CHAPTER II

ADVAITAVĀDA
VIŚIŚṬĀDVAITAVĀDA AND DVAITAVĀDA
There are two meanings of the term Vedânta. In one meaning, it is the last part of the Veda which is known as Upaniṣads and the other is the commentary on the Upaniṣads, the Brahma Sūtra which is the exposition of the philosophy of the Upaniṣads and Bhagavad Gītā.

The Brahma Sūtra is the expression of the philosophy of the Upaniṣads. It is also an attempt to systematize the various strands of the Upaniṣads. It is also known as Uttara Mīmāṁsā or Mīmāṁsā as later part of the Vedas or Śārīraka Sūtra.

The sage Bādrāyaṇa establishes the central idea of Vedânta after refuting the seeming contradictory statements of the Upaniṣads with a great critical analysis. So it is called Brahma Sūtra or Vedânta Sūtra. The Vedântic philosophers of later period were greatly influenced by Bādrāyaṇa’s Vedânta Sūtra.

But the commentaries of Vedânta Sūtra are very short. Each commentary was composed with one or two words. Each commentary is not very clearly defined for its too short forms and in many cases they are highly ambiguous. For this reason many sages in later ages explained Brahma Sūtra with their own logic of wisdom. All the commentator of the Brahma Sūtra agrees that the Brahma Sūtra was intended to be a summary of the teaching of the Upaniṣads.
All schools of Vedānta claim to be based upon the Upaniṣads. It is also true that they derived a considerable part of their material from the Upaniṣads, the Bhagavad Gītā and the Vedānta Śūtra which are known as the Prasthānatraya, the triple foundation of Vedānta.

Every Vedāntist like Śaṅkara, Rāmānuja, Nimbārka, Madhvā, etc., explained their individual opinions. S. Radhakrishnan states, “The commentators, of whom the chief are Śaṅkara, Bhāskara, Yādavaprapāśa, Rāmānuja, Keśava, Nīlakanṭha, Madhva, Baladeva, Vallabha, and Vijnānabhinīkṣu, do not all develop the same view, and it is not an easy question to settle which of them can be accepted as a guide to the right understanding of the Śūtra, for their commentaries were written at a time when the tenets had become matters of grave doubt and serious discussion. They develop their interpretations in the light of their own pre-conceived opinions, and sometimes overlook the literal and the obvious sense of the words in the effort to force the texts to bear testimony to the truth of their own philosophic theories.”

No commentators can claim his interpretation of Upaniṣads etc., to be the last word as Upaniṣads, the Brahma Śūtra and the Bhagavad Gītā leave manifold scope for different interpretations according to the necessity of the age.

The Vedānta is the Philosophy of total experience or limitless consciousness which knows no distinction of race or color, clime or country. “Though it came to be discovered first in

---

India, it was not meant for India alone. Among the qualifications which make one eligible for the study of Vedānta, there is not included any particular locality of birth or genealogy. The Upanisads, which are the fountainhead of the Vedānta, address their call to “All ye, children of immortality.”

Vedānta is applied to all five schools of philosophy namely Dvaitādvaita, Sudhādvaita, Dvaita, Viśiṣṭādvaita and Advaita. But the chief systematic interpretations of the Vedānta are Advaita of Śamkara, Viśiṣṭādvaita of Rāmānuja and Dvaita of Madhva. The aim of the commentators is to give a coherent interpretation of the Upaniṣads etc., taking into account the standards of criticism of their time and finally according to the need of their time and age.

ADVAITAVĀDA

Advaita Vedānta is indeed the culmination of the Sanātana Dharma, and religion, philosophy, science and art. All meet in it and merge into one. Monism obviously means belief in One. But the world-process is not, and cannot be, explained in term of One only. It is patently made up of countless many. The duality of the One and the many is reconciled by Advaita by showing that they are both penultimates and lose their identity in the non-dual Absolute or Parabrahman.

M. Hiriyanna thinks that the teaching of the Upaniṣads is predominantly monistic, though it is not easy to determine what particular form of monism is taught in them. But this did not

2 T. M. P Mahadevan’s article entitled ‘Western Vedanta’ published in ‘Vedanta for Modern Man’ edited by Christopher Isherwood, 1952, p 15
prevent dualistic interpretations being put on them, and the chief form of dualism that was traced to the Upaniṣads in olden times was the Sāṁkhya.⁴

The Advaita or absolute monism expounded by Śaṅkara, continues to be the most popular and widely circulated among philosophers and common people particularly in India. According to Śaṅkara, there is only one Reality (Brahman), which is pure existence, consciousness and bliss. His theory is popularly known as Māyāvāda. The world appears to be different from Brahman on account of the influence of Māyā.

Śaṅkara gives the essence of the Vedānta philosophy in a couplet:

\[ \textit{Slokārdhena pravaksāmi yaduktāṁ granthakotibhiḥ} \\
\textit{Brahma satyaṁ jaganmithyā jivo brahmaiva nāpara}^5 \]

Brahman is the only truth, the world is illusion and there is ultimately no difference between Brahman and individual self.

Surendra Nath Dasgupta comments, “Śaṅkara was interested in proving that his philosophy was preached in the Upaniṣads; but in the Upaniṣads there are many passages which are clearly of a theistic and dualistic purport, and no amount of linguistic trickery could convincingly show that this could yield a meaning which could support Śaṅkara’s thesis. Śaṅkara therefore introduces the distinction of a common-sense view (vyāvahārika) and a philosophic view (pāramārthika), and

---

⁴ M. Hiriyanna, *Outlines of Indian Philosophy*, 1993, p 336
⁵ B. Prasanna Kumari, *The Vedanta of Swami Vivekananda*, p 54
explains the Upaniṣads on the supposition that, while there are some passages in them which describe things from a purely philosophic point of view, there are many others which speak of things only from a common-sense dualistic view of real world, real souls and a real God as creator.'

According to Śaṅkara, all the śruti passages are establishing the identity of the individual self and Supreme Self, Brahman; and the highest end of man is to attain the knowledge of the same. The individual self is being separated from the Supreme Self like a spark from that of fire. The separate existence arises from the delusion generated by limiting adjuncts (upādhis) body, organs etc., therefore, the individual self has to realise that it is not the body, organs, etc., but the transcendent Supreme Self, Brahman.

Radhakrishnan says, “Thibaut, who cannot be charged with any partiality for Śaṅkara, speaks of his philosophy in these words: The doctrine advocated by Śaṅkara is, from a purely philosophical point of view, and apart from all theological considerations, the most important and interesting one which has arisen on Indian soil; neither those forms of the Vedānta which diverge from the view represented by Śaṅkara, nor any of the non-Vedāntic systems can be compared with the so-called orthodox Vedānta in boldness, depth and subtlety of Speculation.”

