

"Arise, Awake and Stop not Till the Goal is Reached!"



Vivek

"This life is short, the vanities of the world are transient, but they alone live who live for others, the rest are more dead than alive."

"My ideal indeed can be put into a few words and that is: to preach unto mankind their divinity and how to make it manifest in every movement of life."

– Swami Vivekananda



"Suppose he(Vivekananda) had not come to London that time! Life would have been like a headless dream, for I always knew that I was waiting for something. I always said that a call would come"

– Sister Nivedita



"If you want to know India, study Vivekananda. In him everything is positive and nothing negative."

– Rabindranath Tagore



Vivekananda Human Centre
www.vivekanandacentre.com

Greetings & Best Wishes for
**Vivekananda Festival 2017 &
150th Birthday Celebration of Sister Nivedita**



"You are the creator of your own destiny"

-Swami Vivekananda



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Monastic Disciples of Sri Ramakrishna



Swami Vivekananda
(1863-1902)



Swami Brahmananda
(1863-1922)



Swami Yogananda
(1861-1899)



Swami Premananda
(1861-1918)



Swami Niranjanananda
(1862-1904)



Swami Shivananda
(1854-1934)



Swami Saradananda
(1865-1927)



Swami Ramakrishnananda
(1863-1911)



Swami Abhedananda
(1866-1939)



Swami Adbutananda
(-1920)



Swami Turiyananda
(1863-1922)



Swami Advaitananda
(1828-1909)



Swami Trigunatitananda
(1865-1915)



Swami Subodhananda
(1867-1932)



Swami Akhandananda
(1864-1937)



Swami Vijnanananda
(1868-1938)

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Vivekananda Human Centre

"...Where should you go to seek for God? Are not all the poor, the miserable, the weak, Gods? Why not worship them first?" "...Serve as worship of the Lord Himself in the poor, the miserable, and the weak. ... In this world always take the position of the given. Give everything and look for no return. Give love, give help, give service and give any little thing you can..."

"Swami Vivekananda dedicated his life to provide for the under privileged members of human kind in the universe. Whether, ailing or downtrodden humanity, Swamiji gave away his own life to show the right path of a universe of love. The time for humanity to join forces and embrace this universal message is now.

"Come, be a man.....Do you love human beings? Do you love your Country? Then let us try our best to be good and develop ourselves."- Being influenced by the philosophy of Swami Vivekananda and with the inspiration of Swami Aksharananda and under the guidance of Swami Dayatmananda, Ram Chandra Saha founded Vivekananda Human centre in London on 11 September 1994. Vivekananda Human Centre is an organisation of Vivekananda Centre for Human Excellence. Vivekananda Human Centre is a registered charity (reg:1170716). This is a philanthropic organisation whose aim is to be good and to do good for all human beings and others, providing inspiration of Swami Vivekananda's message "Each soul is potentially divine."

Objectives of the Vivekananda Human Centre:

- 1.'To serve man as God'- by taking this idea of Ramakrishna-Vivekananda in mind, we should mould our own life and character and should expand and promote this idea in the truest sense. To render service to the poor, the disadvantaged, the sick, the disabled, the old and all under privileged members of human kind in the universe.**
- 2.To promote Ramakrishna-Vivekananda's philosophy of Human Excellence, Unity in Diversity, Universal Tolerance, Harmony and Peace.**
- 3.To promote consciousness in education and culture among the youth and others as ordained by Ramakrishna - Vivekananda.**
- 4.To promote advancement of public education and peace with those from different walks of life. To promote the study of comparative Religion and philosophy in their widest form and by such and other means to assist in bringing about the harmony of Religions.**
- 5.To establish and maintain universal temple and institutions for the advancement of religion, education and other charitable purposes.**
- 6.To print, publish, sell or distribute, gratuitously or otherwise, any periodicals, books or leaflets or through any other media as may be necessary for the promotion of its objects.**
- 7. The centre must be non-profitable and free from any political involvement.**

This life is short, the vanities of the world are transient, but they alone live who live for others, the rest are more dead than alive.

-Swami Vivekananda





Vivek

**Vivekananda Festival 2017
&
150th Birthday Celebration of Sister Nivedita
Sunday, 2 July 2017 from 11.00 am to 7.00 pm
Logan Hall, IOE, University of London**

Editorial Board

Chief Adviser & Patron: Revered Swami Dayatmananda

Advisers: Arati Bhattacharya, David Russell, Gary Thompson, Vinoo Bhatt, Dr Chitta Ranjan Sengupta, Mani Nandy, Dr Subrata Gupta, Dr Pijush Bhattacharyya, Dr Amita Raja, Dr Prabodh Sarkar, Mrinal Choudhury, Dr S K Basu, Dr Saibal Hazra, Sunil Ghosh, Minakshi Samadder, Bani Basu, Sumita Saha, Nagen Bhattacharya, Malabika Ghosh, Sajali Roy, Susanta Samanta, Gouri Banerjee, Fanindra Kumar Dhar, Jitendra Lal Gupta, Sujit Dey, Uday Shankar Das, Himangshu Goswami, Dhiren Basu, Rakhal Saha, Dhiren Halder, Ambika Dutta, Shipra Choudhury, Ratna Chowdhury, Dilip Mukhopadhyay, Prodeepta Das, Sushanta Lal Sen, Dr Chitta Das, Kajal Ghosh, Samir Das, Urmi Sing, Dr Satipada Das, Vishnu Putumbaka.

Editor: Ram Chandra Saha

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www.vivekanandacentre.com





Sister Nivedita says, "...Suppose he (Swami Vivekananda) had not come to London that time! Life would have been like a headless dream, for I always knew that I was waiting for something. I always said that a call would come..."

This year is a very special year for us, as we celebrate the 150th Birthday of Sister Nivedita in London. London has long been a home to many different faith communities, which have lived side by side in harmony and peace, despite recent tragic events.

We are concerned about our free movement. We live with greater fear. We can see worldwide some kind of change, and we feel that tolerance and respect to others is lacking. Which is not good news for humanity, and our hopes for world peace.

Swamiji wrote to Sister Nivedita "My ideal indeed can be put into a few words and that is: to preach unto mankind their divinity and how to make it manifest in every movement of life."

Swamiji's message is more relevant and important today than ever, as it addresses many issues in this modern world, encompassing all aspects of human life: economic, social, moral and spiritual. Swamiji centred his message on man – every human being should achieve divine qualities in every aspect of life.

However, we are so much under the influence of media, especially social media. We are addicted to Facebook and other social media. We have no time to look to our own people, who are close to us, but instead we focus on the social network. We do not know what happened to our next door neighbour, but we know what happened to someone tens of thousands miles away. We make ourselves very busy with all activities, which makes us anxious. Our mind is removed from our body.

We are passing into very challenging times. We are living in a modern diverse society, inflicted with many ailments: depression, stress, mental and physical weakness. We are so weak mentally and physically, that most of the times we are hopeless because we have forgotten our true nature. Swamiji's message can help us to recognise our true nature and manifest our divinity which we have already within us.

Vivekananda Human Centre has been working in London over the past 23 years to promote the message of Swami Vivekananda to make a better place for all. But we all need to practice Swamiji's message more in our daily lives. Only doing so for one day at a big festival is not enough. Therefore, we will distribute at least every year five to ten thousand of Swamiji's books in the UK. If we can read every day only one page of Swamiji's message, then we will be able to realise our real nature and will be able to solve so many more issues in our daily lives.

Rabindranath Tagore says: "If you want to know India, study Vivekananda. In him everything is positive and nothing negative." We have to think positive and we have to be positive. Positive thinking will help us to be happier. We can solve so many big and small problems, between spouses, siblings, neighbours, colleagues, business partners and so on.

We are very grateful to all contributors for their kind messages and articles. And we are thankful to our sponsors who have placed advertisements in this publication. We are also very grateful to all delegates, honourable guests, artists and volunteers who have devoted their time to help us to ensure the success of the Vivekananda Festival 2017 and the 150th Birthday Celebration of Sister Nivedita, and with the publication of the VIVEK.

I hope all the readers will enjoy reading VIVEK. The success of our publication depends on you, our readers, in understanding, realising and practising Swamiji's message in our daily lives, in accordance with our own capacities.

"ARISE, AWAKE, AND STOP NOT TILL THE GOAL IS REACHED"

Joy Swamiji!

Thank you

Ram Chandra Saha



VIVEKANANDA HUMAN CENTRE

(An Organisation of Vivekananda Centre for Human Excellence)

Vivekananda House, 2a Elmhurst Drive, South Woodford, London E18 1BT

Tel: 020 8989 8827, 020 7702 4100

Email: info@vivekanandacentre.com, www.vivekanandacentre.com



Welcome to the Vivekananda Festival 2017 & 150th Birthday Celebration of Sister Nivedita

2 July 2017 from 11.00 am to 7.00 pm
at Logan Hall, IOE, UCL, University of London





2 July 2017 from 11.00 am to 7.00 pm
at Logan Hall, IOE, UCL, University of London

PROGRAMME

Morning Session: 11.00am to 1.30pm

Theme: Human Excellence

Invocation: Candle Lighting, Vedic Chanting, A brief period Meditation & Universal Prayer

A minute's silence as homage to Revered Swami Atmasthanandaji Maharaj and as a respect to the victims of terrorist attacks in London and Manchester, and the devastating fire in Grenfell Tower, London.

