occurred in most fields of theoretical knowledge and consequently less monumental discoveries are being made today. The "Great Man Theory of History" is less evident today. Creativity remains, only now it is due a large number of specialized educated intellectuals working on a project.

While extraordinary geniuses often deal with all-inclusive "Grand Theory," these thinkers usually work in limited areas dealing with for example a single attribute of God (or a lesser subdivision of it), which may be combined to produce "Theories of the Middle Range."¹²⁵ They work within restricted aspects of religious philosophy, rather than with broad abstract entities such as the nature of God as a whole. The result

has been a very fruitful and highly specialized and sophisticated in-depth analysis of this subject. Of course living in a scientific age they are more critical than the religious writers of the past. Emphasis is on reason, which is universal enabling a pluralistic attitude, rather than revelation that is sectarian. A large number of specialists combine to produce highly informative Readers, with each section authored by an expert in the field. The studies tend to be nondenominational in the sense that whether the author is Protestant (or its subgroups), Catholic, or Jewish is often not specified. Exceptions occur if the writer belongs to a Catholic Order or a Protestant School of Theology. Traditionally Protestants identified Thomas Aquinas with the Catholic Church and tended to ignore many of his ideas. But today a number of Protestant philosophers are taking Aquinas' writings quite seriously. Another impressive feature is that they tend to be nondogmatic and often present arguments from both sides of the spectrum. Writers sometimes disagree with one another but following the British system they treat their adversary with respect. Emphasis is placed on clarity and precision of thought. Women play a far bigger role than they did in the 19th century. These studies have long lasting value since they are working in a the very important area of the Perennial Philosophy that covers the ideas of thinkers like Plato Aristotle, Plotinus, Augustine, Anselm, and Aquinas. The last three were well grounded in an all-encompassing Platonic, Aristotelian, and Neoplatonic framework that provided a powerful metaphysical and epistemic foundation to work from. Conversely, modern religious philosophers are guided by a more skeptical and scientific outlook. They also rely on early modern philosophers like Descartes, Leibniz, Hume, and Kant.

Another significant event that has occurred since the 1960s is the expansion of inter-religious dialogue between the various faiths. Gradually the boundaries of dialogue expanded from various groups within Christianity to include Judaism and then Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, and smaller faiths. Eventually high-profile international meetings were organized like the Parliament of Religions in 1993 and afterwards. It is one thing to understand other religions and cultures

from outside that can lead to bigotry and another to seek to understand other religions and cultures from the inside, as they understand themselves. Rather than holding a hostile attitude toward other religions, they come to adopt a more constructive view toward one another, exchanging ideas on [SEP]religious questions and working together on joint social projects such as feeding the poor. Their primary goal is not to defeat their opponent or promote nationalistic and ethnocentric ideologies, but in a genuine dialogue and constructive engagement between religions. Representatives from the various religious traditions engage in mutually respectful dialogue concerning various religious topics with an attitude of mutual respect and openness to the possibility of learning from one another. Experiencing a direct encounter, they begin to understand teachings and practices from the other person's perspective. The constructive dimension of inter-religious dialogue result is a deeper form of self-understanding (often in an unpredictable manner) and the learning of new insights and practices from another religion.¹²⁶

Just as in the 1960s there was a breakthrough in the analytical philosophy of religion, so also there was one in the psychology of religion. This occurred with the emergence of Transpersonal Psychology. For more details see *Swami Vivekananda on Religious, Ethical, and Psychological, Practices*, Ch. IV. The Unconscious Mind and Samskaras (Mental Impressions), Section 7. Transpersonal Psychology. Also, during this period excellent original works were written in the sociology of religion. During this decade this intellectual progress was accompanied by contemporary active events like Pope John XXIII's Vatican II, Transcendental Meditation receiving the support of by the Beatles, Martin Luther King's March on Washington, and the formation of the Peace Corp.

The next step is to combine the wisdom of the Hindus, Christians, and other religions, Western secular thought, and other areas of study into a gigantic syntheses.

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¹⁹ *Fifty Eastern Thinkers* (London: Routledge, 2000), pp. 140-41 on GBS.

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²² CW, IV:316.

²³ PB (1928), p. 356; MOTE (1927). p. 96.

²⁴ CW, III:105, 108-09.

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²⁶ CW, VII:389.

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³⁰ *The Manchester Guardian* (June 10, 1910); WARHD, p. 425.

³¹ VFEW (Sept-Oct. 1963), p. 214.

³² Tathagatananda, p. 549; cf. Web: www.russian-centre-mumbai.org/russianindology/personalities.htm

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³⁴ Ghanananda, pp. xii, 210, 214; GTRV.

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³⁶ HYSC, pp. 158-59.

³⁷ CW, II:206; Burke, III, pp. 222-23.

³⁸ According to two devotees Rockefeller met Vivekananda. Carnegie visited India, believed the country should be free of the British Empire, and greatly admired Edwin Arnold's *The Light of Asia* on the life of Buddha (WARHD, pp. 470, 476-77). Henry Ford co-authored a book, "The Power that Wins" (1928) with the popular New Thought writer Ralph Waldo Trine.

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⁴¹ CW, VI:278, 325.

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⁴³ GSR, p. 368a.

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