---

6 Surendra Nath Dasgupta, A History of Indian Philosophy, Vol II, 1957, p 2
7 P. George Victor, Social Philosophy of Vedanta, 1991, p 106
8 S. Radhakrishnan, Indian Philosophy, Vol II, 1989, pp 445-446
According to him, "Śaṅkara presents to us the true ideal of philosophy, which is not so much knowledge as wisdom, not so much logical learning as spiritual freedom. For Śaṅkara, as for some of the greatest thinkers of the world, Plato and Plotinus, Spinoza and Hegel, philosophy is the austere vision of eternal truth, majestic in its freedom from the petty cares of man's paltry life. Through the massive and at the same time subtle dialectic of Śaṅkara there shows forth a vivid, emotional temperament, without which philosophy tends to become a mere game of logic." 

**VIŚİŞŢĀDVAITAVĀDA**

The philosophy of Viśiṣṭādvaita, expounded by Rāmānuja, which creates harmony between the absolute idealism of advaita and the theistic pluralism of dvaita. According to this philosophy Jīvātmā is a part of Brahman, and hence is similar, but not identical. The main difference from advaita is that in Viśiṣṭādvaita, the Brahman is asserted to have attributes, including the individual conscious soul and matter. Brahma, matter and the individual souls are distinct from one another but mutually inseparable entities.

Rāmānuja was the first of the Vedānta thinkers who made the identification of a personal God with the Brahman of the Upaniṣads and the Vedānta Śūtras the cornerstone of his system. As a personal God, Brahman possesses all the good qualities in a perfect degree, and Rāmānuja does not tire of mentioning them. He interprets the relationship between the unitary and infinite

---

9 *ibid.* p 447
Brahman and the plural and finite world in a novel way, which, however, has some support in the Upaniṣads. For him the relation between the infinite and the finite is like that between the soul and the body. Hence non-duality is maintained, while differences can still be stated. Soul and matters are totally dependent on God for their existence, as is the body on the soul.10

According to Radhakrishnan, “Rāmānuja concentrates his attention on the relation of the world to God, and argues that God is indeed real and independent; but the souls of the world are real also, though their reality is utterly dependent on that of God. He believes in a spiritual principle at the basis of the world, which is not treated as an illusion. He insists on the continued individual existence of the released souls. Though the world of matter and the individual souls have a real existence of their own, still neither of them is essentially the same as Brahman.”11

He quotes from “Śārīraka”, “Everything in this world, whether individual souls or material things, form the body of the supreme soul, and therefore the above can be said to possess a body unconditionally (nirupādhikāsārīra-ātmā). For this very reason, competent persons call the body of teachings (śāstra), having Brahman for its subject-matter ‘śārīraka’.”12 So Rāmānuja’s theory is an advaita or non-dualism, though with a qualification (višeṣa), viz., that it admits plurality, since the

12 *ibid.*, p 660
supreme spirit subsists in a plurality of forms as souls and matter. It is therefore called *Viśisṭādvaita* or qualified non-dualism.\(^\text{13}\)

**DVAITAVĀDA**

Madhva is an important exponent of Advaita (Non-dualism). He is an adherent of Śaṅkara’s school. In his exposition, Madhva shows the influence of the Nyāya philosophic school. He maintains that Viṣṇu is the supreme God, thus identifying the Brahman of the Upaniṣads with a personal God as Rāmānuja had done before him. There are in Madhva’s system three eternal, ontological orders that of God, that of soul, and that of inanimate nature, he is the epitome of all perfections and possesses a nonmaterial body, which consists of saccidānanda (being, spirit, and bliss). God is the efficient cause of the universe, but Madhva denies that he is the material cause, for God cannot have created the world by splitting himself in any other way. Since that militates against the doctrine that God is unalterable; in addition it is blasphemous to accept that a perfect God changes himself into an imperfect world.\(^\text{14}\)

According to Madhva, the Brahman, the individual soul and matter are eternal and separate entities. Madhvacārya admits that there is an inherent and absolute five fold difference in Reality: between one soul and other, the soul and God, God and matter, the soul and matter and matter and matter.

Swami Tapasyananda said that Madhva had a great allergy to the word Advaita and for this he did not use that word at all in

\(^{13}\) *ibid.*, p 661
his system for the Brahman. He preferred to call his system emphatically as pure dvaita – the doctrine of Reality as having two aspects, the independent and the dependent). The Independent is God or Brahman, and the Dependent are the jīva (soul), Prakṛiti (Primordial Matter) and other ontological entities. The difference between the Independent and the Dependent is complete and eternal, as it is the basic and irrevocable nature of Reality. Madhva and his followers did not leave it merely as a theology, but a theology well informed and supported by a philosophy with its own full-fledged logic, epistemology, ontology and ethics, thus justifying its claim to be the Indian version of a philosophy of Realism par excellence.\(^{15}\)

The Dvaitādvaita or dualistic non-dualism of Nimbārka, a Telugu Brahmin of the Vaisnava faith, admits the philosophy of Dvaita and Advaita or Bheda and Abheda (difference and non-difference). Radhakrishnan says that, “According to Nimbārka’s teaching the jīva is of the form of knowledge (jñāna svarupa), though not in Śaṅkara’s sense. It is knowledge as well as the possessor of knowledge, even as the sun is light as well as the source of light........... It is one of difference as well as non-difference. ........ The eternal nature of Īśvara is to govern (niyantṛtvā) Nimbārka and Keśava refute the predicate less character of Brahman and attribute to the latter good and auspicious qualities. The supreme spirit is identified by Nimbārka with Kṛṣṇa and is regarded as possessing all auspicious qualities

\(^{15}\) Swami Tapasyananda, Śrī Madhvācārya: His Life, Religion & Philosophy, 2005, p 22
and exempt from the faults of egoism, ignorance, passion and attachment."\(^{16}\)

Vallabha supported the theory Śuddhādvaita and presented a theistic interpretation of the Vedānta which is distinct from Śaṅkara’s Kevalādvaita.