Group Songs: Uma Basu Pervat, Krishnakoli Ghosh, Archana Chowdhuri, Adrika Sen, Gita Fauzder, Mondira Chakravarti, Prasad Chatterjee, Saroj Chakravarti, Rina Sarkar, Bornali Dasgupta, Pramita Dasgupta, Amit Sen, Krishna Sen

Tabla: Piyas Barua, **Reading & Mondira:** Nani Bhusan Faujdar, **Key Board:** Pretom Saha
Directed by Arati Bhattacharya, Phalguni and Diganta Group

Song: Christopher Ward

Welcome Address: Ram Chandra Saha

Discussion:

Subject: Swami Vivekananda & Sister Nivedita 's Message for Human Excellence

President:

Revered Swami Suhitanandaji Maharaj

Vice-President, Ramakrishna Math & Ramakrishna Mission,
Head Quarters, Belur Math, India

Chief Guest:

His Excellency Mr Y.K. Sinha

High Commissioner of India, UK

Key-note Speaker:

Revered Swami Chetananandaji Maharaj

President, Vedanta Society of St. Louis, USA

Guests of Honour:

Revered Swami Dayamanandaji Maharaj

President, Ramakrishna Vedanta Centre, UK

Mr Virendra Sharma, MP

House of Commons, London

Cllr Sachin Shah

The Leader of Harrow Council

Guest Speakers:

Mr Gary Thompson

Journalist & Writer, London

Mr Leon Silver

President, East London Centre Synagogue

Revered Swami Tattwasaranandaji Maharaj

Ramakrishna Math & Ramakrishna Mission, Belur Math, India

Votes of Thanks: Mr Vinoo Bhatt

Dance: Bharat Nattam
Performance by Students of Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, London
Directed by Bhavan Teacher Sri Prakash Yadagudde

Lunch Break : Prasad Distribution at Jeffery Hall 1.30 pm to 2.30pm

Afternoon Session: 2.30pm to 7.30pm

Theme: Unity in Diversity, Universal Tolerance, Harmony & Peace

Group Songs: Sreyoshi Das, Palmira Taran, Anvita Gupta, Priyanka Purkayasta, Asmita Saha, Tropa Saha, Ridima Choudhury, Bhakti Das, Auhona Maitra, Asmita Saha Oishi, Sneha Roy, Shubhangi Dam, Sreya Paul, Susmita Roy, Raima Choudhury, Suhashini Gupta & Auhona Maitra **Directed by** Gouri Choudhury

Violin: Rohan Dasgupta, **Recitation:** Suhita Saha, Shoumilli Roy, Sudipta Das

Address By:

Mr David Russell

Trustee, Congregation of Jacob Synagogue in Stepney, London

Song: Sarita Saha

Addresses by Guests of Honour:

Councillor Richard Cotton

The Mayor of Camden

The Revd Preb. Alan Green,

Team Rector, St John on Bethnal Green, Church of England &
Chair, Tower Hamlets Interfaith Forum

Recitation: Samar Saha & Sinthia Das

Songs: Nandita Mukherjee, Lipika Roy Lopa, Gouri Bhattacharya

Recitation: Ashis Roy & Dr Amita Raja

Songs: Tunu Pal & Malabika Ghosh

Address by Key-note Speaker:

Revered Swami Chetananandaji Maharaj

President, Vedanta Society of St. Louis, USA

Songs: Sanjoy Ghosh, Gouri Choudhury

Address by President:

Revered Swami Suhitanandaji Maharaj

Vice-President, Ramakrishna Math & Ramakrishna Mission,
Head Quarters, Belur Math, India

Perform by renowned Artists

Haimanti Sukla & Acharya Sanjay Chakrabarty

Musicians: Sandyman & Friendz and Rishi Chatterjee

Vote of Thanks: Dr Subrata Gupta

The Programme to be **conducted by Uday Shankar Das & Ranjita Sen**

150 Cupcakes Decorating by Children

For our children today, we have a great activity; Cupcake Decorating!

Bring your child along to take part in decorating some delicious Egg-Free Cupcakes made especially for today to celebrate 150th Birthday of Sister Nivedita! Once decorated, the cupcakes can be purchased for £2 each to raise money for the Charity. Cupcakes will be on sale at the interval, so make sure you come along and congratulate the children for their hard work in helping raise money today.

All cakes are Egg-Free and have been supplied by Shelley Aiyedogbon, business owner of PrimaBella Cakes.

**"Help and not Fight", "Assimilation and not Destruction",
"Harmony and Peace and not Dissension".**

– Swami Vivekananda





BUCKINGHAM PALACE

5th June, 2017.



Dear Mr. Saha,

The Queen has asked me to thank you for the loyal greetings you have sent on behalf of the Members and Officers of Vivekananda Human Centre on the occasion of this year's Festival for Human Excellence which is being held on 2nd July at Institute of Education, University College London.

Her Majesty was interested to learn that the Festival has been celebrated in London for the last twenty-three years.

Your kind words were much appreciated and, in return, The Queen sends her good wishes to all concerned for a memorable event in this, the UK-India Year of Culture.

Yours sincerely,

David Ryan

David Ryan
Director, Private Secretary's Office

Ram Chandra Saha.



CLARENCE HOUSE
LONDON SW1A 1BA

From: Miss Claudia Spens M.V.O.
The Office of TRH The Prince of Wales and The Duchess of Cornwall

Private and Confidential

10th April, 2017



Dear Mr. Saha,

The Prince of Wales and The Duchess of Cornwall have asked me to thank you for your letter of 24th March in conveying the good wishes and loyal greetings from your members and officers on the occasion of the Vivekananda Festival 2017, *Festival of Human Excellence*, which will be held on 2nd July.

It was most kind of you to take the trouble to write as you did and Their Royal Highnesses were grateful to you for bringing this event and the theme of the festival to their attention. The Prince of Wales and The Duchess of Cornwall have asked me to send you, your members and officers their warmest thanks and very best wishes.

Yours sincerely,



Claudia Spens

Mr. Ram C Saha

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WEST BENGAL : 711 202
INDIA

Shri Ramakrishna Sharanam



MESSAGE

March 20, 2017

I am glad to know that the Vivekananda Human Centre, London, is going to publish a souvenir VIVEK on the occasion of Vivekananda Festival, 2017 and 150th Birth Anniversary Celebrations of Sister Nivedita on 2nd July, 2017.

In a letter to Sister Nivedita, Swami Vivekananda wrote, "My ideal, indeed, can be put into a few words, and that is to preach unto mankind their divinity, and how to make it manifest in every movement of life." The entire life of Swami Vivekananda spiralled through this central message – the Divine Oneness of all human beings. To Swami Vivekananda, religion does not lie in dogmas and doctrines, but it is 'being and becoming', it is 'realisation'. Its life-sap is the realisations and sacrifices of countless saints and devotees of all religions. His clarion call still echoes to stir the slumbering humanity to consciousness – "Sacrifice in the past has been the Law, it will be, alas, for ages to come. The earth's bravest and best will have to sacrifice themselves for the good of many, for the welfare of all. Buddhas by the hundred are necessary with eternal love and pity."

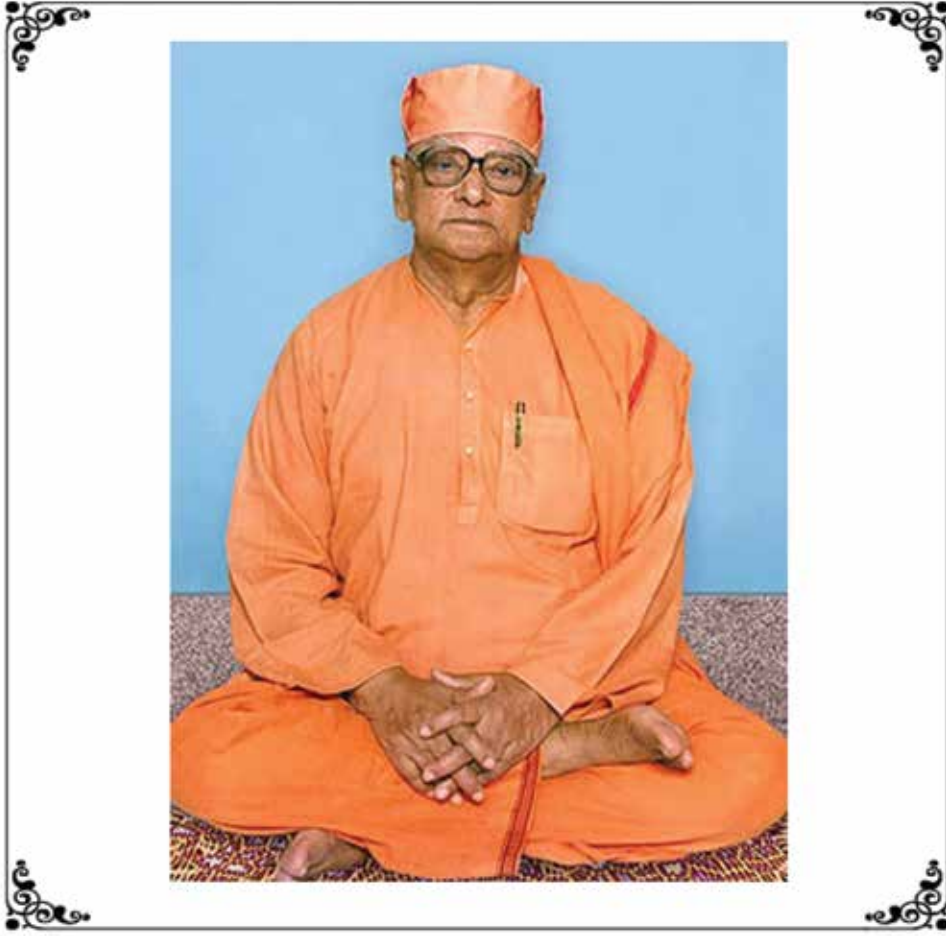
I believe the Vivekananda Human Centre will continue to strive in its efforts to spread the wonderful message of universal tolerance and harmony espoused by Swami Vivekananda. My best wishes and warm greetings to all of you involved in this noble effort.

MR. RAM CHANDRA SAHA
DIRECTOR
VIVEKANANDA HUMAN
CENTRE

(Swami Atmasthananda)
President
Ramakrishna Math & Ramakrishna Mission

The 15th President of Ramakrishna Order Revered Swami Atmasthanandaji Maharaj left us all for Ramakrishna Loka on 18 June 2017

HOMAGE
to
Revered Swami Atmasthanandaji Maharaj



The 15th President of Ramakrishna Order Revered Swami Atmasthanandaji Maharaj left us all for Ramakrishna Loka on 18 June 2017

His blessings and inspiration will always be the guide for the Vivekananda Human Centre. He was very dear to all who came and contact with him. Every year he used to give a message to Vivekananda Centre. His message always encourages to the people. We will miss him always special when we will organise a landmark festival like the Vivekananda festival.

