

VIVEKANANDA, S CONCEPTION OF HUMANISM
AND ITS RELEVENCE TO MODERNAGE

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PROJECT REPORT

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1. INTRODUCTION:

Right from the beginning of human civilization elevation of human potentiality plays a vital position in shaping the order of the society as well as world in a right way. In the history of philosophy, shifting of belief from God to man was first initiated by Greek philosopher Protagoras, and from then the term 'Humanism' occupy an important position in subsequent philosophical development. Apart from the western thinker, some orientalist, particularly in India, contributed lots towards the development of humanism based on their own indigenous flavors.

Swami Vivekananda, a versatile genius of international repute, was a profound supporter of humanism. Enriched with missionary zeal, Vivekananda imparted the traditional Indian Vedanta philosophy to a practical shape by emphasizing its positives aspect that "All is Brahman" and therefore he admits that service to man is service to God is better than quiescent meditation. His special contribution is the revival of human life and service to humanity. Swami Vivekananda tried to evolve a human social order throughout his life irrespective of cast, creed, religion, and geographical distinction. All the humanist philosopher of the world has touched only peripheral aspect of human life by keeping aside other aspect of human life. But Vivekananda's humanism reaching the significance in estimation of value in life. His humanism is great in its nature as it touches the central theory of man which makes it relevant to modern age.

2. INFLUENCE ON VIVEKANANDA:

Swami Vivekananda was primarily influenced by ancient Indian Vedic literature. The deepest influence upon his thought is obviously Vedanta philosophy. It can be said that Vivekananda was a vedantic. The core concept of his philosophy is derived from the Upanishad and the Vedanta. His basic belief in the essential unity of everything is a completely monistic in nature, owes its origin to the Vedanta. Vivekananda always emphasizes the need of re-interpreting Vedanta in accordance with the demand of the time. Vivekananda was also influenced by the Buddhist philosophy. B.K. Lal observed that "There are at least three ideas in Vivekananda philosophy for which he remains indebted to Buddhist thought"¹. First and foremost is the idea of 'mass-liberation' which has similarity with the Buddhist ideal of Bodhisatta, secondly he was influenced by the Buddhist assertion of helping others in their struggle against suffering, and thirdly some of the Buddhist ideal like Samyak Karmata and Ajiva have also inspired Vivekananda a great deal. Along with the Indian influence, he also carried on his thought, the influence of Christianity. From Christianity Vivekananda takes up the ideal of service and love. Besides these the profound influence upon Vivekananda's thought was of his Master Swami Ramakrishna Paramhansa, which remodeled and shaped the entire thought of Vivekananda. Swami Nikhilananda, speaking about this as "It was his master who had taught him the divinity of the soul, the non-duality of God-head, the unity of existence and one more great thing- that is the universality or harmony of all different religions."². Vivekananda's philosophy is a meeting point of orient and occident, of the ancient and

the modern. Swami Rangathananda has commented about the influence on Vivekananda's thought as "These influence were four: first his assimilation of the rich spiritual element of Indian culture in his early life through the informal education received from his mother and from his own studies; second his assimilation of the energy and spirit of western culture through his formal education in school and college as a youth; third his silent spiritual training under his guru, Sri Ramkrishna whom Romain Rolland present to his western readers in his 'life of Vivekananda' as the 'consummation of two thousand years of the spiritual life of three hundred million people. Although he has been dead forty years, his soul animates modern India'. And forth his intimate acquaintance, through his extensive travel across the length and breath of his vast country as a parivrajaka or wondering monk, just prior to his historic journey to the west, with the living, pulsating India of people and their problem, as much economic as social, political, and spiritual."³. This fourth formative influence contributed substantially to the shaping of Vivekananda humanism.

3. VEDANTA AND VIVEKANANDA:

Swami Vivekananda (Narendra Nath Dutta, 1862-1902) occupies one of the most brilliant chapters in the history of Indian philosophical and social thought of the new times. His world view embodied the most essential feature of bourgeois ideology of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, exerting enormous influence on its further development. He tried to re-orient the Vedanta philosophy to make it the theoretical foundation of the struggling for building a new India. Vivekananda puts a broad

construction on the concept of the Vedanta philosophy .According to him Vedanta is also used as a Hinduism which cover in fact all of Indian philosophical school i.e. .orthodox and heterodox. Vivekananda wrote “Thus the Vedanta, whether we know it or not, has penetrated all the sects in India, and what we call Hinduism..... Has been throughout interpreted by the influence of Vedanta. Whether we are conscious of it or not, we think the Vedanta, we live in the Vedanta, we breath the Vedanta, and we die in the Vedanta, and every Hindu does that”⁴ Fundamental principle of Vedanta is “ONENESS”. Swami Abhedananda has commented as “There is one Existence, one life, one spirit, one being in the universe.” ⁵ The first conception of the unity of existence that was ever express before the world, is to be found in the Rig veda, the most ancient scripture of the world as “ekam vipra vahuda vadanti” .Vedanta philosophy teaches us that the highest goal of life is attainment of freedom and emancipation from the bondage and that freedom and emancipation comes when we are able to realize divinity within us. Vedanta is strictly human concern. Swami Ranganathananda commented regarding the human relevance of Vedanta in this way- “This great philosophy of Vedanta, which India has developed since ages, and has continued to reauthenticate down to our times through a succession of grate saint , sages, and thinker, has a tremendous relevance for humanity everywhere.It is not some magic, some cheap mystery; it is a pure message of human growth, development,and fulfillment; it is a rational philosophy of full human unfoldment, human evolution”⁶