Radhakrishnan says, “His view is called Śuddhādvaita, or pure non-dualism, and declares that the whole world is real and is subtly Brahman. The individual souls and the inanimate world are in essence one with Brahman. Vallabha admits that jīva, kāla or time, and prakṛti or māyā, are eternal existences; they are referred to the being of Brahman and have no separate existence. Those who accept the force māyā as the explanation of the world are not pure Advaitins, since they admit a second to Brahman.”\(^{17}\)

Radhakrishnan again comments, “The doctrine of Śuddhādvaita as supported by Vallabha declares that the whole world is real and is subtly Brahman.” He continues his point saying, “Vallabha gives us something like Schelling’s neutrum, where the differences are abolished, while Rāmānuja’s view is more like Hegel’s.”\(^{18}\)

**Vivekananda’s Interpretation of Advaita, Viśiṣṭādvaita and Dvaita Vedānta**

Vivekananda is one of the famous exponents of Vedānta philosophy. His philosophy originates as a result of re-

---


\(^{17}\) *ibid.*, p 756

\(^{18}\) *ibid.*, p 758
interpretation of the great tradition of the country to suit the
collection of the time. He is not a philosopher like Kant, Hegel
etc., who are system builders, but a philosopher like Śaṅkara,
Rāmānuja and Madhva of India as an interpreter. He is a great
interpreter of Vedānta philosophy. He conveyed his Master
Ramakrishna Paramahansa’s message of the universal religion
that proclaims all religions point to the same truth. He proclaimed
Advaita Vedānta based on the Vedas and the Upanisads that refer
to the belief that behind the appearance of multiplicity in the
world, the ultimate reality is unity and not diversity. 19

Three prāsthānās, viz., the Upaniṣads, the Vyāsa Sūtra and
the Bhagavad Gītā are the original sources of the Advaita
doctrine, which was commentated upon by Śaṅkara, Rāmānuja
and Madhva. To Vivekananda this process was ‘text torturing’
culminating into different Hindu sects which are unable to unify
them in one single body of Vedāntism.

Out of different commentaries, three commentaries are
being discussed here to make clear the view point of
Vivekananda. He also emphasizes on these three to advance his
new view. Every schools of Vedānta were in conflict with each
other. Some philosophers think that Brahma or the Supreme
Reality is nirguṇa, nirupādhi, nirviśeṣa and empirical world is
false, imaginary. Some others intended a personal God to be
worshipped by men and women belonging to a world that was
real. But Vivekananda thinks that conflict between these two
schools is totally inconsistent. He always tries to prove that the

19 Bryan Aubrey’s article ‘Vivekananda’ published in ‘World Philosopher and Their Works’
Vol III, 2000, edited by John K. Roth and others.
Vedāntic scholars are not contradictory, they all necessitate each other, all fulfil each other, and one, is the stepping stone to each other, until the goal, the Advaita, is reached.\textsuperscript{20}

Vedānta philosophy really compromises all the various sects that now exist in India. Thus Vivekananda said, “....All schools of philosophy in India, although they claim to have been based upon the Vedas, took different names for their systems. The last one, the system of Vyāsa, took its stand upon the doctrines of the Vedas more than the previous systems did, and made an attempt to harmonize the preceding philosophies, such as the Sāṅkhya and the Nyāya, with the doctrines of the Vedānta. So it is specially called the Vedānta philosophy; and the Sūtras or aphorisms of Vyāsa are, in modern India, the basis of the Vedānta philosophy. Again, these Sūtras of Vyāsa have been variously explained by different commentators in India now; and from their interpretations have arisen three system philosophy and sects. One is the Dualistic or Dvaita; a second is the qualified non-dualistic or viśiṣṭādvaita; and a third is the non-dualistic or Advaita. Of these the dualistic and the qualified non-dualistic include the largest number of the Indian people. The non-dualists are comparatively few in number.”\textsuperscript{21}

In the Jaffna address, Vivekananda says, “Vedānta... comprises the Upaniṣads; and all the sects of India — Dualists, Qualified-Monists, Monists or the Shaivites, Vaishnavites. Shāktas, Sauras, Gānapatyas, each one that dares to come within the fold of Hinduism — must acknowledge the Upaniṣads of the

\textsuperscript{20} C. \textit{W.}, III, pp 323-324  
\textsuperscript{21} C. \textit{W.}, I, pp 358-359
Vedas... So deeply have these Upaniṣads sunk into our race that those of you who study the symbology of the crudest religion of the Hindus will be astonished to find sometimes figurative expressions of the Upaniṣads.”

In his address ‘Vedānta in its Application to Indian Life’, he says: ‘In the Upanisads, also, we find the germs of all the subsequent development of Indian religious thought’. In the same address he says that ‘the essence of Buddhism was all borrowed from the same Upanisads’.

R. K. Dasgupta says that Vivekananda’s large mind cannot be fitted into a metaphysical strait-jacket. We should not be tempted to use any Procrustean method to give some four-square consistency.

To speak the truth, philosophical position of Dvaita, Viśiṣṭādvaita and Advaita were to Vivekananda not absolute systems, but stages in the final spiritual fulfilment. We can quote him, “In these three systems we find the gradual working up of the human mind towards higher and higher ideals till everything is merged in that wonderful unity which is reached in the Advaita system.”

There are various commentaries on the Vedānta, but every commentaries were not true to the text of the Brahma Sūtra. Vivekananda acknowledged the Brahma Sūtra as an authentic Vedāntic text. In his Harvard lectures on Vedānta, he says “Its

---

22 C.W., III, pp 119-120
23 C.W., III, p 230
25 C.W., III, p 397
doctrines found their final expressions in the philosophical aphorisms of Vyāsa. This treatise called the ‘Uttara Mīmāṁsā, is the standard authority of Vedāntism – nay, is the most authoritative exposition of the Hindu scriptures. The most antagonistic sects have been compelled, as it were, to take up the texts of Vyāsa, and harmonies them with their own philosophy.'\textsuperscript{26}

Vivekananda says that the Upaniṣads are sacred to Hindus, as the Bible is to Christians, the Quoran is to the Mohammedans and the Zend Avesta to the Parsees.\textsuperscript{27}

To Satish Chandra Chatterjee, unlike Śaṅkara, Vivekananda’s is a synthetic Vedānta reconciling both Dvaita and Advaita. The germ of his Neo-Vedāntism is to be found in the life and teaching of Ramakrishna, which is developed into a new philosophy of Practical Vedānta.\textsuperscript{28} Dinesh Chandra Bhattacharya is of the same view that Vivekananda synthesized Advaita and Dvaita.\textsuperscript{29} Bhabatosh Datta mentions that in Vivekananda’s Vedāntic thought the One and the Many are equally true.\textsuperscript{30}

Nirod Baran Chakraborty commenting on different schools of Vedānta says that every system of Vedānta has a Shastric basis as is rooted in the realization of the Upaniṣadic seers. We should not forget that the Vedānta philosophy which includes Shruti, Smriti (the Gītā) and Nyāya (Brahma Sūtra) is essentially the Upaniṣads. The Gītā presents their essence and the Brahma Sūtra