We offer our heartfelt gratitude and homage to the sweet memory of Revered Swami Atmasthanandaji Maharaj.



*India House,
Aldwych,
London,
WC2B 4NA*

June 16, 2017

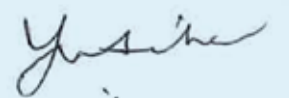


MESSAGE

I would like to convey my best wishes to the Vivekananda Human Centre for the celebrations of the Vivekananda Festival and the 150th Birth Anniversary of Sister Nivedita.

We should strive to uphold the values of non-violence and universal tolerance that were propagated by Swami Vivekananda. His message is particularly relevant today.

Throughout her life, Sister Nivedita spread the message of kindness and compassion, which are of vital importance in this age of conflict.


(Y.K. Sinha)



Department
for International
Development

Mr Ram Chandra Saha
Director
Vivekananda Human Centre
Vivekananda House
2A Elmhurst Drive
South Woodford
London, E18 1BT



Rt Hon Priti Patel MP
Secretary of State

18 March 2017

Dear Sir

Thank you for your letter of 22 February inviting me to be the Guest of Honour at the Vivekananda Festival 2017 and the 150th Birthday Celebration of Sister Nivedita on 2 July. I am very honoured by your request. Please accept my apologies for the delay in responding.

I would like to extend my very best wishes to the Vivekananda Human Centre on this auspicious occasion.

This is a tremendously significant day to commemorate the inspiring personality of Swami Vivekananda, who advocated the importance of respect and tolerance across humankind. The Vivekananda Human Centre play a hugely important role in practising and promoting Vivekananda's beliefs, for instance, through helping under-privileged members of society and promoting education. This displays that the teachings of Swami Vivekananda are as relevant today as they were in the 19th century.

I also welcome the celebration of the 150th Birthday of Sister Nivedita, who made incredible contributions towards improving education in India and improving the lives of Indian women.

It is with my deepest regret that I am unable to attend the festival on 2 July. Please accept my sincerest apologies. However, I trust that this event will

be a great success and I wish the Vivekananda Human Centre all the best in their future endeavours.

Yours sincerely,

Rt Hon Priti Patel MP
Secretary of State





KENSINGTON PALACE

From: Miss Claudia Spens M.V.O.
The Office of TRH The Duke and Duchess of Cambridge and HRH Prince Henry of Wales

Private and Confidential

19th April, 2017



Dear Mr. Saha,

The Duke and Duchess of Cambridge have asked me to thank you for your letter of 24th March conveying the good wishes and loyal greetings from your members and officers on the occasion of the Vivekananda Festival 2017, *Festival of Human Excellence*, which will be held on 2nd July.

It was most kind of you to take the trouble to write as you did and Their Royal Highnesses were grateful to you for bringing this event and the theme of the festival to their attention. The Duke and Duchess of Cambridge have asked me to send you, your members and officers their warmest thanks and very best wishes.

Yours sincerely,



Claudia Spens

Mr. Ram C Saha



KENSINGTON PALACE

From: Miss Claudia Spens M.V.O.
The Office of TRH The Duke and Duchess of Cambridge and HRH Prince Henry of Wales

Private and Confidential

6th April, 2017



Dear Mr. Saha,

Prince Harry has asked me to thank you for your letter of 24th March conveying the good wishes and loyal greetings from your members and officers on the occasion of the Vivekananda Festival 2017, *Festival of Human Excellence*, which will be held on 2nd July.

It was most kind of you to take the trouble to write as you did and His Royal Highness was grateful to you for bringing this event and the theme of the festival to his attention. Prince Harry has asked me to send you, your members and officers their warmest thanks and very best wishes.

Yours sincerely,



Claudia Spens

Mr. Ram C. Saha

S: Mayor17-18/VivekanandaFestival

16 June 2017

Ram Chandra Saha
Vivekananda Human Centre
Vivekananda House
2A Elmhurst Drive
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London
E18 1BT



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Tel: 020 7974 2727
Tel: 020 7974 1989
Fax: 020 7974 5881
mayor@camden.gov.uk



Dear Ram Chandra Saha,

I am glad to learn that Vivekananda Human Centre is going to celebrate Vivekananda Festival 2017 & 150th Birthday of Sister Nivedita on 2 July 2017 at Logan Hall. Vivekananda's universal message is vitally important for our society for tolerance, harmony and peace and it is particularly important to bring the community together in the wake of recent terrorist attacks. We are all faiths and none; we are many, we are one. If we learn Vivekananda's teaching from this festival and try to respect others faiths as my own faith then we can solve so many conflicts.

I hope all you will enjoy this festival. As Mayor of Camden, I would like to welcome all of you to this Vivekananda Festival 2017.

With best wishes

Councillor Richard Cotton
Mayor of Camden

Via Email: info@vivekanandacentre.com



Executive Mayor's Office
Tower Hamlets Town Hall
Mulberry Place
5 Clove Crescent
London E14 2BG

Contact: Gulshan Begum
Tel: 020 7364 6971
Fax: 020 7364 4999

mayor@towerhamlets.gov.uk
www.towerhamlets.gov.uk

25 April 2017

Dear Colleagues,

Message of Support from Mayor of Tower Hamlets

I am delighted that the Vivekananda Festival 2017 and the 150th birthday celebration of Sister Nivedita have been organised.

The theme of the event is 'human excellence, unity in diversity, universal tolerance and harmony and peace'.

Swami Vivekananda was a prominent Hindu philosopher who believed strongly in serving the poor. He founded the Ramakrishna Mission and through this Mission he asked young men and women to come forward to help society; his powerful message inspired all ages, in particular younger people. Well over a century since his death, he is still inspiring millions of people all over the world.

The Vivekananda Human Centre has admirable goals and does very positive work.

I offer my best wishes to everyone involved and hope you have a very successful event.

Many congratulations.

Yours Sincerely,



John Biggs
Executive Mayor of Tower Hamlets

John Biggs, Executive Mayor of Tower Hamlets
Tower Hamlets Town Hall, Mulberry Place, 5 Clove Crescent, London E14 2BG
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**RAMAKRISHNA MATH AND
RAMAKRISHNA MISSION**
(The Headquarters)
P.O. BELUR MATH, DIST. HOWRAH
WEST BENGAL : 711202
INDIA



MESSAGE

I am glad to learn from the letter dated 12 March 2017 of Sri Ram Chandra Saha, Director, Vivekananda Human Centre, London, that the centre is going to organize Vivekananda Festival 2017 and the 150th Birthday Celebration of Sister Nivedita on 2 July 2017 at London and a souvenir titled 'VIVEK' will be brought out on the occasion.

The subject of discussion for this year's festival is: 'Human Excellence, Unity in Diversity, Universal Tolerance, Harmony and Peace'.

Swamiji said: "...Purity, patience, and perseverance are the three essentials of success and, above all, love. All time is yours, there is no indecent haste. Everything will come right if you are pure and sincere. We want hundreds like you bursting upon society and bringing new life and vigour of the Spirit wherever they go."

May by the grace of Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna, Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi and Srimat Swami Vivekanandaji the programmes and the publication be a grand success—is my earnest prayer to Them!

I convey my good wishes to all.

(Swami Smaranananda)
Vice-President

2 April 2017



RAMAKRISHNA MATH, COSSIPORE

90, Cossipore Road, Kolkata – 700 002

(Sri Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa Deb Sarani)

The Cossipore Udyanbati

Phone : 2557-3605/ 2532-9348

Email : rkmcu@yahoo.com

Date : 21/03/2017



Benediction

It is a pleasure to learn that Vivekananda Human Centre, South WoodFord, London is organising Vivekananda Festival, 2017 along with 150th Birthday Celebration of Sister Nivedita on 2nd July, 2017, in London, having the theme of multi subjects with Seminar, Songs, Music, Dance etc.

As regards subjects of the theme Swamiji himself was the manifestation of 'Human Excellence' as pointed out by Revered Swami Ranganathanandaji Maharaj in his lecture delivered at Moscow University. Swamiji was also exponent of the other subjects of the theme as received from his Master Sri Ramakrishna Deva.

In this connection I think it will not be out of place to quote, as follows, the conclusion of the message given by swami Akhandanandaji Maharaj on 23rd February, 1936 in the Inaugural Message of Centenary celebration of Sri Ramakrishna Birth anniversary, "Knowingly or unknowingly the human race is moving forward along the path of liberation inspired by Sri Ramakrishna's message of the harmony of all religious and by his unique realization of the essential oneness of Karma (action), jnana (knowledge) bhakti (devotion), and yoga (psychic control). The day is not far off when the whole world will witness the establishment of a universal kingdom of peace, and when in loving response to the call of the Master, all people, forgetting their religious differences, will unite together and glorify the Master's message, "As many faiths, so many paths." Then only will the meridian light of the Master's advent illumine the hearts of humanity".

I hope the deliberations in the festival will focus on the same issue and souvenir "Vivek" to be published in this occasion will contain valuable articles on the theme.

I pray to Holy Trio a grand success of both the festival and the souvenir.

Swami Vagishananda

(Swami Vagishananda)
Vice-President

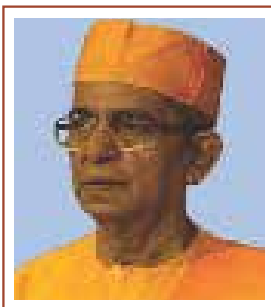


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RAMAKRISHNA MATH

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INDIA



MESSAGE

I am happy to learn from your e-mail the news about Vivekananda Festival 2017 & 150th Birthday Celebration of Sister Nivedita, on 2 July 2017, in London, and that a Souvenir "Vivek" is being brought out on this joyful and lofty occasion, featuring a Seminar on "Human Excellence, Unity in Diversity, Universal Tolerance, Harmony and Peace", music, recitation, dance, etc. I also understand with great delight that persons of great repute will be attending the program.

