Swami Vivekananda and the Social Revolution

Professor (Dr.) K. Jayaprasad, Pro-Vice Chancellor, Dean, School of Cultural Studies &
Director, Mahatma Ayyankali Centre for Kerala Studies, Central University of Kerala, Kasaragod

retical renaissance, enlightenment
and social reformation became the
foundation of Indian Nationalism and the
renaissance of India had different tracks
from the renaissance movement in Europe
in its religion and history and context. Our
scholars of religion and Technology reflected
the frequent economic development. But in
India. Social awakening resulted in the
integration of philosophy, religion, culture, social
migration and political consciousness.
The Indian culture nourished to strengthen
it vastly and started to challenge the
dominance of colonial power. As a defence
mechanism against the impact of British
colonial rule and began to revive the old cultures
in the and began to revive the old cultures
who were the primary force and social reform
breaking. They believed that social and
and location should be put upon the
culture. Also they cultivated a spiritual
conception of freedom and equality.

Among the great leaders of 19th Cen-
tury India, who awakened the Indian na-
tion, Swami Vivekananda held a great
a leading role and Islands (1863-1902)
in a special process in India. Being a Hindu
sanyasin and Philosophically a Hindu
saint with the past, destitute and ignorant
Vananda had a clear understanding on

The teachings and the personality
who immensely had a great influence
made national renaissance had a great influence

enlightenment
India's history and also India's mission to
the world. He mercilessly condemned the
inequalities of the caste system and un-
touchability. Though fundamentally a man
of religion and philosophy, Swami Vive-
kanda's social criticism and concern for the
poor needs special attention. He had a clear
social vision and tried to reconstruct the
society on the basis of Indian tradition and
values.

Being a saint, Swami Vivekananda
had personal knowledge of the maladies of
Indian society. As a monk he travelled all
over India and experienced the poor life of
the downtrodden and the ignorant people.
He identified the four evils which destroyed
the social fabric and instrumental to the for-
eign slavery. The evils were the priest craft,
the philosopher of social ignorance. As
poverty, social tyranny and ignorance. As
denounced priest craft in vigorous terms.
Though he was an outspoken missionary
of India's greatness, he was a great critic
of prevailing social conservatism. Hence
he condemned the old orthodox Brahman-
ical doctrine of 'adhikara vada'. (Complete
works Vol. 11 pp 190-92).

On the basis of this doctrine the vast
majority of the lower Castes were excluded
from the benefit of the vedic knowledge. Vi-
vekananda proposed the concept of spiritu-
al equality, he stated that all men are equal
and equally entitled to spiritual wisdom.
He says — "Is no use fighting among the
castes. What good will it do? It will divide
us all the more, weaken us all the more,
degrade us all the more. The days of ex-
clusive privileges and exclusive claims are
gone, gone forever from the soil of India",
(complete works Vol. III, P 294).

Annoyring the foreign rule in India, he
found that the Muslim rule and the British

rule destroyed the exclusive privileges en-
joyed by the Brahmin Caste in India. Islam
flourished not only with power of the sword
but also with the prevailing social inequal-
ity in this land. He also warned the people
of Madras province — "And one fifth-one
half of your Madras people will become
Christians if you do not take care" (Swami
Vivekananda, Complete Works-Vol, III. pp
294-95). He cited the example of Kerala
and criticized the prevailing peculiar social
scenario of Kerala society and cited that
province as "lunatic asylum". Vivekananda
said "was there ever a sillier thing before
in the world than what I saw in Malabar
country? The poor pariah is not allowed to
pass through the same street as the high
caste man, but if the changes his name to
a hodge podge English name it is all right;
or to a Mohammedan name, it is all right.
What inference could you draw except
that these Malabaris are all lunatics, their
homes so many lunatic asylums and that
they are to be treated with derision by ev-
ery race in India until they mend their man-
ners and know better. Shame upon them
that such wicked and diabolical customs are
allowed; their own children are allowed to
die of starvation, but as soon as they take
up some other religion they are well fed.
There ought to be no more fight between
the castes. (Swami Vivekananda, Complete
works Vol. III, pp 294-295).

Swami Vivekananda stood for social
change. At the same time he believed in
moderation with regard to social change.
According to him to do away with social
regulations is not to destroy them vaults
but gradually to remove the forces which
had necessitated the incorporation of new
customs. Thus the particular social cus-
toms will wither away. Mere demarcation