\textsuperscript{26} Swami Vivekananda, \textit{Vedanta Philosophy} at the Harvard University, 1972, p 4
\textsuperscript{27} B. Prasanna Kumari, \textit{The Vedanta of Swami Vivekananda}, p 4
\textsuperscript{29} Dinesh Chandra Bhattacharya Shastri, \textit{Vivekanandar Vedanta Chinta}, 1990, p 3
\textsuperscript{30} Bhabatosh Datta, \textit{Bangali Manase Vedanta}, 1986, p 71
their conclusive teachings. Reason has a place in Vedânta but that must be based on the Upaniṣads. Shrutipratikul tarka (reason opposed to the Upaniṣads) is forbidden in the Vedânta.31

According to Swami Vivekananda, “There have been various interpretations of the Vedânta philosophy and to my mind they have been progressive, beginning with the dualistic or Dvaita and ending with the non-dualistic or Advaita.”32 While making an imaginary journey towards the sun and taking a photograph at each steps till a man reaches his destination could see every photograph taken by him differs from one another. But all are true though appearing different due to changing conditions of time and space. Thus, Vivekananda says that the man is not traveling from error to truth but from truth to truth, from lower to higher truth.33

Sister Nivedita in explication of her preceptor’s view writes: “It must never be forgotten that it was the Swami Vivekananda who, while proclaiming the sovereignty of the Advaita philosophy, as including that experience in which all is one, without a second, and also added to Hinduism the doctrines that Dvaita, Viśiṣṭādvaita and Advaita are but three phases or stages in a single development, of which the last named constitutes the goal.”34

Most of us think that Advaita, Dvaita, and Viśiṣṭādvaita oppose one another. One Vedântist is either an advaitist, or a viśiṣṭādvaitist, or a dualist. But Vivekananda does not accept this

31 Nirod Baran Chakraborty’s article entitled ‘Advaita, Visistadvaita and Dvaita as different stages of Vedanta’, published in Vedanta: Concepts and Application, 2000, pp 174-175
32 C.W., l, p 357
33 ibid., p 17
34 C.W., l, p xv
opposition. To him all this descriptions are of the same Reality and as such are equally true. He observed the following interpretations presented by the different schools regarding Vedānta in the following way:

1. The different interpretations of the Vedānta philosophy: Dualistic, Qualified Monistic and Non-dualistic – are not contradictory. These are progressive, beginning with the dualistic and ending with the non-dualistic.

2. None of these is erroneous. Every one is true from its own standpoint. Their relation is that of hierarchy beginning with the lower truth and ending with the highest truth. So these are different stages of Vedānta.

3. This attitude is exemplified in the life of Sri Ramakrishna who is a prophet of Harmony, whose life is a living commentary of the Upaniṣadic texts and a human form of the Vedānta philosophy.

4. The truth may be viewed from different stations and viewpoints. For this reason, Dvaita, Viśiṣṭadvaita and Advaita are each true from their different stand points. The ultimate is reached in Advaita, just as the best likeness of the sun is found in the last photo. A man gets this when he reaches the sun.35

We may now make some points in support of Vivekananda’s observations. Dualism, Qualified monism and

35 Nirod Baran Chakraborty’s article entitled ‘Advaita, Visistadvaita and Dvaita as different stages of Vedanta’, published in Vedanta: Concepts and Application, 2000, pp 181-182
Non-dualism are true because different persons following these different schools of Vedānta have attained liberation from the sufferings of life. Madhva, Rāmānuja and Śaṅkara were all men of realisations. If they did not speak the truth and their paths were erroneous, they would not have been known as men of realization. Verification is test of truth. Dualism, Qualified monism and Non-dualism are verified lives of their propagators and their followers. So their truth cannot be denied. That they are not really contradictory, but harmonious is verified in the life of Sri Ramakrishna, the great preceptor of Swami Vivekananda.

According to some scholars, Sri Ramakrishna was a most comprehensive exemplar of Vedānta. Swami Mumukshananda, after reviewing the different main schools of Vedānta states, "Dvaita (Dualism), Viśiṣṭādvaita (qualified Non-Dualism or Quasi-Monism) and Advaita (Non-Dualism or Monism) represented respectively by Madhva (1179-1278), Rāmānuja (1017-1137) and Śaṅkara (788-820). These three great teachers and philosopher of Vedānta are each considered as the historic exemplar or only one system of Vedānta. Each of them not merely expounded his philosophical system but also had the suprasensuous realization (anubhuti) of God (or Absolute) and Soul as explained in his philosophy. Thus, each of them was an exemplar of one system of Vedānta."36

Swami Vivekananda says, "It was given to me to live with a man who was as ardent a dualist, as ardent an Advaitist, as ardent a Bhakta, as a Jnani. And living with this man first put it into my

36 Swami Mumukshananda's article entitled 'Vedanta: Through Sri Ramakrishna's Life' published in Concepts and Application, p 294
head to understand the Upaniṣads and the texts of the scriptures from an independent and better basis than by blindly following the commentators; and in my opinion and in my researches, I came to the conclusion that these texts are not at all contradictory.\textsuperscript{37}

All the systems of the Vedānta recognise unanimously that any being, apparently a body-mind complex, has merely forgotten his real nature and is in reality the pure and blissful immortal Ātman. The ultimate reality behind the universe is Saccidānanda. But according to Dvaita and Viśiṣṭādvaita, the reality (God) is a supreme person, who can be loved, worshipped and prayed to. Liberation is realizing our own nature as Ātman and loving and knowing God or Brahman who is saguṇa. A jīva is similar in nature to God but always separate or distinct from God, as maintained by Dvaita system. On the other hand, Viśiṣṭādvaita system maintaining that Jīva is a part and parcel of God and the Jīva’s body is a part of His body. God is the supreme soul within the Jīva’s soul and is the inner controller of all the beings and things.\textsuperscript{38}

At some other state or mood of Ramakrishna’s mind, he used to experience the Divine Mother Kali as neither separate from his Soul nor completely identical with it but as his indwelling soul-the Supreme Soul with in his soul (Antaryāmin). From that experience he used to say, “I am the machine and God is the Operator. I am the house and He is the Indweller. I am the

\textsuperscript{37} C.W., III, p 233

\textsuperscript{38} Swami Mumukshananda’s article entitled ‘Vedanta: Through Sri Ramakrishna’s Life’ published in Vedanta: Concepts and Application, pp 294-295
engine and He is the Engineer. I am the chariot and He is the Charioteer. I move as He moves..."39

This is clearly a Viśiṣṭādvatic realization. Again, at other times Ramakrishna used to feel and experience that Divine Mother or God or Brahman had become everything, every being including his own ego. About this type of experience he says, "The Divine Mother revealed to me in the Kali temple that it was She who had become everything. She showed me everything was full of Consciousness. The image was Consciousness, the altar was Consciousness, the water-vessels were Consciousness, the door-steel was Consciousness, the marble floor was Consciousness—all was Consciousness."40