Swami Vivekananda's message is relevant for all times because he was a Rishi (seer) who could look into the future needs of humanity. What he has said over a hundred years ago will guide humanity for several centuries into the future, in remaining true to the spiritual ideal and facing all opposition to progress from selfish-minded people and nations all around. Reliance on the deathless, splendorous Atman within will give the strength, courage and the spirit of sacrifice that is very much needed today.

The theme of the seminar is quite appropriate: Human Excellence, Unity in Diversity, Universal Toleration, Harmony and Peace. It is spirituality which transforms the brute man into man and ultimately into the Divine which is the height of human excellence. While variety in the Play of the Shakti is the beauty of nature, one must also focus on the underlying thread of unity, which is Brahman. As Sri Ramakrishna observed time and again, Brahman and Shakti are just two aspects of the same ultimate Reality. Tolerance at the outset seems to be a grand idea. However, as Swamiji pointed out, tolerance has the underlying implication that we do not agree in to with the other person and that out of our magnanimity we somehow tolerate that person. The Indian ideal as pointed out by Swamiji is not of toleration but of acceptance—the same Truth adapting itself to meet the requirements of different minds in different parts of the world. Applied in the field of religion, it means that the religious paths may vary but the ultimate goal is the same—as many faiths, so many paths, as Sri Ramakrishna worded it. Acceptance in place of toleration ensures global harmony. Global harmony is a forerunner to universal peace which the world is frantically seeking today being cornered by selfishness, hatred, terrorism, economic embargo, misleading, exploitation, and war. I am sure that the ideas of Vivekananda will help the audience to be grounded in his lofty and elevating ideas as also guide others who are confused seeing no solution to the unnumbered problems of today.

Parliamentarians, Interfaith leaders and other scholars, no doubt, accept the ideas of Swami Vivekananda. But what the world wants today is putting these ennobling ideas into practice and giving a practical demonstration to others as to how to apply these ideas in their daily life. Punctuated with music, recitation, dance, etc, the listeners will get the required ambiance and mood to ruminate over and absorb these ideas.

I wish the Vivekananda Festival 2017 and the celebration of the 150th Birth anniversary of Sister Nivedita all success.

Yours affectionately,
Swami Prabhananda
(Swami Prabhananda)
Vice-president

Sri Ram Chandra Saha
Director
Vivekananda Human Centre, London E18 1BT

Date : 17 March, 2017



VIRENDRA SHARMA
Member of Parliament for Ealing Southall



HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA



Vivekananda Human Centre

Vivekananda House
2A Elmhurst Drive
South Woodford
London
E18 1BT

2nd July 2017

Swami Vivekananda's Message of universal tolerance, harmony and peace is of vital importance for our modern diverse society. The ideology which teaches us to *"Fill the brain with high thoughts, highest ideals, place them day and night before you, and out of that will come great work"* could not be more important in the modern world. By teaching the importance of humans and their relationships with others he demonstrates the value of a life well lived.

We can learn more from his understanding of science and morality. When Swami Vivekananda tells us that even before we knew of gravity it existed, and even after we forget it, it will still exist, he reminds us that times and knowledge will change. We should not cling to the old fashioned and outdated, but we must always remember to try to improve ourselves and our humanity.

When he spoke in Chicago at the First Parliament of the World's Religions he ended with a poignant epigram as relevant today as it was in 1893, *"Help and not Fight, Assimilation and not Destruction, Harmony and Peace, and not Dissension"*.

The world would be a far fairer and kinder place if we took his words to heart and so I wish everyone here the best in their celebrations of Sister Nivedita and Swami Vivekananda.

Best wishes
Virendra Sharma

Virendra Sharma MP
Chair, Indo-British APPG

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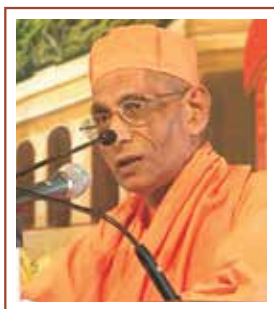


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RAMAKRISHNA MATH
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INDIA

15 May 2017



MESSAGE

Dear Ram Chandra Saha,

I am glad to know that Vivekananda Human Centre is going to observe Vivekananda Festival on 2 July 2017 with focus on **Human Excellence, Unity in Diversity, Universal Tolerance, Harmony and Peace** and a souvenir "Vivek" will be released on the occasion, as in earlier years.

It is the experience of many disciples and friends of Swami Vivekananda who were fortunate to come in personal contact with him during his lifetime that whenever he spoke to them the very best traits of their personality would come to the surface. This is but natural since Swamiji epitomizes all that is excellent in human consciousness.

I sincerely hope that the festival will effectively spur all the participants into action to achieve human excellence in the light of Swami Vivekananda's ennobling teachings.

I sincerely pray to the Holy Trio for the success of the festival and the souvenir – Vivek.

With best wishes,

Yours sincerely,

(Swami Suhitananda)
Vice-President

Sri Ram Chandra Saha
Director, Vivekananda Human Centre
London





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Message

“Swami Vivekananda’s dedication to harmony in a broken and fragmented world is as important now as it was in his lifetime. He remains a shining light to show how a religious commitment can lead to overcoming barriers and differences to heal and unite our world”.

Best wishes,

Alan Green



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MESSAGE

I am glad to learn that Vivekananda Human Centre, London is organizing "Vivekananda Festival 2017 & 150th Birth Anniversary of Sister Nivedita" on 2nd July 2017 and that a Souvenir titled "Vivek" will be brought out during the occasion. The celebration will be attended by Swami Suhitanandaji, Mayors, Diplomats, MPs, Scholars, Interfaith Leaders and other Honourable Guests.

Swami Vivekananda's Message of Universal Brotherhood, Acceptance of all Faiths and Religious Harmony are more relevant now than ever. Swamiji felt keenly that without the empowerment of women, the country cannot truly prosper. Swamiji used to say, "It is not possible for a bird to fly on only one wing". He paid great attention to the uplift of women in his scheme for the regeneration of the nation and was looking for a suitable woman to undertake this arduous task.

Margaret Noble (then) who was in despair and confusion, by Divine Grace happened to attend the lectures of Swamiji in London and had all her doubts about religion cleared. Swamiji identified her as 'The woman' to shoulder the great responsibility he had in mind.

Swamiji was convinced about the earnestness of Margaret's desire to serve the cause of the Indian women when she took the bold decision to come to India despite being appraised of the unfavourable conditions viz., apprehension of the local people about foreigners, fearfully hot climate, lack of even basic European comforts etc.

After arriving in India, she was initiated into Brahmacharya and given the name "Nivedita" – the dedicated. The rest of her life and work is history.

I am sure that the readers of the Souvenir, especially women would draw inspiration and come forward to participate in the nation-building programme.

On this momentous occasion, I earnestly invoke the blessings of Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna, Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi and Swami Vivekananda on all the Organizers, Devotees, Well-wishers and for the success of the Celebration.

Wednesday, 10 May 2017.

To
Sri Ram Chandra Saha
Director
Vivekananda Human Centre
Vivekananda House
London

Swami Gautamananda
(Swami Gautamananda)
Vice-President





22 April, 2017



MESSAGE

It is a matter of great delight that Vivekananda Human Centre, London, will celebrate Swami Vivekananda Festival and the 150th Birthday of Sister Nivedita on 2 July, 2017, and a souvenir named 'Vivek' will be published on these occasions.

Swami Vivekananda says, "Religion is the manifestation of divinity already in man." Most of us in our lives are seen to be highly concerned with the materialistic development of the world. It is also a fact that we may reach at the peak of the materialistic development, but, in spite of worldly development we may not find ourselves always truly satisfied and happy unless we are simultaneously developed morally and spiritually in our lives. Moreover, due to lack of morality and spirituality, materialistic achievements are seen not to be properly utilized for the cause of humanity. Religion helps us growing morally and spiritually, and becoming a perfect being with manifested divinity.

All religions and all method of work and worship lead us to one and the same Goal. Sri Ramakrishna practised all major religions of the world including Hinduism, Islam, Christianity, and reached the same reality. He expressed his realization with these few words--- "As many faiths, so many paths."

The ideals of Sri Ramakrishna & Vivekananda lead us to be sincere to our own path as well as to be respectful to other religions. By practising Sri Ramakrishna-Vivekananda ideals in our lives we can become perfect personalities keeping our individuality intact and simultaneously embracing the whole humanity as our own. Such outcome of spirituality gives rise to a harmonious and peaceful co-existence among the people of different faiths of the society as well as sustained development of the world which is expected in the modern age.

We appreciate Vivekananda Human Centre and all associated with this centre for their endeavour in enlightening their life on Swamiji's Ideal and sharing the ideals with the others in the society. The festival is a noble attempt in this regard. We also express our heart-felt thanks to the personals associated with the publication of the souvenir--'Vivek'. May Swamiji lead them to reach the goal of life.

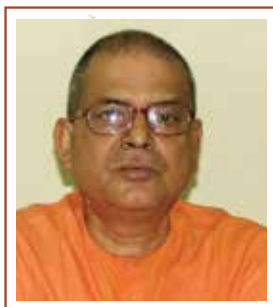
Swami Ameyananda
(Swami Ameyananda)
Ramakrishna Math, Dhaka.



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19 May 2017

MESSAGE

Dear Sri Ram Chandra Saha,

I am glad to know that, as in previous years, this year too Vivekananda Human Centre is going to observe Vivekananda Festival and release the commemorative volume 'Vivek'.