Vedanta offer a religion that is rational and universal, non dogmatic and all comprehensive, at the same time it is intensely human and profoundly spiritual. According to Vivekananda man has to manifest his divine potentiality present in him. This is the true religion of the mankind. According to Vivekananda this Vedanta needs to be interpreted in a language that is understandable by the common man. "Tat Tvam Asi" (That thou art) of the Chandogya Upanishad is the essence of the Vedanta, which conveys the most profound truth about man, lying at the deepest level of his being. There is profound Divine dimension of human life apart from having physical, neurological and physic dimension, which has to be realized by man. Vedanta teaches man to have faith in themselves first and then manifest his divine potentiality for the welfare of the human society, that is the central position of Vivekananda humanistic philosophy. Vivekananda presents human life as a long march to truth and fulfillment, a march towards the highest and divine potentiality of man. As Rangathananda commented "This truth is your birth right; you have not to borrow it or beg for it, in the context of the life you live and the work you do, in the midst of earning of your living, the rearing of your family, and all other things that you do in life. These can become a fitting external venue for this tremendous internal march of man to truth and fulfillment. This is true human evolution, says Vedanta. This is the robust philosophy taught by the Upanishad, by the Gita, and by Buddha, in the past, and by the Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda, in the modern age."⁷ Vivekananda in his lecture on jnana- yoga has pointed out the highest glory of man. He says "In worshipping God, we have been always worshipping our own hidden self"⁸ According to Vivekananda ideal of faith in our self is of the greatest help to us. If faith in our self had been more extensively taught and practiced, a large portion of the

evils and miseries would have been vanished. Regarding vedantic notion of theism and atheism Vivekananda says "The old religion said that he was an atheist who does not believe in God. The new religion says that he was an atheist who did not believe in himself. But it is not selfish faith, because the Vedanta again is the doctrine of Oneness. It means faith in all, because you are all".⁹ Noble prize winner Romain Rolland in the opening pages of his book "Life of Vivekananda" wrote "Never forget the glory of human nature; we are the greatest God.....Christ and Buddha's are but waves on the boundless ocean which I AM"

So, it is observe that in the light of vedantic philosophy Vivekananda recognized divinity in man which can be unfold for the well beings of entire humanity. This humanistic trend of Vedanta has been given a modern shape by Vivekananda to promote humanism in general.

4. VIVEKANANDA'S CONCEPTION OF MAN:

Vivekananda's conception of man occupies a vital position through out his thought. His conception of man is a reflection of vedantic interpretation of man. According him man isn't what he ordinary appears to be. Over and above his physical appearance, Vivekananda assert that man is 'spiritual', referring to positive aspect of spirituality man represent some aspiration and urges which only he is capable of having. B. K. Lal has stated "He was devoted much time and energy in trying to determine the spiritual dimension of man; his emphasis on spirituality is so great that even the bodily aspect of

man get spiritualized”¹⁰. Though Vivekananda gave more emphasis on spiritual aspect of man, he did not keep aside physical aspect of man. The nature of man that is reflected in Vivekananda philosophy is an organized unity of physical and spirituality. He never undermines the importance of physical nature of man. The very fact that man is always ask to awaken his spirituality, pre-suppose that there is a side of man that is somewhat different from and yet akin to his spiritual nature, that is his physical nature. The physical nature of man includes the bodily, the biological and psychological aspect of man's nature. Vivekananda belief that even in his physical capacities man is superior to other beings.

Man physical nature is also due to the presents of spirituality in him. Though Vivekananda initially did not deny the reality of physical side of man, he is convinced that this represent only his inferior nature. His real nature consists in his capacity of going beyond his physical nature. According to Vivekananda real nature of man is soul force. Following Gita he describe the Atman as “It is the self beyond of thought, one without birth or death, whom the sword can not pierce or fire bum, whom air can not dry or water melt, the beginingless and endless, the unmovable, the intangible, the omniscient, the omnipotent being, that is neither the body nor the mind but them all.”¹¹ Such description of the Atman reveals that the concept man represent two character , firstly according to Vivekananda real nature of man is similar to divine nature, it is not possible for us to give an exact description of this aspect of man from the empirical point of view.

In other words Vivekananda regard man as divine from the transcendental point of view. According to Vivekananda, like Vedanta, from transcendental point of view there is no difference between atman and Brahman. B. K. Lal had observed "His reason for identifying the two are generally similar to the reason given by the Vedanta. The basic fact to be noted is that, unless the two are identified, the strict monastic character of reality can not be maintained. Soul can not be said to be an aspect or a part of the one, because in that case in that case the one will become composite having part or aspect within it self. Soul can not be conceived also as expression or manifestation of the Absolute, even in that case they would become separate realities over and above the Brahman. Then there is only one way of conceiving the relation between the two, that the two are basically identical and that their different is only apparent"¹². Vivekananda tried to explain the oneness of self and Brahman by adopting vedantic analogy of 'pratibimba' which says that same sun can be reflect in many on the water kept in different pot, but the different of the sun are only apparent reflection the one sun. As Vivekananda observed "There is, therefore, but one atman, one self, eternally pure, eternally perfect, unchangeable, unchanged, it has never changed ; and all this various changes in the universe are but appearances in that one self"¹³. So it is observed that according to Vivekananda real nature of man consist in his Divinity. Divinity of man is the core of Vivekananda's philosophy .By these he makes man almost almighty. According to him man inherent strength and capacities are infinite. This divinity of man, his sovereignty over the nature is the central theme of whole Vivekananda's revolutionary philosophy. Regarding the Divinity of man as held by Vivekananda, B.K.Lal observed "If we survey the life of man either in its collective aspect, or in its individuality, we find that there is

no upper limit- no boundary that can be set around him and beyond which he can not go. His quest for truth, for his activities, knows no bounds. He come to acquire knowledge, or come to enrich his personality by doing something good and noble, yet he can still go ahead. This capability of self- transcendence is itself an evidence of the basic Oneness of Atman and Brahman”¹⁴