This is also a kind of Monistic realization with a semblance of diversity. It is Monistic because only one element is perceived here and not two. Some consider it as a case of Viśiṣṭādvaita Vedānta since a perception of diversity is there. Sri Ramakrishna, however, called this realization — that everything is Consciousness — to be the realization of a Vijnāni (one endowed with a special knowledge of Brahman, the Absolute).41

Romain Rolland42 in order to locate Vivekananda’s position in respect of different schools of Vedānta mentioned the following sentences uttered by Vivekananda: "I heard once the complaint made that I was preaching too much of Advaita (absolute Monism) and too little of Dualism. Ay, I know what grandeur,

40 ibid., p 345
41 ibid., p 345
42 Romain Rolland, The Life of Vivekananda: And the Universal Gospel, 2001, p 90
what ocean of love, what infinite ecstatic blessings and joy there are in the dualistic...religion. I know it all. But this is not the time with us to weep, even in joy; we have had weeping enough; no more is this the time for us to become soft. This softness has been with us till we have become like masses of cotton...... what our country now wants are muscles of iron and nerves of steel, gigantic wills, which nothing can resist, which...will accomplish their purpose in any fashion, even if it meant going down to the bottom of the ocean and meeting death face to face. That is what we want, and that can only be created, established, and strengthened, by understanding and realizing the ideal of the Advaita, that ideal of the oneness of all. Faith, faith, faith in ourselves...»

In the Harvard lecture Vivekananda compared the three schools, “the Dualists, who acknowledge a supreme being, and a lesser being manifesting in men, but eternally separate from men. Next he described the philosophy of the qualified non-dualists, whose particular idea is that there is a God and there is nature, but that the soul and nature is simply expansion, or the body of God, just as the body of man is to man’s soul. They claim, in support of this theory, that the effect is never different from the cause, but that it is the cause reproduced in another form, and as God, therefore, is the cause of this universe, he is also the effect. The Monists... declare that if there is a God, that God must be both the material and the efficient cause of the universe. Not only is he the Creator; but he also the created. He himself is this universe, apparently; but, in reality, this universe does not exist—it is mere hypnotisation. Differentiation is in name and form only. There is

43 C.W., III, p 190
but one soul in the universe, not two, because that which is immaterial cannot be bounded, must be infinite; and there cannot be two infinites, because one would limit the other. The soul is pure, and the appearance of evil is just as a piece of crystal, which is pure in itself, but appears to be variously colored when flowers are placed before it.

According to Vivekananda, the philosophy of Rāmānuja was more practical, had an emotional appeal, it denied categorically the privileges of the birth in the spiritual sphere. And since its vehicle was the people’s language it succeeded in drawing the masses to the fold of the religion of the Vedas once again. And with it unification was also accomplished. Thus the spiritual upheaval of Śaṅkara and Rāmānuja was followed by the usual Indian sequence of united races and powerful empires.

He has introduced a change of attitude in respect of different religions or faiths. In this context he preached the doctrine of unity in diversity. Vivekananda acknowledged that living with his master Ramakrishna he understood the meaning of the Upaniṣads. Romain Rolland quotes from ‘The Vedānta in its Application to Indian life’, “The one fact I found is, that....they begin with Dualistic ideas...and end with a grand flourish of Advaitic ideas. I have seen the harmony which is at the back of all the faiths of India and the necessity of the two interpretations – as the geocentric and the heliocentric theories of astronomy.....”

---

44 American Newspaper Reports, C.W., IX, 1997, pp 497-98
45 Santwana Dasgupta, Social Philosophy of Swami Vivekananda, 2005, p 138
46 Romain Rolland, The Life of Vivekananda: And the Universal Gospel, 2001, p 235
Vivekananda beautifully explained the Vedāntic view in his address ‘Ātman’. Here he says that non-dualism is as valid as dualism and both are as valid as qualified non-dualism. Vedānta “begins with dualism, goes through a qualified monism and ends in perfect monism.” Each one is necessary and is a fulfilment of the other. The philosophical position of these three stages was to Vivekananda not absolute system but the stages in spiritual growth in man. All of religion is contained in Vedānta, one comes after the other.

According to Vivekananda, these three schools of Vedānta are thus the three stages of spiritual growth in man. Each one is necessary and is a fulfilment of the other. Vedānta begins with dualism, goes through a qualified monism and end in perfect monism. He says, “Now I will tell you my discovery. All of religion is contained in the Vedānta, that is, in the three stages of the Vedānta philosophy, the Dvaita, Viśiṣṭādvaita and Advaita, one comes after the other. Theses are the three stages of spiritual growth in man. Each one is necessary. This is the essence of religion.” He further declares, “But the one fact – I found is that in all the Upaniṣads, they begin with dualistic ideas with worship and all that, and end with a grand flourish of Advaitic ideas.”

Ramakrishna, in spite of his explaining the devotional path, accepted fully the non-dualism of Śaṅkara. He accepted all the doctrines of Non-dualism (Advaita), Qualified Non-dualism (Viśiṣṭādvaita) and Dualism (Dvaita). But these three doctrines

---

47 C.W., II, p 252
48 ibid., IV, p 81
49 ibid.
50 ibid., III, pp 233-234
are accepted by the human mind according to the stage of its progress. In one stage of the mind Dualism finds acceptance; the other two are then felt to be wrong. In a higher stage of spiritual progress the doctrine of Qualified Non-dualism is regarded as true; one then feels that the Reality which in itself is eternally devoid of attributes exists in sport as always possessed of attributes. One then cannot but feel that not only is Dualism wrong but there is no truth in Non-dualism also. Finally, when man reaches the ultimate limit of spiritual progress with the help of sadhanā, he experiences the Nirguna nature of the divine Mother and remains in oneness with Her (Nirguna nature of the Divine mother). All the ideas, Such as I and you, subject and object, bondage and liberation, vice and virtue, merit and demerit, etc., are then all merged in One (Nirguna Brahman).

According to Vivekananda, “In these three systems we find the gradual working up of the human mind towards higher and higher ideals till everything is merged in that wonderful unity which is reached in the Advaita system.”5 By solid reasoning Śaṅkara extracted from the Vedas the truths of the Vedānta and on them built up the wonderful system of Jñāna that is preached through his commentaries. He unified all the conflicting descriptions of Brahman and showed that there is only one infinite Reality.

Vivekananda had successfully synthesized all the schools of Vedānta by his intellectual greatness. He has stated another reason for the variations in the descriptions of Brahman. He says that as there are different grades and types of human mind, a philosophy

5 ibid., p 397
or religion must comprehend all these types, if it is to satisfy and serve the needs of the various grades of human mind.