Among the great thinkers and spiritual leaders of the modern world, Swami Vivekananda was unique in that he was the first person to work in both the West and the East and propagate a message for both these areas of the earth. Swamiji's message is truly universal in the sense that it is meant for all people irrespective of their class, caste, religion, race, gender or age, and also because it deals with the aspirations, needs, affairs and actions of humankind as a whole. Swamiji's message is also universal in the sense that it harmonizes the ideals and thought-currents of the East and the West, of the ancient and the modern, and of the sacred and the secular.

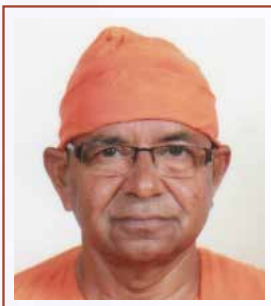
I pray to Sri Ramakrishna for the success of the festival.

With best wishes,

Sri Ram Chandra Saha
Vivekananda Human Centre
London

Yours sincerely,
Suvirananda
(Swami Suvirananda)
General Secretary





22 April, 2017

Message

We are very glad to learn that Vivekananda Human Centre, London, is going to publish a souvenir---'Vivek' on the occasions of Vivekananda Festival 2017 and the 150th Birthday celebration of Sister Nivedita scheduled to be held on 2 July, 2017.

It is seen that on the basis of caste, creed and religion etc. there are variations among the people in the society. Each variation has its own individuality and uniqueness in its kind. In spite of different variations we are one as human being. As a flower garden is beautifully nurtured with varieties of flowers, it is as if that the world is also a garden of humanity which is created with of various caste, creed, nationality, religion etc. Unity in diversity is the plan of nature.

It is due to our ignorance we think that one is superior to another; one will survive, others will not. Such attitude creates disparity, hatred, jealousy, disharmony and fighting among us. Consequently peace and progress of our society is disturbed which is unexpected in every civilized society in any age.

Swamiji says---"If you go deep enough, all will be seen as only variations of the One; Happiness belongs to him who knows this oneness, who knows He is one with the universe".

Practising Swamiji's ideals in our life we can have a proper outlook to the world and humanity which is essential for the happiness, peace and progress with regards to our individual and collective life.

The more the ideals of Swami Vivekananda will be perceived by the mass, the society will more be benefited. The endeavour of Vivekananda Human Centre, London, for propagating Swamiji's Ideal in the mass is praise-worthy.

May Swamiji bless them for accomplishing the work for the cause of humanity properly.

Best wishes to all.


(Swami Dhruveshananda)
Adhyaksha



Nivedita: A Great Wonder

Swami Chetanananda

President, Vedanta Society of St. Louis, USA



Tulasidas, a medieval mystic of India, said: “O Tulasi, when you came to this world, you cried and the world smiled. You do such thing in your life that when you die, you smile and let the world cry for you.” I feel for Nivedita that way. She lived only 44 years and her guru Swami Vivekananda lived only 39 years. It seems to me no great soul live for a long time. They come with a mission and when it is fulfilled, they depart. We are familiar with bullock-cart speed, rickshaw, train, car, jet-plane, rocket speed; these souls move like rocket speed. Within a short time, they accomplish a tremendous amount of work. This we find in the lives of Nivedita and her guru. Their legacy overwhelms us. Vivekananda said to a disciple: “When you are born, leave a mark in this world that you were born.” Nivedita did.

Nivedita’s name is now recorded in the pages of Indian history. There is very limited space in the golden boat of history. The rich or the masses have no entry there. They only get room in that golden boat, who have sacrificed their lives for the country and the people and contributed maximum for the national heritage.

Nivedita’s life is really a wonder. She was an embodiment of energy, virility, strength, power, and fortitude. She was strong physically, mentally, intellectually, and spiritually. God gave her talent and by the grace of her guru she executed it in various fields in her life.

Nivedita’s premonastic name was Margaret Elizabeth Noble. She was born on 28 October 1867 at Dungannon, a small town in North Ireland. Her grandfather John Noble was a minister of a church and her ancestors migrated from Scotland to Ireland. Her father Samuel Richmond was also a minister, married Mary Isabel Hamilton, and moved to Manchester, England. They had three children -- Margaret, May and Richmond. Samuel died in 1877 at 34. Mary moved to her father with three little children. Margaret and May joined Halifax School. Margaret was very serious and sincere about her study. She was a brilliant student and finished her school at 17. To help her poor mother, she took a job at Keswick Boarding School as a teacher. Afterwards she worked at a couple of schools and then started her own school in Wimbledon, a suburb of London. She became a supporter of the New Education movement in England introducing Pestalozzi-Froebel’s method of teaching there. From 1884 to 1894, Margaret spent 10 years as a schoolteacher and gained a lot of experience and became well known among the literary circle, including Shaw, Keats, and Huxley.

Margaret’s deep Christian upbringing could not satisfy her thirst for spirituality. She was an original free thinker and searching the truth. Although she loved Jesus, the faith-based Christian doctrines and dogmas created doubt her rational and analytical mind. She then began to study Buddha, which gave her some peace. As a fish on the ground flops and flounders, so Margaret’s mind was restless for knowing the truth.

Meeting with Vivekananda

In October 1895 Swami Vivekananda came to London after his grand success in the Parliament of Religions in Chicago. He became well known in London as a “Hindu Yogi” and the newspapers flashed the news. On 15 November Lady Isabel Margesson arranged Swamiji’s parlour-talk at her home and invited some of her friends and Margaret was one of them. Margaret wrote about her meetings with Swamiji in 1895 and 1896 in her book *The Master as I saw Him*. She heard something new, inspiring and convincing from Swamiji’s talk: “All our struggles is for freedom, we seek neither happiness nor misery but Freedom alone.” “Man travels from lower truth to higher truth and not from error to truth.” “It is better to be born in a church and not to die in it.” She took notes for studying Swamiji’s teachings in depth. Her arid heart began to absorb this wonderful message like a sponge. She later wrote her first impression: “I had recognized the heroic

fibre of the man, and desired to make myself the servant of his love for his own people. But it was his character to which I had thus done obeisance.”

Swamiji stayed in London until November 27, 1895. During this period, he gave several lectures on Jnana Yoga and Margaret attended them. She wrote her impression: “He spoke with a sense of conviction born out or realization which even an unbeliever could not deny.” Margaret’s doubt began to melt. Doubt is extremely painful to a sincere soul like a tiny flying moth on the eye. A person cannot have rest until the moth is out. Margaret waited another few months for Swamiji’s return. He returned in April 1896, began to continue his lectures on Jnana Yoga, and electrified the London audience. He said: “What the world wants today, is 20 men and women who can dare to stand in the street yonder and say that they possess nothing but God. Who will go? Why should one fear?” Margaret boldly and tacitly accepted the challenge.

Margaret began to correspond with Swamiji and the latter replied her questions. Swamiji wrote to Margaret on 7 June 1896, which is one of his famous letters:

Dear Miss Noble,

My ideal indeed can be put into a few words and that is: to preach unto humankind their divinity, and how to make it manifest in every movement of life.

Who will give the world light? Sacrifice in the past has been the Law, it will be, alas, for ages to come. The earth’s bravest and best will have to sacrifice themselves for the good of many, for the welfare of all. Buddhas by the hundred are necessary with eternal love and pity.

Religions of the world have become lifeless mockeries. What the world wants is character. The world is in need of those whose life is one burning love, selfless. That love will make every world tell like thunderbolt.... Awake, awake, great one! The world is burning with misery. Can you sleep? Let us call and call till the sleeping gods awake, till the god within answers to the call.

Inspired and overwhelmed, Margaret listened to this divine call and felt an urge to dedicate herself for a noble cause. One day during a conversation, the swami said to Margaret, “I have plans for women of my own country in which you, I think, could be of great help to me.”

Later Nivedita wrote a letter to a friend from India: “Suppose he had not come to London that time! Life would have been like a headless torso -- for I always knew that I was waiting for something, I always said that call would come. And it did.” Margaret accepted Swamiji as her Master.

Swamiji travelled 3 months in Europe and then finally left for India from London on 16 December 1896 and reached February 1897. Margaret decided to join Swamiji in India and dedicate herself to help his mission. Swamiji wrote to her: “Let me tell you frankly that I am now convinced that you have a great future in the work for India. What was wanted was not a man but a woman. A real lioness, to work for the Indians, women specially. Your education, sincerity, purity, immense love, determination and above all, the Celtic blood make you just the woman wanted.... Yet the difficulties are many. You must think well before you plunge in. On my part I promise you I will stand by you unto death whether you work for India or not, whether you give up Vedanta or remain in it.”

Margaret in India with Swamiji

Margaret left London and arrived in Calcutta on 28 January 1898 by SS Mombasa. Swamiji received her at the port and escorted her to a devotee’s house on Park Street, where the Western people would live. Margaret began to be acquainted with the place and people. Ramakrishna Math was then at Nilambar’s garden house in Belur and the Order bought an old house with land nearby, which is now Belur Math. In February 1898 Swami Saradananda returned from the West with Mrs. Ole Bull and Miss Josephine MacLeod. Mrs. Bull and Miss MacLeod fixed that house in Belur to live, and Margaret joined them. Every morning Swamiji would take breakfast with them and told them his plan to work in India. Miss MacLeod asked, “Swamiji, how can we help you?” “Love India,” was the answer. Swamiji began to train Margaret and told her India’s religion and culture, history and philosophy, scriptures and spiritual tradition, and so on. On 25 March 1898, Swamiji initiated Margaret into Brahmacharya and gave the name “Nivedita” -- the dedicated one. He blessed her saying, “Go thou and follow Buddha, who was born and gave his life for

others 500 times before he attained the vision of Buddha.”

During that time it was not so easy for the Westerners to enter Hindu society because of rigidity of the caste system. The Hindus were afraid that the white people might convert them into Christianity and they considered them mlechhas -- untouchables. Swamiji wanted to engage Nivedita to educate Indian women. Therefore, he took different methods to bring Nivedita in the main stream of Hindu society.