Vivekananda’s interpretation of man brings dynamism to the concept of man. According to him man can attain liberation by realizing his divine nature. Sister Nivedita stated “He preached mukti instead of heaven, enlightenment instead of salvation; the realization of immanent unity, Brahman, instead of God”.¹⁵ Man must struggle for liberation; struggle is the nectar of his life. Man has to struggle continuously without a break. Vivekananda’s philosophy of man is a song of this struggle, a virtual marching song of the soul. This dynamic character of man impels man to march towards liberation by braking down the shackles of dead custom, tradition, superstition, dogmas and meaningless rituals. Vivekananda stated “Ay, let every man and woman and child, without respect of cast or birth, weakness or strength, hear and learn that behind the strong and the weak, behind the high and the low, behind every one, there is that infinite soul, assuring the infinite possibility and the infinite capacity of all to become great and good”¹⁶.

Thus we find that Vivekananda’s conception of man is a gospel of hope, having strength, fearlessness and freedom are the cardinal qualities of man. He urges man to recreate a

better future for himself and for mankind as a whole. Vivekananda places man above nature, above society and above environment and make man the moulder of security of this human civilization.

5. WHAT IS HUMANISM?

The term "humanism" is a multidimensional. It has a number of meanings. Each meaning of the word constitutes different types of humanism. But different meaning of the term humanism agree on one point, that is "human its problem and development". Human is the core issue of humanism. General meaning of humanism is that, it is a system of belief that concentrates on human needs and seeks rational way of solving human problem. Humanism is the understanding of human problem and setting of human initiative of benevolence, compassion and mercy. Humanism is employed in contrast to an opposing term e.g. Absolutism, theism, in which human value and appreciation are presumably less central. In more recent centuries the term has been often used in contrast to theism, locating in man the source of goodness and creativity.

Corliss Lamont, a modern humanist as well as philosopher defined humanism as "a naturalistic philosophy that reject all supernaturalism and relies primarily upon the reason and science, democracy and human compassion" (philosophy of humanism, published in 1997, ^{SNW Edition,} humanist press, a division of American Humanist Association¹⁷). Modern humanism has a dual origin, both secular and religious. Secular humanism is an outgrowth of 18th century enlightenment, rationalism and 19th century free thought, on the

other hand religious humanism emerges out of ethical culture, Unitarianism and universalism. The problem to deal with modern humanism lies on the fact that, the inability to its advocates to agree on whether or not this world view is religious. Those who set it as philosophy are the secular humanist while those who see it as religion are religious humanist.

Frederic Edwords, executive director of American Humanist Association, has point out certain characteristic of modern humanism ([http\\www.americanhumanist.org](http://www.americanhumanist.org))-¹⁸

1. Humanism is one of those philosophies for people who think for themselves. There is no area of thought that a humanist is afraid to challenge and explore.
2. Humanism is a philosophy focused upon human means for comprehending reality. Humanist makes no claims to possess or have asses to suppose transcendental knowledge.
3. Humanism is a philosophy of compassion. Humanist ethics is solely concerned with meeting human needs and answering human problem –for both the individual and society –and devotes no attention to the satisfaction of the desires of supposed theological entities.
4. Humanism is a realistic philosophy. Humanist recognized the existence of moral dilemma and the need for careful consideration of immediate and future consequence in moral decision making.
5. Humanism is, in sum, a philosophy for those in love with life. Humanist takes responsibility for their own lives and relishes the adventure of being part of new

discoveries, seeking new knowledge, exploring new option. Instead of finding solace in prefabricated answers to the great question of life, humanists enjoy the open-endedness of a quest and the freedom of discovery that this entails.

6. VIVEKANANDA'S CONCEPTION OF HUMANISM:

Vivekananda's humanism is based on vedantic notion of self realization, it is not mere a intellectual understanding of the self, but a spiritual realization. He gives a spiritual orientation to humanism by maintaining man is the central theme of discussion. Vivekananda conception of humanism is associated with Vedanta notion of science of human possibilities or adhyatma-vidya. It is a science of man that India investigated and developed over the three thousands years ago in the Upanishad and in other immortal ancient Indian literature. Swami Rangathananda says "They penetrated in to the human personality to the very depth and revealed, behind his physical body, behind his nervous system, behind his physis system, a spiritual focus of on infinite and immortal dimension, forming its pure science, and the technique of its manifestation in life and work, forming its applied science" ¹⁹. According to Vivekananda every man has to explore his divine possibility lying within him and has to developed technique to realize this divine possibility for the welfare of the society as well as world.

Vivekananda opines that unlike the eyes of the doll-baby, the eyes of a living baby reveals some depth dimensions to its personality. How can we discover them and help

the baby to manifest those hidden possibilities and energies, and how to process them so as to humanize them? This is the main problem before man according to Vivekananda, the problem of education of human, so as to help it to achieve maximum growth, development, and fulfillment. His special contribution is the revival, in the life and in the service of humanity, of the philosophy of the monistic Vedanta of Sankara and attempt to re-emphasize the unity of all religion. Enriched with missionary zeal, Vivekananda imparted the monistic Vedanta to a practical shape by emphasizing its positive aspect-that is all is Brahman, and therefore service of man as God is better than quiescent meditation. In the words of Katha Upanishad, which Vivekananda love most among the Upanishad "This (Infinite) Atman is present in every being, but this lies hidden and (therefore) is not manifest; but it can be realized by the subtle and penetrating reason of those who are trained to perceive subtler and subtler truths".²⁰