Swami Vivekananda admitted with gratitude that he was able to find this harmonious unity of these three schools of Vedānta in the light of the teachings of his illustrious Master Sri Ramakrishna. To quote Swamiji, “Therefore I now find in the light of this man’s (meaning Sri Ramakrishna’s) life that the Dualist and Advaitist need not fight each other; each has a place, and a great place in the national life. The dualist must remain for he is as much part and parcel of the national religious life as the Advaitist. One cannot exist without the other; one is the fulfilment of the other, one is the building, the other is the top; the one, the root, the other the fruit, and so on.”52 All these utterances of Vivekananda go to show the wonderful power of his intellect in synthesizing the three apparently contradictory schools of Vedānta in a harmonious manner.

Among Dvaita, Viśiṣṭādvaita and Advaita of Madhva, Rāmānuja and Śaṅkara respectively, one consider the other two as false. But Vivekananda considers none of them as false. To him, all of them are three stages in a single development process of which the last one constitutes the goal. This is the simple doctrine that many and the one are the same Reality; one is not exclusive of the many and the many should not the divorced from the One.

Truth is understood by different people in different ways owing to their different stations, perspectives, stages as well as

52 ibid., p 234
their different tastes and temperaments. As a result, there develops difference in theory and practice as was there in the cases of Madhva, Rāmānuja, and Śaṅkara.

To Madhva, difference between the devotee and God was important and this nearness is emphasised by him. Rāmānuja is definitely closer than mere nearness and he set attainment of being a part of God as his goal. Śaṅkara’s is the highest goal being non-difference from Brahman, the ultimate reality. Thus Dvaita, Viśiṣṭādvaita and Advaita may be considered as a journey from lower truth to higher truth.

Advaita is definitely higher than Viśiṣṭādvaita or Dvaita. Dvaita represents the lowest step of the ladder, Viśiṣṭādvaita the next higher and Advaita the highest. Being one with the ultimate Reality is the highest ideal of man and the goal of all spiritual paths.

Dvaitins and Viśiṣṭādvaitins may be satisfied with their position and attainment and they may never want to become Advaitins. Only Advaitins may speak of their gradation and progress as he reaches the summit and admits the possibility of going through these different stages, while the former ones having no experience of all the three stages cannot make any judgment concerning all of them. Since Vivekananda is an Advaitin, his observation is consistent with this concept.53

It is true that Vivekananda is not only a great humanist, but also a philosopher according to many scholars. R. K. Dasgupta

53 Nirod Baran Chakraborty’s article entitled ‘Advaita, Visistadvaita and Dvaita as different stages of Vedanta’, published in Vedanta: Concepts and Application, 2000, p 185
has lamented that some of our Indian scholars have not recognized Vivekananda as a philosopher. Our academic philosopher like K. C. Bhattacharya, S. N. Dasgupta and others did not mention anything about Vivekananda’s philosophy. It may be the fact that our scholars could not present Vivekananda as a philosopher. It might be the fact that they considered him to be a prophet who was treated as greater than a philosopher. Dasgupta thinks that our academic Philosophers have not admitted Vivekananda as a philosopher because he was not an academic philosophers but a philosopher of philosophers. “When I say Vivekananda is a Vedântist philosopher I do not mean to say that his philosophy is only an echo of Śaṅkara or Rāmānuja. He gives a new dimensions and a new depth to our Vedânta philosophy and presents it as a philosophy for the modern man.”

Vivekananda has his own concept about the relationship between philosophy and religion. He says that in every religion there are three parts: philosophy, mythology and the ritual; philosophy is the essence of every religion. According to him, the religious beliefs of the various religious sects of India have a common philosophical foundation in Vedânta.

Our question then is what is really new in Vivekananda’s Vedânta philosophy? Whether is it different from what may be called traditional or classical Vedânta? If we study the entire corpus of our Vedântic texts we will see that Vedânta is not one philosophy, but a collection of several philosophies. Of these various schools of Vedânta philosophy, the major ones are Advaita Vedânta, Viśiṣṭdvaita Vedânta, Dvaita Vedânta and

---

54 R. K. Dasgupta, Swami Vivekananda on Indian Philosophy and Literature, 1996, p 305
Dvaitādvaita Vedānta. There are finer and subtler variations of Vedānta philosophy which is left out of this discussion here. Vivekananda does not believe in this fragmentation of the Vedānta philosophy. He takes a holistic view of Vedānta and takes it as a single philosophy. The Dvaitavādi is as good a Vedāntist as an Advaitavādi and similarly the Dvaitādvaitavādi is as good a Vedāntist as a Viśiṣṭādvaitavādi. The foundation of the Vedāntic philosophy is the Upaniṣads and Vivekananda affirmed that they represented a variety of philosophical position rooted in a variety of spiritual sensibility. Vivekananda said that commentators of the middle ages could be accused of a kind of 'text-torturing' when they insisted that Vedāntic philosophy meant the philosophy they favoured. Vivekananda found in the Upaniṣadic philosophy a catholicity of spiritual sensibility which gave its universality and this is the foundation of the principle of unity and variety which makes that universality possible.  

William James acknowledged Vivekananda as a philosopher and pointed out in his Pragmatism that the paragon of all monistic systems was the Vedānta philosophy of Hindustan and the paragon of Vedāntist missionaries was Swami Vivekananda who visited his land some years ago. He tells, 'We all have some years for this monistic music; it elevates and reassures'. All this statement were made by him just a decade after Vivekananda's demise. It is astonishing to note that no Indian philosopher was found to make such statement on the philosophy of Vivekananda during that tenure.  

55 *ibid.*, pp 305-306  
56 *ibid.*, p 307
Basant Kumar Lal treats Vivekananda as an idealist. In his words, "He is an idealist because he believes that the ultimate reality is essentially spiritual in character. He is also an idealist in the sense that he believes in the ultimacy of certain ideal values and recommends that a continuous and persistent effort should be made for the attainment of those values."57

It is a matter of debate whether Vivekananda’s philosophy is strictly and abstractly monistic or monotheistic. Basant Kumar Lal says, "In fact, Vivekananda combines, in his thought, Abstract Monism and Theism. He is a Pantheist, and yet God, according to him, is personal. Consequently, we find two currents flowing almost side by side in the philosophy of Vivekananda – one that resembles Advaita Vedānta, and the other that reminds one of the theism of the Bhakti-cult. Vivekananda is almost convinced that these two currents are not really two currents, that they are just two ways of looking at the Reality."58

Swami Abhedananda rightly points out that as a philosopher, Swami Vivekananda is the greatest of all Eastern and Western philosophers. In him he finds the ideal of Karma-Yoga, Bhakti-Yoga, Rāja-Yoga and Jñāna-Yoga. He also asserts that he seems to be the living example of Vedānta in all its different branches.59

Vivekananda’s Vedāntic Humanism does not contradict with any kind of Humanism in the East as well as in the West in whatever extent it may be popularly acceptable. Vivekananda

57 Basant Kumar Lal, *Contemporary Indian Philosophy*, 1978, p 4
58 *ibid.*, p 5
says, “I propound a philosophy which can serve as a basis to every possible religious system in the world, and my attitude towards all of them is one of extreme sympathy – my teaching is antagonistic to none. I direct my attention to the individual, to make him strong, to teach him that he himself is divine, and I call upon men to make themselves conscious of this divinity within. That is really the ideal – conscious or unconscious – of every religion.”