First, he arranged Nivedita's lecture on "The Influence of Indian Spirituality in England" and invited the elite of the Calcutta people. She made a deep impression in their minds. Second, Swamiji taught the mystery of Kali worship to Nivedita and arranged her lecture on Kali at Kalighat, South Calcutta, which was a stronghold of the Hindu society. Third, Swamiji introduced Nivedita, Sarah Bull, and Josephine MacLeod to Holy Mother Sarada Devi. She received them cordially and had refreshment with them. The Mother asked Nivedita, "What is your name?" She replied, "Miss Margaret Elizabeth Noble." With a smile, the Mother said, "My child, I shall not be able to utter such a long name. I will call you Khooki [baby]." When Swami Swarupananda translated it, Nivedita joyfully said, "Yes, yes, I am the Mother's baby." Swamiji overjoyed when he heard the whole story. When the orthodox Baghbazar people learned that Holy Mother accepted Nivedita as her daughter, she became part of the society. Fourth, during the plague epidemic in Calcutta, Nivedita got involved in the relief work. She cleaned the streets and nursed the poor people in the slums. Her unselfish love and service conquered the hearts of the people. Fifth, she started a school for the girls in Baghbazar according to the instruction of Swamiji and Holy Mother inaugurated it. Thus Nivedita became part of the Hindu society.

On 11 May 1898, Swamiji left for Nainital, Almora, and Kashmir accompanying Nivedita, Mrs. Bull and Miss MacLeod. During this period, Swamiji incessantly trained Nivedita about Indian religion, culture, scriptures, epics, art, history, tradition, and so on. He even took Nivedita for that difficult pilgrimage to Amarnath Shiva in Kashmir, which she wrote elaborately in her book, *The Master as I Saw Him*.

Again in June 1899, Swamiji travelled to the West accompanying Swami Turiyananda and Nivedita. During this voyage, Swamiji trained Nivedita day after day about her future work. Nivedita also needed money for her school and Swamiji introduced her to his friends and admirers in the USA. After one and a half year, Swamiji returned to India and Nivedita returned in February 1902. Nivedita continued to teach in her school and met Swamiji frequently. Swamiji died on 4 July 1902. The next morning she rushed to Belur Math. She was shocked. The entry of her diary on 4 July 1902: Swami died.

Journey Alone

On 13 December 1896 in London, Swamiji said in his farewell address: "It may be that I shall find it good to get outside my body -- to cast it off like a worn-out garment. But I shall not cease to work. I shall inspire men everywhere until the world shall know that it is one with God." Those words rang in her ears. She wrote: "Swamiji is not dead. He is always with us. I cannot even grieve. I only want to work."

Nivedita did not spend any time to cry or lament for the guru. The spirit of her guru began to flow into her veins and she decided to carry his mission. Swamiji forecast about Nivedita, "India shall ring with her." She wrote, "My task is to awake the nation." She worshipped the Mother India through her writings and speeches. She began her lecture tour in Bombay, Baroda, Nagpur, Madras, Patna, Lucknow, and various cities in India. Gradually she got involved with the political movement and came in close contact with the national leaders, Aurobindo, Gokhale, Tilak, Lala Lajpat Rai, Gandhi, Bipin Pal, Surendranath Banerjee. She inspired the young freedom fighters. As a result she officially disconnected herself from the Ramakrishna Mission because its policy is to be free from politics. Nevertheless, she always signed her name: Nivedita of Ramakrishna-Vivekananda.

Nivedita was not happy the way the Indians were treated by the foreign rulers. Nivedita and Aurobindo planned the future course of freedom movement in India. She regularly lectured at Dawn Society and contributed to the Dawn magazine, which acted an active role in the Swadeshi Movement. She said, "When will arise then the veritable fighter in the good cause again, with the Gita in the one hand and the sword in the other." The government put a surveillance on her activities, but did not arrest her. Aurobindo was arrested but later released by C.R. Das. In 1907, when Swamiji's brother Bhupendra Nath Datta was arrested,

Nivedita went to court, arranged to pay 10,000 rupees as bail, and had him released. The Englishman called her a traitor. She also arranged for Bhupendra to leave for America, so that he would not be arrested again. The British Government was trying to crush the freedom movement ruthlessly. The Nationalist leaders advised her to leave for England and work from there instead of being in Indian jail. She left for England and USA from 1907 to 1909, but continued to help the revolutionaries. When situation calmed down, she returned to India with Jagadish Bose and his wife.

Being endowed with god-gifted talent and unlimited energy and the blessings of her guru, Nivedita became the source of inspiration to the Indians in various important fields. In fact, she acted as an architect of Indian Renaissance. Bharat or India became her living mother. She asked her students to repeat: Bharat, Bharat, Bharat – Ma, Ma, Ma. Bande Mataram. She helped the scientist Jagadish Bose in his research by collecting money and editing his books. She inspired and helped the historians, such as Jadunath Sarkar, Radhakumud Mukherjee and economist Benoy Sarkar to write the social history of India. She edited The History of Bengali Literature written by Dinesh Sen. She regularly contributed articles and art reviews in the Modern Review magazine, edited by Ramananda Chatterjee. She appreciated the masterpieces of Indian paintings produced by Abanindranath Tagore, such as Bharat Mata. She sent Nandalal Bose, Asit Halder and other modern artists to Ajanta-Ellora to copy the frescoes from those caves to recover the spiritual heritage of India. She herself travelled and studied the beauty of Indian art in Ajanta, Ellora, Agra, Delhi, Varanasi, Gaya, Nalanda, Chittoor, Jaypur, Udaypur, Udaigiri-Khandagiri and other places and wrote articles on it.

Nivedita was a wonderful art critique. Her background knowledge of art and keen power of observation overwhelmed the artists. Here are some examples: One day Nivedita visited the Calcutta Art School and a young artist showed her his painting of Buddha and asked her opinion. She commented: “Why did you make the nose flat like the Chinese? Buddha was an Indian prince; he was not born with flat nose. You are imitating the Chinese and Japanese style of art. Regarding beauty, the Indian forms are not less than Romans and Greeks.”

Nandalal recalled: Sister Nivedita came to our Art School. Seeing my portrait of Kali, she commented: “Is it Kali? She is naked – no covering. You put a lot of cloths on her body. Read Swamiji’s writings about Kali to understand her form.”

“Seeing my painting on Kaushalya fanning grief-stricken Dasharatha with a palm-leaf fan, Sister remarked: “My goodness! You have put a palm-leaf fan in the hand of a queen! Well, where will you get the idea? The queen should have an ivory fan in her hand. You go to the museum and see how the ivory fan looks like.”

“I painted the portrait of Jagai and Madhai, two ruffians, who tortured Chaitanya’s disciples. Impressed, Sister said: “It is beautiful. Where did you get the idea of facial expression of these ruffians? I replied, ‘From Girish Ghosh.’ Sister laughed and told me to draw after meditation, which brings life to the paintings.

“I made a painting of Swami Vivekananda. Seeing it, she commented: “This picture is not right. You have covered Swamiji’s body with many clothings. He never covered himself with so many cloths. Moreover, your climate is not suitable for too many cloths. Look at the image of Buddha? Is his body covered with too many cloths? Swamiji was like Buddha.”

Some Glimpses of Nivedita

About Nivedita’s simplicity: Holy Mother was then at 10/2 Bosepara Lane and Nivedita visited her almost every day. She began to learn Bengali and put on sari like Bengali women. She tied a bunch of key in the upper corner of the sari like others and placed on the left shoulder. As she was not accustomed to it, the upper part of the sari slipped again and again and she threw back on the shoulder with a jham jham sound of the key. The Mother remarked with a laugh, “Her outside is white and inside also white.” Then she mentioned that the Master said it. Curious, Nivedita asked when did the Master said it? Then Holy Mother related: “One day the Master was lying on his bed and I carried his food tray to his room. I noticed he was sleeping. I put the food on the floor and stood there silently. He opened his eyes and asked, ‘Did you bring the food? You see, I went to a country where its inhabitants’ outside is white and inside also white.”

When Nivedita asked when it happened, the Mother mentioned an approximate Bengali era and the day of

chariot festival. Nivedita noted it down and went to Shashi Ghosh, Ramakrishna's disciple. He traced the chariot festival of the Bengali era corresponding English year and date from the almanac. Nivedita brought that information in her house and found in her diary that on the same day she saw the Master in her dream. After many years when Swamiji came to London, Nivedita saw the Master's picture from him and was overwhelmed that she saw him in a dream long ago. Nivedita narrated her story to the Mother, then she said, "You are Naren's daughter, so the Master appeared before you."

Saralabala Sarkar wrote in her memoirs:

It was painful to observe that Nivedita could not see the image of the Kali in Dakshineswar because she was a Christian and Westerner. She would try to visualize the Mother standing in the courtyard. Alas, how many Hindus have devotion for Kali like Nivedita?

Nivedita's residence cum school was in 17 Bosepara lane, without electricity. Sister taught in the school and most of the time she was busy in writing books, which would bring revenue for the school. Sister suffered terribly during the hot summer days. Sometimes she would come out of her room and tell her colleagues in Bengali, "Mathai baro kasto -- terrible pain in my head." Forgetting the physical discomfort, she would start to work again.

Nivedita would teach Indian history twice a week with great enthusiasm and passion. One day she talked about the history of Rajputana along with her experience in Chittoor: "I climbed to the top of the hill, knelt down on a rock, and began to think of Queen Padmini closing my eyes." Immediately she sat with closed eyes and folded hands. At that time her facial expression was beggar's description. Nivedita continued: "Devi Padmini was standing with folded hands in front of the blazing fire. I was trying to think of Padmini's last thought before she jumped into the fire avoiding surrendering to the Muslim king. How wonderful was her chastity! It was beautiful." Saying so Nivedita remained in silence with closed eyes in front of her students. Thus the class was over.

Nivedita's love and faith in Ramakrishna, Holy Mother and Swamiji were phenomenal. She would talk about her guru to her students: "My guru was Vireswar. He was a god of the heroes. The heroes of the world must follow his footsteps. You all be heroes overcoming this little happiness and misery of the world." In the girls' classroom, there was a world map on one wall and a picture of Ramakrishna on the other wall. She took the world map and put below the Ramakrishna's picture and said, "Ramakrishna was a teacher of the world, so the world map should be below his feet."