~~ham~~ According to Vivekananda Vedanta is the true meaning of education. Like Vedanta Vivekananda used the term unfoldment to mean education secular as well as spiritual-education in apara vidya, or ordinary knowledge and education in para-vidya or extra ordinary knowledge, that is how Vivekananda defines the roll of the physical science, politics, and economics on the one side, and of art, ethics and religion on the other side. He would even hold that all human education is spiritual since all such education is designed to bring out the possibilities within man. These hidden possibilities classified in to three categories. Firstly there are the physical possibilities, which finds manifestation in development of the body or muscles and

nervous system, which produce physically strong and well equipped man and woman .Second constitute the mental possibilities, which is more subtle and more deep, which express through our thought, reason, will and feeling, producing intelligent and sensitive human beings, who understand the world and used it for further human development. Third constitute the Divine possibilities in man centered in his infinite and immortal dimension which finds expression in the taming and creative use of the other energy resources, which is most subtle and deep with its own unique and enormous energy resources, so that he does not use his strong body, or trained mind, or powerful will to exploit other or to others, but to love them and serve them and help them to achieve life-fulfillment as well as liberation. The attainment of third kinds of possibilities is the highest growth of man, apart from attainment of physical and mental growths. Swami Rangathananda has commented in this respect as “Vedanta warns man and Vivekananda emphasize the same today, that if man grows only physically and mentally, but does not side by side grow also spiritually, he will actually use his strength to exploit other, and to harm and destroy even himself. But when he grows spiritually also, and manifests his ever present divine dimension, he becomes capable to express himself in love and compassion, become capable to radiate humanistic impulse towards not only other human beings but also animals”.²¹

During his visit to western countries Vivekananda preaching Vedanta, and emphasized the need for modern civilization to change its direction from human sensibility to human spirituality. He preaches their philosophy of vedantic humanism with vision of the infinite divine possibilities in man, and mans organic capacity to

realize this in this life. He never thought or taught in narrow terms of the sects or creed or races or nationalities. He treats man as man, saw his infinite divine possibilities, and felt compassion for the tragedy of man creatureliness and unfulfilment. Vivekananda expounded this luminous philosophy of humanism, which at once rational, universal, practical, and dynamic.

Vivekananda, being a spiritual teacher of mankind, his deep interest is in man and his untiring works for total human development and fulfillment. This interest and works is not just religious in the narrow sense of the term religion – just helping man to secure the salvation of their soul, as all other spiritual teacher generally do, but Vivekananda special interest cover all aspect of human life as much economic and social as moral and religious. In fact all round human development forms the central position of Swami Vivekananda mission of life. Romain Rolland, a biographer of Vivekananda, describes the universal sweep of Vivekananda vision as “In the two words, equilibrium and synthesis, Vivekananda constructive genius may be summed up. He embraced all the path of the spirit: the four yoga’s in their entirety, renunciation and service, art and science, religion and action, from most spiritual to most practical. Each of the ways he taught had its own limits, but he himself had been through them all, and embraced them all, As in quadriga, he held the reins of all four ways of truth and traveled towards unity along them all simultaneously. He was the personification of the harmony of all human energy”.²² Above writings of Rolland reflects the universality of Vivekananda humanism. E.P Chelishev of Russia, noticed the practical aspect of Vivekananda’s humanism. He consider Vivekananda’s

humanism as” Posses many feature of active humanism manifested above all in a fervent desire to elevate man, to instill in him a sense of responsibility for his own destiny and the destiny of all people, to male him strive for the ideals of good, truth and justice, to foster in man abhorrence of suffering”²³. Here in all the practical aspect of Vivekanandas revolutionary active humanism has been beautifully brought out. Unlike Christian ideology which dooms man to passivity and to begging God for favor, Vivekananda in order to elevate man put forward the idea that “The highest divine substance-Brahman is personified in millions of ordinary living people and there for the worship of God is tantamount to serving man”.²⁴. Thus Humanism expounded by Vivekananda has reveals the democratic nature of his world outlook and his great concern for the masses, as he regard essence of man as divinity.

^ According to Vivekananda strength is virtue and weakness is sin. As stated by him “strength” is the medicine for the world’s disease. Strength is the medicine which the poor must have when tyrannized ever by the rich. Strength is the medicine what the ignorant must have when oppressed by the learned; and it is the medicine that the sinner must have when tyrannized over by other sinners” .²⁵ By the word “strength” Vivekananda actually convey the idea of divine possibilities of man or spiritual strength, but he also same time consider inner, outer and physical strength as necessary for the realization of divine possibilities of man. As Chelishev aptly point out that “strengthening of the body is required because it is inseparably linked with the spiritual substance and by perfecting it, man helps the development of this divine essence” ²⁶. Vivekananda send out his call to man every where “Arise, Awake, and

stop not till the goal is reached”²⁷. We find this clarion call to arise, awake, in many of his writings. It is a free translation by him of a famous verse of the Katha Upanishad “Uttishthata jagrata, Prapya varan Nibodhata” its literal translation is: Arise, Awake, and approaching the great ones, enlighten yourself, what is the goal? Here we find that Vivekananda give a tremendous emphasis regarding the potentiality of man to achieve certain goal.