Vivekananda calls himself an Advaitist and he never deviates from the basic tenets of the Advaita. He finds God in himself, in man. As a proof he may be quoted, “What does the Advaitist preach? He dethrones all the gods that ever existed or ever will exist in the universe and places on that throne the self of man, the Ātman higher than the sun and the moon. Higher than the heavens, greater than this great Universe itself. No books, no scriptures, no science can ever imagine the glory of the self that appears as man, the most glorious God that ever was, the only God that ever existed, exists or ever will exist. I am to worship, therefore, none but myself.”

According to Advaita Vedānta, the philosophy of nondualism, Brahman, the Indeterminate pure Consciousness, is the only reality: everything else is unreal. Brahman is Saccidānanda, Being-Consciousness-Bliss, and all-pervading. The entire universe consisting of finite beings and nature is, basically, identical with Brahman. In other words, Brahman, which is One without a second, becomes many, that is to say, the world is

---

multiplicity. But how can the One which is Indeterminate and unchangeable be changed into that which is changeable and perishable? In order to answer the question the Advaitists take the help of the theory of Vivartava'da or apparent manifestation. Brahman or God is unchangeable. Like other Advaitists he also takes the help of the theory of vivartavāda to explain changeability of Brahman or God.62

He further clarifies the matter when he says that according to the dualists and the Sāṅkhya, the whole of this universe is the evolution of primal nature. According to some of the Advaitists and some of the dualists, the whole of this universe is evolved from God. And according to the Advaitists proper, the followers of Śaṅkarācārya, the whole universe is apparent evolution of God. God is the material cause of this universe, but not really, only apparently. The celebrated illustration used is that of the rope and the snake, where the rope appeared to be the snake, but was not really so. The rope did not really change into the snake. Even so this whole universe as it exists is that Being. It is unchanged, and all the changes we see in it are only apparent.63

According to Amiya Kumar Majumder, Vivekananda’s aim in propounding the Advaita was not to spin a cobweb of metaphysics with the help of accuracy of logical analysis. His main aim is to emphasise the basic truth that the Absolute which is Existence-Consciousness-Bliss is the underlying reality of all.64

---

63 Vivekananda, *Thoughts on Vedanta*, p 9
64 Amiya Kumar Majumder, *Understanding Vivekananda*, 1972, p 37
S. S. Ragavachar comments on Swami Vivekananda's interpretation of Vedānta in the following way, "For the student of philosophy the first note-worthy fact is that the Swami was not merely a philosopher, a daring metaphysician of Vedāntic Idealism employing methods of logical analysis and speculative construction but also monk, who renounced the life of worldliness and dedicated himself in ascetic completeness to the ideal of Vedānta. In him are combined philosophic thought and religious self-surrender. This is in the high tradition of Vedānta and Swami constitutes a symbol of the philosophical heritage of Vedānta." So we find in him logic metaphysical speculation, religion, ethics, the combination of which becomes the source of inspiration for all living in the world.

According to J. L. Shaw, the reason why the Western philosophers could not recognize Vivekananda as a philosopher is that he has introduced new categories for solving some of the problems of philosophy of religion, ethics, and metaphysics. Beginning Plato the traditional philosophy is concerned with a series of dichotomies such as reason and faith, thought and extension, forms and matter, concept and percept, appearance and reality....etc. But Vivekananda has not projected them as dichotomies. So the western philosophers could not appreciate the importance of his oneness which has been introduced in several contexts. As a consequence, Western philosophers could not realize his relevance and his techniques for solving some of the age-old problems of philosophy of religion and ethics.

---

65 S. S. Raghavachar, New Epoch of Vedanta, pp 37-38
Vivekananda does not believe in such a God which is fictitious and made of dull dead matter. He who believes in such a God is not religious. He is religious who sees God in man. He says, “If you can not love your brother whom you have seen, how can you love God whom you have not seen? If you cannot see God in the human face, how can you see him in the clouds, or in images made of dull, dead matter, or in mere fictitious stories of our brain? I shall call you religious from the day you begin to see God in men and women.”

Swamiji’s philosophy is based on unity. Accordingly he has not given more importance to dichotomies or the problem of bridging the gulf between. J. L. Shaw also points out, “Kant’s philosophy suffers from the gulf created by a series of dichotomies between reason and inclination, between two types of will, between noumena and phenomena, between reason and faith. But Swamiji’s philosophy is based on unity. Accordingly he has not given more importance to dichotomies or to the problem of bridging the gulf between phenomena and noumena, or between reason and inclination, or between I and you does not arise.”

The philosophy of Vivekananda is for all human beings irrespective of creeds, castes, religions etc. J. L. Shaw show also may be quoted here. “The Philosophy of Swamiji is for the old and the young, for the rich and the poor, for the strong and the weak, for the believers and the non-believers, for the theists and the atheists. It is for the Hindus, it is for the Christians, for the Jews and for the Mohammedans. It is for the idealists, it is for the

---

67 C.W., II, p 326
68 J. L. Shaw, Swami Vivekananda as a Philosopher, 2005, pp 21-22
materialists or the Marxists. It is for all. In this sense his philosophy is universal and he may be considered as a true philosopher. If he is not a philosopher, who else is?  

The philosophy of Swami Vivekananda is rooted partly in the teachings his master, Sri Ramakrishna and partly in the Kevalādvaita Vedānta of Śāṅkara. From Sri Ramakrishna, he received the message of rendering unfailing service to human being, serving Jīva as Śiva through the unique power of love; from Śāṅkara he learnt the message of tattvamasi or aham Brahmāsmi, or Jīva Brahmaiva nāparaha.

His philosophy cannot be separated from his spiritual experience, for it is the language thereof. It is a school of its own, gained from observations along all lines of human speculation and realization concerning the Divine Nature. To him religion and philosophy were controvertible terms. He makes poetry of philosophy, for as the background of ideas is an ocean of spiritual emotion, lashed into waves by the winds of his realization. To his poetic vision, the Upaniṣads are the greatest poems ever given out by man to man. Incomparably different from mere scholasticism and professorial philosophy, his thought-system, emanating like sparks from the anvil of his soul, set souls afire and brought on the greatest longing for renunciation and spiritual experience.  