One day Nivedita saw the maidservant pasted cow dung patties on the outside wall of the Mother's house, which was a holy temple to her. She told the Mother's attendants that this should not be done. However, a few days later the maidservant did the same thing, which made Nivedita annoyed. She wrote a postcard to Brahmachari Ganen: "Please tell the maid that she should not do it anymore. Never! Never! Never!!! Furious 'N'." This little incident shows how much love she had for the Mother.

Navadurga Basu, a student of Nivedita, reminisced: "I have seen Sister waving the incense before the picture of Swamiji with great devotion, and then she would start the class in the school."

Nirjharini Sarkar, another student of Nivedita, reminisced: The class took place on the floor and we sat on the mat and a low desk in front. Sister told the students to sit erect always. Once the Sister took us to the museum and carried a big packet of dry fruits in the horse carriage. After the tour, she asked Prafulladi to distribute those fruits to the students and she did. She gave some to the Sister also. When the Sister learned that Prafulladi did not keep anything for herself, she was moved and remarked with a sweet smile: "This is natural for the girls in this country. They are always busy to serve others without keeping anything for themselves."

She had tremendous feeling for the poor people. Some workers were painting a room of the museum and a tired worker was sleeping on the floor. Sister asked us not to make any noise and disturb his sleep. However, that worker's sleep broke and seeing a white woman, he hurriedly got up and saluted the sister with fear, saying, "Memshab." Sister was embarrassed and requested him to go to sleep. Still I visualize that compassionate face of the Sister.

During the plague relief in the slums of Baghbazar, Dr. R.G. Kar left this eyewitness account about Nivedita: "I asked her to take precautions. When I went to visit the patient again in the afternoon I saw Sister Nivedita sitting with the child in her lap in the damp and weather-beaten hut in that unhealthy locality. Day in and day out, night after night, she remained engaged in nursing the child in that hut, having abandoned her own house. When the hut was to be disinfected, she took a small ladder and began whitewashing the walls herself. After two days, the child lay in Eternal sleep in the affectionate lap of the merciful lady."

Ramananda Chatterjee narrated two touching incidents of Nivedita's loving heart for all: Once I went to see her at Dum Dum at the residence of Jagadish Bose. I had my early lunch and reached there at their lunchtime. As soon as she heard my arrival, she came out and asked someone to feed the driver. She told the driver to feed the horses and give them rest. Then she offered tea to me and we had a long conversation about the publication work. I was moved observing her feelings for the horses. Another time I was passing through Sukhia Street in North Calcutta and noticed Nivedita was in another carriage. She saw a puppy dog gasping on the footpath. She immediately stopped the carriage, bought some milk from a shop, and fed the dog to save its life.

Nivedita in the eyes of the contemporaries

Nivedita was glorified by poets, scientists, artists, writers, national leaders, journalists, and many Indian and foreign savants. We shall mention here briefly a few appreciations:

Rabindranath Tagore: She had a versatile, all-round genius, and with that there was another thing in her nature -- that was her militancy. She had power, and she exerted that power with full force on the lives of others. I have not noticed in any other human being the wonderful power that was hers of absolute dedication of herself.... She was in fact a Mother of the People.

G.K. Gokhale, a national leader: Her marvelous intellect, her lyric powers of expression, her great industry, the intensity with which she held her beliefs and convictions, and last but not the least, that truly great gift -- capacity to see the soul of things straightaway -- all these would have made her a most remarkable woman of any time and in any country.

Aurobindo: She was a veritable live wire.

Subhas Chandra Bose said to Dilip Roy: "Those who try to downgrade our country because of thousand disgraceful oppressions, I ask them to read The Master as I Saw Him [Life of Swamiji by Nivedita]. I do not know there is any such great disciple of such a great guru in this world."

Abanindranath Tagore, artist: I saw her at a party of the Art Society at Justice Homewood's house. I was given the charge of sending out invitations. I had sent an invitation to Nivedita also. The party had begun. The whole place was crowded with so many rich people. Many well-dressed beautiful ladies were there. Nivedita came late in the evening. The same white dress, the rosary of Rudraksha beads round her neck and her brown hair tied in high knot. When she came and stood there it seemed as if the moon had arisen among the stars. In a moment all the beautiful women paled into insignificance. The men started whispering. Woodroffe came and asked who she was. I introduced him to Nivedita. I do not know whom you would call beautiful; to me she is the ideal."

S.K. Ratcliffe, editor of The Statesman: The land to whose service she had devoted herself made her overwhelming appeal to her -- its history and thought, its people and their life, its present state in subjection and social transition. There could be no partial surrender with her: she gave herself utterly.

Nivedita: A Great wonder

We wonder when we see Taj Mahal in India, Pyramid in Egypt, and the Great wall in China. We think how it is possible to build all these great things! Similarly, we wonder watching the legacy of Nivedita in various fields of Indian national life, who lived and worked in India approximately 9 years among 44 years of her lifetime! Nivedita is no more with us but her powerful writings made her immortal. Apart from her voluminous writings and letters, there are three English biographers and several Bengali biographers. The Master as I Saw Him, The Web of Indian Life, and Cradle Tales of Hinduism are her masterpieces. In recent time Sankari Prasad Basu wrote Lokamata Nivedita in 5 volumes, which unearthed various facets

of Nivedita.

Nivedita fell on India like a luminous comet from a different planet and awakened the Indian people from their moribund condition through her divine power and unselfish love. She worked in the fields of religion, politics, nationalism, art, literature, science, education, journalism, and what not. She was a genius with an encyclopedic knowledge. Nivedita became the moving figure in the renaissance of India.

Last year I visited Roy Villa in Darjeeling from September 12-15, 2016, which is now a branch of the Ramakrishna Mission. I stayed in a room adjacent to Nivedita's where she breathed her last from blood dysentery on 13 October 1911. On the 14th I went to visit the spot where Nivedita was cremated. A monument and her statue had been installed there. There is an inscription on the monument: "Here reposes Sister Nivedita who gave her all to India." Before death she made her will and gave her all money and income from her books to her school for the women's education. Abala Basu recalled: "During her last moment, she prayed, 'O Lord, lead us from the unreal to the real, darkness to light, and death to immortality.' Finally, her face became luminous and she uttered, 'The boat is sinking but I shall see the sunrise.' Thus Nivedita merged into light divine." Nivedita's ashes were brought to Belur Math and installed in her guru Vivekananda's shrine. Every morning in Belur Math a monk offers flowers to her relics.

With a lightning speed her death news spread all over India. The Mother India lost a wonderful, glorious, and dedicated daughter. Nivedita's spirit began to travel in the veins of million Indians. When Holy Mother heard the news, she cried and remarked: "All people cry for a great soul.... Nivedita once said to me: 'Mother, we were Hindus in our previous births. We are born in the West so that the Master's message may spread there.'"

Nivedita left a mark on this earth and justified her name: "Nivedita -- the dedicated one."

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Nivedita, The Dedicated Swami Dayatmananda

President, Ramakrishna Vedanta Centre, UK

Early life

Sister Nivedita was indeed the choicest flower of womanhood which Swami Vivekananda brought from the West and offered at the feet of his Divine Master, the Holy Mother and Mother India.

Margaret Elizabeth Noble was born on October 28, 1867 in the town of Dungannon in County Tyrone, Ireland to Mary Isabel and Samuel Richmond Noble. She lost her father at the tender age of ten, and was brought up by her maternal grandfather Hamilton. Hamilton was one of the first-ranking leaders of the freedom movement of Ireland. A wise man predicted that she was born to serve India though he did not know in which way.

Margaret took up teaching at the age of seventeen. She first worked in Keswick as a teacher of children. Subsequently she established a school in Wimbledon and followed her own unique methods of teaching.

Meeting Swami Vivekananda

Though brought up in an orthodox atmosphere, Margaret and her friends could not understand, why God and religion should be understood the way it was taught traditionally. They were looking askance at many things. At this time Margaret came to know that an Indian monk from India came and was meeting some people in a friend's house, they felt curious. Why not go and see how this person would meet their questions. So she went to see him, who with his supreme power at once opened up a new vista of life before her.

Swami Vivekananda was explaining Vedanta philosophy in the drawing room of an aristocratic family in London. Lady Isabel Margesson, a friend of Margaret, invited her for this meeting. Margaret has herself described her experience on the occasion.

She wrote:

‘The time was a cold Sunday afternoon in November, (1896) and the place, it is true, “West-end” drawing room. But he was seated facing a half-circle of listeners, with the fire on the hearth behind him, and as he answered question after question, breaking now and then into a chanting of some Sanskrit text in illustration of his reply. There were about fifteen or sixteen guest, intimate friends, and he sat amongst them in his crimson robe and girdle, bringing news from a far land, with a curious habit of saying now and again ‘Shiva! Shiva!’, and wearing that look of mingled genialness and loftiness, that one sees on the faces of those who live much in meditation, that look, perhaps, that Raphael has painted for us, on the brow of the Sistine Child.’

She had an inexhaustible stock of questions and she accepted him as her Master only after he stood the stern test.

Decision to follow swami Vivekananda

After meeting Swamiji in England in November 1895 Margaret writes: ‘Suppose he had not come to London that time! Life would have been like a headless dream, for I always knew that I was waiting for something. I always said that a call would come. Vivekananda's principles and teachings influenced her and this brought about a great change in her. Swami Vivekananda could foresee her future role in India.

One day Swamiji told Miss Noble, ‘I have plans for the women of my country in which you, I think, could be

of great help to me.' She knew now that she heard the call which would change her life for ever. She decided to go to India and got the permission from her mother, who had dedicated her to the service of God even before her birth.