Uniqueness of Vivekananda humanism based on the fact that, it resort to a divine possibility of man. As swami Rangathananda observed “The humanism expounded by Vivekananda is intensely human and universal. But it is also something more than human; for it derives its strength and sanction from the ever present and inalienable divine spark in all man and women, and that constitute its uniqueness.”²⁸ According to Vivekananda without spiritual growth of man no progress of society is possible. It is a fact that humanism expounded by Vivekananda is strengthened and sustained by the ignition of divine spark in man which is different from the current humanism of the west, including scientific humanism. Swami Rangathananda says “He accept the human situation, man as we find him in society. He also accepts the need for the manipulation of his socio-political condition up to a point to ensure his growth and development. But he will insist that man must develop and grow further, that he must evolve and steadily unfold also the higher divine possibilities hidden within him”²⁹. Thus the development from organic level to the ethical level which is known as psycho-social evolution is reflected in Vivekananda’s humanistic philosophy. According to Vivekananda in order to establish world peace and functioning of

universal humanism it is needed to overcome beastliness in man, through his education being carried beyond the intellectual level to the spiritual level of his being. He holds that Brahman or Atman is one divine and immortal self, which only rational sanction for all ethical and moral life and action. And for all humanistic impulse and behaviors .when man manifest this divine Atman in his life and behaviors then he realize his spiritual oneness with all, as a result man feel compassion for his fellow beings. Vivekananda was of the opinion that mans physical life tension; all the complexities of his mental dimension become resolved in his higher divine dimension of the personality. Swami Rangathananda commented that “This is humanism with the deepest spiritual import and, therefore, with the widest social relevance, beyond the reach of the pressure, narrow and violent, of all political, racial and religious prejudices, frenzies and passion”³⁰ .

Swami Vivekananda has laid more emphasis regarding the upliftement of common masses, and to fell compassionate for them. He thought that Atman pervades everything and everyone. He would say that when we give a morsel of food to a dog; we worship God in that dog. He saw the same Atman in everyone. Swami Medhasananda rightly observe “After long spiritual practice he come to realize that it is God that dwells within all embodied soul or Jiva and that one who serve these embodied souls, serve God. On another occasion he also said that after so many austerities he understood this is to be the real truth; “God is present in every Jiva; there is no other God besides that”³¹ . Vivekananda love for his motherland and people was greater than his faith in divinity. As Chelishev observed “since he wrote that the

only God that existed was his people, their hands, feet, eyes, ears everywhere they covered everything”³². According to Vivekananda not only his people was God but the people of every country, everyman, every living beings was God and this in terms of his vedantic teaching that “everything is Brahman”. His love for people was again the result of his faith in divinity. The Ramakrishna Paramhansadev, the great master of Vivekananda, whose has a tremendous influence on Vivekananda’s thought, unlike vedantic uses of Maya to mean illusion, Ramakrishna uses Maya to mean love in the sense that it is discriminating love; love which discriminates, while daya means indiscriminating love; love for all people. As Swami Medhasananda has commented “Sri Ramakrishna categorized love in to these two; that which discriminates and the higher love that does not. This universal love knows no limitation or boundary. Further, there is no expectation of something in return for his love. And as all types of love finds a means of expression, this highest love is expressed as service”³³. This highest form of love begins as a feelings of fellowship with all of ones fellow beings. Swami Vivekananda expressed this as love for all souls; for all forms of Atman. He actually saw the same Atman in everyone. Swami Medhasananda observed “Swami had a special love for the poor, the illiterate, the exploited, the fallen. Swamiji said, “He who see Jiva in the poor, in the weak, in the diseased, really worship Shiva. And he who only sees Shiva in the image; his worship is only preliminary, basic.” Sri Ramakrishna says “Who are you to have compassion for Jiva? Not compassion, but see Shiva in the Jiva, and with that idea worship Jiva.”³⁴. Thus it reveals that, according to Vivekananda service to man is service to God which is the common slogan of humanism.

Vivekananda has proclaimed about hundred years ago about service to human beings as "Renunciation and service are the twin ideals of India. Intensify her in those channel, the rest will take care of itself" ³⁵. They are two sides of same coin. Renunciation of the little self, with view to manifesting the higher self, and the spirit of service. It may be mentioned that in order to serve the people Vivekananda initiated a lot of relief work with an outbreak of the plagues in Calcutta with the help of his disciple sister Nivedita. Regarding the service to humanity Vivekananda was unconventional in his approach and insists many others to serve. Swami Vivekananda established Ramakrishna mission in 1897 under the ideals of self realization and service to other with the idea of worship. In other words worship of man is the central theme of Vivekananda's humanism. Thus Vivekananda humanism gave a new orientation to the monastic tradition of Hinduism by initiating humanitarian works by monks in the modern age.

Vivekananda's chief concern was the people, their emancipation from social oppression, poverty and degradation have been noticed by many western thinkers who are working on his social ideas. Noted Soviet scholar, E.N. Komarov observed in an article "The most important progressive feature of social-political view of S. Vivekananda is that he considered liberation of India and democratic social emancipation of the masses as mutually related and twofold goal"³⁶. Vivekananda regarded education of the working people as the first step on the way to this goal. Describing his plan for the regeneration of the masses Vivekananda wrote ".....

our mission is for the destitute, the poor, and the illiterate peasantry and laboring classes”³⁷. Thus it is observed that a core issue of Vivekananda’s humanism is upliftment of common people with a view to get social emancipation which is to be brought about by people themselves.

7. RELEVENCE OF VIVEKANANDA’S HUMANISM IN MODERN AGE:

Humanism propounded by Vivekananda has tremendous relevance in modern age as well as present day situation of the world. Core issue of his entire thought is unity of every things or oneness which he derived from Adaita Vedanta. Vedantic notion of “Oneness” is interpreted by Vivekananda in such a manner that it is the foundation of all existence as well as human civilization which plays a vital role in uniting the races of human civilization in to a single whole. As Vivekananda says “There is but one existence and that existence seen through different constitution appears either as the earth, or heaven, or hell, or gods, or Ghost, or men, or demons, or world or all this things”.³⁸ He also says” It has always to be understood that the personal God worship by the Bhakta is not separate or different from the Brahman. All is Brahman, the one without second”³⁹. To see all life and the whole universe in the Atman is to see oneness in the universe. As swami Vivekananda sats “In the heart of things there is unity still. If you go below the surface, you find that unity between man and man, between races and races, high and low, rich and poor, Gods and man, and man and animals. If you go deep enough, all will be seen as only variation of the One”⁴⁰. Thus

it is observed in the light of Vivekananda philosophy that differences among man is only apparent, fundamentally there is no difference, all man are alike, since all man are only difference manifestation of the same Atman, which reveals the fact of belongingness of man to a certain one whole. This fact of belongingness can be instrumental for overcoming current problem of discrimination among man, exploitation of man by man, and can promote universal brotherhood, which is the most intense present crisis of human civilization.