In Vivekananda’s metaphysics God is what is called philosophy of the Absolute Substance or the cosmic intelligent permeating the entire universe. In Sanskrit it is called Brahma.

---

69 ibid., p 30  
70 Vivekananda: The Man and His Message, By his Eastern and Western disciples, pp 59-60
We are to see God, says Vivekananda, in everything. God an infinite circle whose circumference is nowhere, but whose centre is everywhere. This conception of God is not peculiar to Vivekananda; it is common to all Advaitins.

Vivekananda’s metaphysics and philosophy concerning the idea of God fully coalesce and out of the fusion emerges his view of man. Since man is potentially divine, metaphysically he is equated with the divine. Soham (I am He) and Tat tvam asi (thou art That) are the words that express the equation. The Swami exclaimed on one occasion, reports Sister Nivedita: “I would not worship even the Greek gods, for they were separate from humanity. Only those should be worshipped who are like ourselves, but greater. The difference between the gods and me must be a difference only of degree. Vivekananda’s social philosophy urges every one to strive to manifest his potential divinity and thus become He on the empirical plane; and since every one also is potentially He, it is one’s duty to assist the manifestation of that divinity in others.”

Vivekananda did not look upon Vedānta as a dogma or a doctrine: it is a sensibility, a spiritual temper that gives one’s religion its universality. Vedānta takes a man above sect and dogma and enables him to breathe the ampler air of the upper skies of his faith from where he can realize his freedom.

In the address of Harvard University Vivekananda says that the large number of the Indian people is dvaitist and few are Advaitist, but the advaitavād is the goal of attainment of

71 S. L. Mukharjee, The Philosophy of Manmaking, 1971, p 126
Saccidānanda. In the words of Vivekananda, “When the Vedāntic has realized his own nature, the whole world has vanished for him. It will come back again, but no more the same world of misery. The person of misery has become changed into Sat, Chit, Ānanda – Existence Absolute, Knowledge Absolute, Bliss Absolute – and the attainment of this is the goal of the Advaita Philosophy.”

Swami Vivekananda again utters, “When a man has reached the highest, when he sees neither man nor woman, neither sect nor creed, nor colour, nor birth, nor any of these differentiations, but goes beyond and finds that divinity which is the real man behind every human being – then alone he has reached the universal brotherhood, and that man alone is a Vedāntist.

Such are some of the practical historical results of the Vedānta.”

Vivekananda has demonstrated in a very beautiful style that the Dvaita, the Viśiṣṭādvaita and the Advaita are but three phases or stages in the development of the soul, reaching the highest goal in the perception of Oneness. Such a one does not discard the Dualistic outlook, but deifies it by seeing unity in diversity, by seeing God, his self and the universe as one.

Following D. R. Bali it may be pointed out that Swamiji as a philosopher combines logical presentation with the

---

72 The above address was delivered before the Graduate Philosophical Society of Harvard University, on March 25, 1896, C.W., I, p 365
73 C.W., I, pp 391-392
74 Vivekananda: The Man and His Message, By his Eastern and Western disciples, 2008, p 63
unimpeachable self-evidence that realization brings. The pros and cons of logic are so dovetailed one into the other as to make the unassailable synthesis which declared that all religions are true, and all philosophies are different diagrams of same reality. His is a rare instance of the synthetic mind. He perceives Truth at all angles and through all perspectives. And this is because he has, like his great Master, the all reconciling genius that the realization of the Absolute Truth in the Nirvikalpa Samādhi induces. Though he perceives the grandeur of the ancestral inheritance of Hinduism, he bow his head with equal reverence before those other forms of Religion, like Buddhism and Roman Catholicism, which has Truth and Sādhanās, Devotion and Renunciation, as pillars to support them.75

D. R. Bali has rightly comments on Vivekananda. He considers him not only as an idealist and spiritualist but also as a great Marxist, a realist and a rationalist. In his words, “There are different interpretations of the philosophy which Vivekananda preached. Two sets of opinions are most common. One regards Vivekananda as an idealist philosopher and a religious mystic. His disciples mostly follow this interpretation. The other interpretation by the radicalists who consider him as a great is that he worked for a complete social and economic revolution. It would be wrong to brand him purely as an idealist or a Marxist. Vivekananda was a realist, rationalist and spiritualist in his humanist philosophy of religion.”76

75 ibid., p 64
76 D. R. Bali, Modern Indian Thought: Rammohan to Jayaprakash Narayan, 1984, p 44
Vivekananda suggests that the various schools of Vedānta philosophy may be considered in this fashion: “first, begin with Dvaitism; that is in your consciousness; second stage, Viśiṣṭādvaitam, I in you, you in me, and all is God. The highest, Advaitism ... In Advaitism ‘I’ loses itself in God. God is there, God is ‘I’. Thus the Vedānta is divided in three schools — two dualistic and one monistic.”

In the lecture on Practical Vedānta, Vivekananda does not utter a single word about the great Commentators. He avoids references of Advaita, Viśiṣṭādvaita and Dvaitavāda. To stress the central message of Vedānta he says that ‘you must always remember that the one central ideal of Vedānta is this Oneness’. Actually the idea of Vedāntic humanism of Vivekananda is dependent on this ‘Oneness’. Thus he says there is one life, one world, one existence. Everything is that one, the difference is in degree.

From the above discussion, it is to be noted that the philosophy of Vivekananda, the Vedāntic Humanism is the synthesis of Dvaita, Viśiṣṭādvaita and Advaita. It is also found that he has propounded his humanism with such an interpretation even any realist or rationalist, any religion or religious sect or any atheist or any form of humanism will hesitate to go against it. His emphasis on the supremacy of One does not exclude many establishing Many in One, Unity in diversity. His interpretation of Brahman or God as Man-God, Nara-Nārāyaṇa, Daridra-Nārāyaṇa, his interpretation of religion as seva i.e., service to man

77 Swami Tejasananda, A Short Life of Swami Vivekananda, pp 19-20
78 C.W., II, p 297
79 ibid., p 297
irrespective of creed, caste, religion etc., might ignite all human beings including the non-believer of God, an atheist to accept this type of humanism being universal in nature.

According to Vivekananda, Advaita is ‘the fairest flower of religion’. It can not be doubted that he is an Advaitist even though he has never said anywhere that Advaita alone is Vedānta. He emphases on the supremacy of Advaita describing it as the highest goal of spiritual life.80 Thus he tries to reveal a new vision, new voice with a new dimension, a new message to the suffering humanity of India and world at large.

---