Present world has been facing a lot of problem with the advent of modern science and technology. No doubt it is truth that science has given us so many things which make our life very comfortable. As Swami Vireswarananda has commented "Many thinker now realize that human civilization now declining .Having thus understood the situation, they are trying to save it somehow from sinking altogether through some patch work. These efforts have given rise to socialism, communism, and so on. Through proper analysis we can find that in this system there is some truth, some good thing; but this things alone can't fully satisfy human beings. That is why these systems are not able to ^{solve} our problem completely. They can't be solved by any system of politics or economics, for at the very root a great mistake is being made- Man is being regarded as only product of matter, and only as a body. The fact that he has a soul is ignored. For solving the modem problem, an inner revolution, a complete transformation will have to be brought about in the soul of man. Only this inner transformation can solve our entire problem, mere changes in outer world can't achieve this."⁴¹ Thus it reveals that only material prosperity can not bring peace to

mind, there should be parallel development of human mentality as recognized by Swami Vireswarananda, a disciple of Vivekananda. But how can this inner transformation can be brought out. We find that in different age's prophet were born and through their teaching and lives great civilization had come in to existence. Like this teaching and life of Vivekananda can be able to bring peace in many soul as well as inner transformation by following his man making religion or humanism, since he insisted upon the unfoldment of human possibilities in right direction. As Marie Louise Burke has pointed out "The religion that will develop on this basis of self knowledge as swami taught it, will be in itself strong and inevitably give strength and energy to every aspect of human endeavor. There is no room in it's for weakness or for despair. At every turn it calls to the best in man"⁴²

The most common observed phenomena of the present society is that religion has no sympathy for the miseries of the people, that the religion are different to peoples suffering, which is also the way of reasoning and the mental attitude of the people of the modern age, that has permeated among the common people. As a result it has become difficult to have faith in the existence of God. As Swami Vireswarananda has commented regarding the problem of modern man that "Our old platitude about religion can no longer stand the scrutiny of modern scientific outlook. That is why, being unable to ascertain whether God exist or not, man is loosing faith in Him. But what are the consequences of loosing faith? Man is suffering from mental affliction, his mind is filled with agonizing restlessness and he feels that he has lost a great deal. He has no idea about the aim or goal of human life"⁴³. This is a special problem of the

modern man. In the life and teaching of Vivekananda we get right answer to this problem of modern man. As Swami Viveswarananda wrote "Swamiji used to say, 'I do not believe in that God who can not give me food here but will give unlimited happiness in heaven'"⁴⁴. Swami Viveswarananda also wrote "one day after coming down from the super conscious state, Sri Ramakrishna uttered these word: 'Not compassion to Jiva, but service to him as Shiva.' Living beings (Jivas) are to be served as manifestations of the Divine. The whole world is in need of this ideal today."⁴⁵. This teaching of Ramakrishna is widely propagated by Vivekananda throughout the world. Hence it follows that, teaching of Vivekananda has practical relevance in modern age as he preached service to man is service to God is the supreme ideals of life.

Humanism of Vivekananda has also relevancy in western world. Vivekananda throughout his visit to western country he preached his humanistic philosophy based on vedantic visions of reality. In this respect Marie Louise Burke has observed "As I see it, the need of America for Swami Vivekananda is desperate indeed"⁴⁶. Vivekananda noticed the over all growth of the western country, particularly America in respect of material growth, at the same time he also noticed the moral degradation of western society as well as loss of peace of mind. As Marie Louise Burke has wrote "I think when every possible avenue of material progress has been explored and when at its blind end the human soul still finds its longing for truth and for joy unsatisfied. When a people have nowhere left to go, when there no more dreams to follow, when in the midst of material plenty and cultural affluence they find no fulfillment or

peace, then that people either goes down the cosmic drain or turns towards God”⁴⁷. It reflects that the material growth of the western people is unable to bring peace in their mind. Burke has also observed regarding the spiritual need of that people in this way “If a seed of spirituality has been planted in the hear of of a nation, then times of inner erosion can act as awakeners of that seed; it will surely stir and sprout. Such a seed was planted in the heart of America some eighty years ago by the towering prophet of this age – Swami Vivekananda”⁴⁸. Vivekananda tried to arose a spiritual awakening in the minds of western people in order to eliminate their problem of loss of peace in mind as well as society.

According to Burke the general religious situation of America is that primary longing for human soul, for some supreme and responsive Divine beings may not be articulate, but its frustration can brings about a corroding sense of despair. So when religion was declining science taking its place, but gradually science also become declining. In short science can not give us the ultimate truth and so also religion. According to Burke in three basic respects American has found himself frustrated, firstly in his search for ultimate Being, secondly in his search for ultimate truth, and thirdly in his search for lasting joy and peace. Most deadly of all, according to Burke western people have lost his spontaneous and energizing faith in himself which causes frustration and degradation of human value among them .In order to overcome this problem of western people, according to Vivekananda their life should be rooted in the Divinity of man of Vedanta. As Burke has observed “Swamiji 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 truth of Advaita Vedanta. Nothing else could hold them firm- and nothing else can hold them firm- against the terrible blows, this present age is dealing them and will continue to deal them.”⁴⁹ Vivekananda’s teaching to the west, their centre lay in his teaching of the Self-the Atman. Vivekananda wrote” to preach unto mankind their divinity and how-to make it manifest in every moment of life”.⁵⁰ Vivekananda holds self knowledge on a rational, scientific, and empirical basis, which is congenial to western tradition. As Burke has observed “He explained from many angles and with closely reasoned argument the logical necessity of the unchanging self; he discussed in detailed the method to be employed in its discovery, and because the West automatically asked the question, he pointed out its utility. With the prophetic urgency he insisted that western man experienced for himself the indescribable wonder of his own Being, all else-utility and all-would follow.”⁵¹.

According to Vivekananda, religion in essence is the realization as well as manifestation of man’s own divinity. Rationally one can deny the existence of an extra cosmic God, one can deny the necessity for a God immanent in nature, one can deny even Brahman, but one can’t deny one’s own awareness, as the father of modern philosophy Rene Descartes has established this fact, there is no possibility of such denial. It is the only certainty from start to finish. Burke has commented regarding the eternity and relevancy of this self awareness as “this undeniable fact of self consciousness is the only certainty in this relentlessly questioning modern age. Nothing can militate against it. And this initial certainty, pushed deeper and deeper,

culminates in the supreme certainty: 'I am He. I am Existence, Knowledge, and Bliss Absolute.'⁵² Thus Vivekananda place the ultimate position of man in his Divine dimension. This Divine dimension of man nothing but the man himself only. Vivekananda observed as "when we have no body to grope towards, no devil to lay our blame upon, no personal God to carry our burdens. When we are alone responsible for my fate, I am the bringer of good unto myself; I am the bringer of evil. I am the pure and blessed one. We must reject all thoughts that assert the contrary"⁵³. This emphasis of man by Vivekananda is pertinent in American situation, as Burke has observed "The emphasis that Swamiji placed on man as the controller of his own destiny was in perfect accord with American temperament. No true American has ever really, in his heart of hearts, had any other notion than that he was master of his fate. He makes his own fortune-in every sense of the word. He relies upon himself, he fights his own battles, and he carves out his own destiny. 'Praise the Lord and pass the ammunition' become a joyous American battle cry in the Second World War precisely because the nation recognized in it its own free, self-reliant spirit. Americans were vastly amused by their own image and delighted in it. It was this spirit to which Vivekananda wanted to give real depth and permanence"⁵⁴

According to Vivekananda the service of man as God himself is a vitally important aspect of the new religion and philosophy. Each man must act in away to help every other man since every man are essentially divine and one. Swami Vivekananda said in an American lecture" the most glorious God that ever was, the only God that ever existed, exist or ever will exist"⁵⁵. Here actually Vivekananda reflects the

glorification of man inner soul which assumes a God. With this conviction man's every action become service, and that service is worship. Regarding the influence of Vivekananda's teaching in American society Burke has observed "Swamiji often said he had planted a live seed in America and that it was bound sooner or later to fructify. And today that seed is fructifying. Within the last decade – coincidentally, since around Swamiji's centenary –the whole nation has been undergoing a revolutionary change."⁵⁶ . Burke has also observed relevancy of his teaching in this way" His teaching of Advaita Vedanta will, in any case, be the spearhead of a new religion for a new age. For as he said again and again, nothing else but this will do. He foresaw great turmoil and tumult in the coming age; he anticipated gigantic world wide problems that would have to be faced and solved, and he knew that only man 's strong to the depth of their being could stand up to those problem and not to be overcome"⁵⁷. Hence it is follows that humanism of Vivekananda influences the western as well as American society to overcome their problem.

Divinity of man is the core of Vivekananda's humanism. By this doctrine Vivekananda makes man almost almighty. He places man above environment and make him moulder of his own destiny. According to him this divine possibility of man is instrumental in solving the problem of modern age. Prof. P.A. Sorokin rightly observed in this respect, "The sensate culture did its best in the way of degrading man to the level of a mere reflex mechanism, a mere organ motivated by sex , a mere semi- mechanical, semi physiological organism, devoid of any divine spark, of any absolute value, of anything noble and sacred"⁵⁸. Thus it reflects that urgent need and

crisis of the present age is the divinity of man and degradation of human value under materialistic culture or sensate culture respectively. It is also an observable fact of the present age that value crisis mushroomed the whole society. The solution of this crisis of present age obviously lies in the elevation of man from materialism to spirituality is urgently needed but it does not mean that material prosperity have been totally ignored. As observed by Prof. Sorokin "mankind should be grateful to the sensate culture (materialistic) for its wonderful achievements (in the field of science and technology). But now When its products is poisonous gas rather than fresh air, when through its achievement it has given in to man's hands terrific power over nature and the social and the cultural world without providing with self control, with power over his emotion and passion, sensate appetites and lust- now in the hands of such a man, with all its achievement of science and technology, it is becoming increasingly dangerous to mankind itself and to its values"⁵⁹ Hence it reveals that material prosperity should be guided by man themselves. In other words man is the core factor in shaping the security of mankind as recognized by Vivekananda throughout his teaching based on vedantic notion of Divinity of man. This fact is also observed by Sorokin "If the conquest of the forces of nature is the main function of the sensate [materialistic] culture, the taming of man, his "humanization", his ennoblement as the participant in the Divine Absolute, has always been the function mainly of the ideational or idealistic [spiritualistic] culture..... Hence the urgency of the shift... from the subjugation and control of nature by man to the control of man by himself"⁶⁰. In addition to this Sorokin also observed "This control is impossible without a system of universal perennial values. Such value is irreconcilable with the

sensate mentality and culture which by their nature are relative, utilitarian, hedonistic and expedient only.”⁶¹. Hence the crisis of the present age is in search of a absolute, eternal, and spiritual values which lead the direction of society in right way as recognized by Vivekananda.

Swami Vivekananda declared “ye divinities on earth sinner”.⁶²This declaration of Vivekananda is very technically analyze eminent Indian sociologist prof. Benoy Kumar Sarkar in this way “The first four words summoned in to being the ultimate gospel of joy, hope, virility, energy, and freedom for the races of man. And with the last word he demolished his whole structure of soul degenerating cowardice-promoting negative, pessimistic thought.’ ‘On the astonished world,’ Professor Sarkar points out, the little five word formula fell like a bomb- shell.”⁶³. Santwana Dasgupta, a scholar of social philosophy of Vivekananda, commenting on this as “It was a true bomb- shell on the orthodox world believing in the theory of original sin as well as on the new world of agnostic- who did not believe in the presence of any divine spark in man. And he threw it on an august assembly of world’s intellectuals and elites. Standing firmly on the ancient vedantic philosophy, Vivekananda coined these words as a solution to the problem of modern man and to the crisis of modern civilization.”⁶⁴

Present socio-economic order of the world give rise the concept of internationalism which is reflected very clearly in Vivekananda’s philosophy about this international character human being. Vivekananda says”Advaitism preaches that

this world is self-creating, self destructive and self manifesting. The ancient message of India remains –for the good of many, for the happiness of many”⁶⁵. Observing on international appeal of Vivekananda’s thought Dr. Sarup Prasad Ghosh, a scholar of Ramakrishna Institute says “This remained the core of Swamiji’s idea about international co-operation, conciliation and co-existence.....

Vivekananda tries to take us towards this higher life where differences of caste, creed, religion and nationality become irrelevant and this doctrine teaches the ethics of the universal religion which can resolve the conflict of interest based on racial or religious ground. This is the prescription for the new age where ‘humanism’ is being given the importance it deserves”⁶⁶.

From the recent development in various countries mostly socialistic, it seems today that a social order in which all human interest will be guided and controlled according to the idea of man’s ultimate spiritual value, as conceived by Vivekananda is possible. As has been remarks by Santwana Dasgupta “That towards approaching that social order man is struggling hard is apparent from the emergence of the concept of Euro-communism, struggle for democracy in china, East Germany, Hungary and Poland, the emergence of the concept of Glasnost and Perestroika in the Soviet Union, and above all by the appreciation of Vivekananda in the communist countries. The integrated system that man is aspiring for was given a concrete shape in his philosophy by Vivekananda”⁶⁷. So it is reveals that elevation of man to its highest limits is the main issue in controlling turmoil of the present society that is reflected in Vivekananda’s thought as well as thought of some greatest thinker of the world.

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Marie Louise Burke says "The spiritual stature of Swami Vivekananda was such that he could not live among men without altering, enriching and illuminating the very texture of world thought"⁶⁸. Thought of Vivekananda is widely influence the thinker of the world, as has been comment given by Santwana Dasgupta "The impact of his thought on thinker like Sorokin, Toynbee, Aldous Huxley, Isherwood and many others in the Western world, as well as on the Soviet and Chinese thinker in the socialist countries is an indication towards the fact that the world texture of thought is getting revolutionized under his impact."⁶⁹

Vivekananda's thought of humanism plays an instrumental role in controlling the upcoming social problem of the modern age which makes his thought very relevant in this 21st century. Sister Nivedita says "His prime concern was vindication of Humanity, never abandoned, never weakened, always rising to new heights of defence of the undefended, of the chivalry for the weak."⁷⁰. Significance of Vivekananda's thought lies in his attempt for the redemption of the rights of the oppressed, the weak, and the downtrodden. Santwana Dasgupta has given a comment on this "His constructive idea on organic growth, immanent change, involution, and stands out in bold contrast with the mechanical and destructive views of revolutions so popular today with its antecedent of violence, bloodshed and imposed externalistic institutional changes which have proved disastrous in the socialist countries of today."⁷¹. Thus it reveals the fact that elevation of masses is one single aim of the Vivekananda's thought which he tries to preach throughout the world in order to solve the problem of modern man. Today we are also notice a gradual growth of a

vedantic social revolution as conceived by Vivekananda. In this respect Chelichev's feels "The message of Ramakrishna and Vivekananda is the message of peace, amity and world –brotherhood. That message can indicate the path of survival in the fear-stricken world of today. I personally felt that in the context of present nuclear menace which is gradually engulfing the earth, it is very much essential to disseminate the message of Ramakrishna-Vivekananda all over the world. There is no doubt that their message was necessary and relevant in India and the world of their times, but it is still more necessary and relevant in the present day Indian context of the contemporary world."⁷²

Hence it follows very clearly on the basis of above discussion that humanism that is expounded by Vivekananda has intense relevancy in this modern materialistic world, as many western as well as Indian thinker tried to establish it. It also reveals as a matter of fact that man himself is the core factor in mitigating the problem of the world. As Vivekananda give a clarion call to humanity in this way "Arise, awake and stop not till the goal is reached.....Stand up, assert yourself, proclaim the God within you, don't deny Him."

8. CONCLUSION:

Above discussion about the Vivekananda's humanism and its relevance in present day situation lead to the conclusion that , obviously humanism propounded by Vivekananda has a influential value in controlling the crisis of present society. Elite

group of world nation has also gradually recognized the importance of Vivekananda's teaching in modern age. Vivekananda's great ideas are finding firm foundation and are spreading everywhere. His constructing and revolutionary thinking has given a new direction to the country as well as whole world. He not only revitalizes religion but also reform the humanity. Vivekananda knew that true emancipation of humanity can be attaining through only being truly scientific and truly spiritual simultaneously. His pragmatic idealism was a rewarding inspiration at a time of crisis when the individual and the society faced a choice between materialism and spiritualism, that is the eternal choice facing humanity and we still face this choice today. Vivekananda's message of love, tolerance, sympathy, service to humanity gives to new hope to humankind, both in India and across the globe.

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