Swami Vivekananda narrated to her the pitiable condition of the women in India prevailing at that time and wrote to her in a letter:

'Let me tell you frankly that I am now convinced that you have a great future in the work for India. What was wanted was not a man, but a woman—a real lioness—to work for Indians, women especially. India cannot yet produce great women, she must borrow them from other nations. Your education, sincerity, purity, immense love, determination and above all, the Celtic blood make you just the woman wanted.'

Swami Vivekananda's assurance

Speaking very clearly to her about the uncongenial atmosphere prevailing in India, the Swami had written : 'You must think well before you plunge in, and after work if you fail in this or get disgusted, on my part I promise you I will stand by you unto death whether you work for India or not, whether you give up Vedanta or remain in it.'

Responding to the call, Margaret visited India for the first time on 28 January 1898, leaving behind her family and friends, including her mother.

Nivedita the Dedicated

On 25 March 1898, Swami Vivekananda formally initiated Margaret in the vow of Brahmacharya or lifelong celibacy, and gave her the name of "Nivedita", the dedicated. She became the first Western woman to be received into an Indian monastic order.

As a Brahmacharini

After her initiation into Brahmacharya the Swami held up as a model before Nivedita the ideal of an orthodox Hindu Brahmin Brahmacharini.

He said : 'You have to set yourself to Hinduise your thoughts, your needs, your con-ceptions, and your habits; your life, internal and external, has to become all that an ortho-dox Hindu Brahmin Brahmacharini ought to be. The method will come to you, if only you desire it sufficiently. But you have to forget your own past, and to cause it to be forgotten. You have to lose even its memory.'

Easier said than done! Swami Vivekananda devoted his time in building up her character and developing her love for India and its people. He explained to her India's history, philosophy, literature, life of the common mass, social traditions, and also the lives of great personalities, both ancient and modern.

Swami Vivekananda commanded her:

'India should be your thought, your dream and your worship. She should be your holy Mantram.' We are told that she would actually take out her beads and make Japa of these words! Her identification with India was so complete that she always felt herself as an orthodox Hindu Brahmacharini.

Hard Training

Swami Vivekananda knew that Nivedita, the dedicated has a great mission to fulfil and as such he gave her his best attention in order to mould her into the desired pattern. She was subjected to a constant and unrelaxing and severe discipline. She had to pass through the treadmill of the harshest discipline with courage and energy.

Swamiji trained Her with infinite patience and affection, held her as an ideal of a new type of womanhood—an ideal he embodies in his blessings to the spiritual daughter of his:

The mother's heart, the hero's will

The sweetness of the southern breeze,

The sacred charm and strength that dwell



On Aryan altars, flaming, free;
All these be yours, and many more
No ancient sage could dream before .
Be thou to India's future son
The mistress, servant, friend in one.

As a result of Swamiji's training Nivedita had undergone a complete metamorphosis and had identified herself completely with the welfare of India and her people in a way unthinkable even today.

Meeting Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi

Within a few days of arrival in India, Margaret met Holy Mother Sarada Devi, who, embraced her as her "khooki" or "baby" in Bengali. "This, said Nivedita, was the greatest day of her life." Till her death in 1911, Nivedita remained one of the closest devotees of Holy Mother. The Holy Mother showered every mark of tenderest affection on Khooki, as Nivedita used to be called by the Mother. To Nivedita, the Holy Mother was the very embodiment of ideal 'Indian womanhood'.

A Friend to all

Nivedita was a friend to many intellectuals, revolutionaries, and artists in the Bengali community, including Rabindranath Tagore, Sri Aurobindo, Sir Jagadish Chandra Bose, and Abanindranath Tagore. Later she plunged herself into the cause of Indian freedom movement. She also worked with Indian artists like Anand Coomaraswami and Havell and inspired them to develop pure Indian school of art.

Death

Like her Guru Nivedita was also short-lived, her mission completed. 'The boat is sinking but I shall see the Sun rise.' Saying these words her soul went to the abode of light and immortality. She passed away on October 13, 1911, aged 43, in Darjeeling.

Here is a beautiful pen-picture of her character by Nevinson:

'It is as vain to try to describe Sister Nivedita as to reduce fire to a formula and call it knowledge. There was, indeed, something flame-like about her. But of all nobly sympathetic natures, she was amongst the finest.'

Rabindranath Tagore called her a 'Mother of the people.' He said:

'He who has seen her has seen the essential form of man, the form of the spirit....We have been blessed in that we have witnessed that unconquered nobility of man in Sister Nivedita. ...She is to be respected not because she was a Hindu but because she was great. She is to be honoured not because she was like us, but because she was greater than us.'



Purity of mind is an essential condition for the attainment of the Ultimate Reality; real purity is freedom from lust and External observances are only of secondary importance.

-Sri Ramakrishna



Vivekananda's message offers us hope in 2017

Gary Thompson

Author & Journalist



WITH so many momentous events fighting for our attention it is easy to lose sight of the things that matter in life.

As we gather together at the Vivekananda Human Centre, perhaps we should take this opportunity to pause for breath whilst we look back at the pace of history during 2017.

In the UK, we witnessed the Government trigger Article 50 in March, which will herald Britain's departure from Europe. In the same month, we were shocked by the terror attack in Westminster.

In international news, President Trump was inaugurated at the White House, nuclear tension escalated in North Korea, and human conflict continued to be rife in Syria.

Meanwhile, just a few weeks ago there was the small matter of a General Election. It's hard to believe that we are only half way through the year.

The common threads that seem to run through many of these news events are fear and disharmony. It's easy to believe that the world is currently a very troubled place. As a friend said to me recently: "When you switch on the news, everybody is fighting everybody."

It strikes me as somebody who works in the news media, that there is nothing new about fear: danger has always lurked beneath the headlines.

Much of this is driven by our collective lack of tolerance.

It is through my work as a journalist that I met my good friend, Ram Saha, of the Vivekananda Human Centre. Until then, I knew very little about the Swami Vivekananda and his teachings.

However, I was fascinated to read about how this holy guru captivated Victorian audiences when he came to London with his message of respect for all religions. People from all walks of life flocked to hear his speeches, in which he advocated peace, harmony and religious tolerance.

The Swami's interfaith message is a powerful principle, which offers us hope today. He said that that if one religion is true, then all others can also be true, because we are all seeking the same destination.

Why then do so many of us react negatively to beliefs that are different from our own? Perhaps it is fear itself that drives this lack of tolerance?

With this in mind, I went online to research what Vivekananda said about 'fear'.

This is what I found: "Be not afraid of anything. You will do marvellous work. The moment you fear, you are nobody.

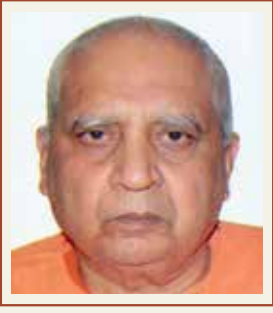
"It is fear that is the great cause of misery in the world. It is fear that is the greatest of all superstitions. It is fear that is the cause of our woes, and it is fearlessness that brings heaven even in a moment." *

Powerful words indeed.

(ends)

* **Source:** https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Complete_Works_of_Swami_Vivekananda/Volume_3/Lectures_from_Colombo_to_Almora/Address_of_Welcome_Presented_at_Calcutta_and_Reply





UNITY IN DIVERSITY

Swami Girishananda

Manager, Ramakrishna Math, Trustees, Ramakrishna Math & Ramakrishna Mission, President, Ramakrishna Mission Bhava Prachar Parishad, Belur Math, Howrah, India



“Abhibhaktam cha bhutesu vibhaktamiba cha sthitam, Bhutabhart cha tattejyo grasisnu prabhavishnu cha”. -Bhagavad Gita-(13.16) “And that knowable, though undivided, appears to be existing as divided in all the beings; and it is the sustainer of all the beings, as also the devourer and the originator.”

Tat (that Brahma); is (avibhaktam) undivided, non-different, only one; (bhutesu), in all the beings, but not different with respect to each body, because it is all -pervasive like space. Even then, owing to its being perceived as identified with the bodies, (sthitam), It exists; iva, as though, (Vibhaktam), separate, in each body. The meaning is that the appearance of difference in It is because of its having limiting adjuncts; it (difference) is unreal like (the divisions) in space.

Swami Vivekananda spoke on ‘Unity in Diversity’ in London, 3rd Nov, 1896 elaborated how unity is lying within diversity. He insisted that human mind is so deluded. So weak that it cannot comprehend the unity. “How are we to see it? The mind, so can be strengthened as told in the Upanishads, so weak, so easily let, and may catch a glimpse of that knowledge, that Oneness, which saves us from dying again and again as the physical death happens with the transformation of the body mind complex but the essence is there where then is no change or the inherent spirit which is Self. As rains falling upon a mountain flows in various streams down the sides of the mountain, so all the energies which you see here are from that one Unit. It has become manifold falling upon maya. Do not run after manifold; go towards one.”

The teaching of the Upanishad points out to that unity. It is said in the scripture, “He is in all that moves; He is in all that is pure; He fills the Universe; He is in the sacrifice; He is the greatest in the house; He is the man, in water, in animals, in truth; He is the Great One. As fire coming into this world is manifesting itself in various forms, even so, that one Soul of all Souls of all beings of the universe is manifesting Himself in all these various forms As air coming into this universe manifests itself in various forms, even so, the One Souls, of all beings, is manifesting Himself in all forms.-1 (CW of SV V-2, p.182, Jnana Yoga)

How to adopt the education ourselves about consciousness of one existence all pervading. The master key to regain that flow of eternal consciousness of one existence is to make our minds strong and overcome weakness. So the weakness is a mistake. Who makes us ignorant causing the mistake we ourselves. We put on hands our own eyes and weep that it is dark. Take the hands away and there is light. The light exists always for us, the self-effulgent nature of the human Soul. What is the cause of the Universe?

It is desire. The animal wants to do something but does not find the environment favorable and therefrom develops a new body. Who develops it? The animal itself. It is will. The continuance of the exercise of the will and it will take you higher. After the publication of Darwin’s Origin of the species in 1859, the theories of evolution through struggle for existence, competition, survival of the fittest and natural selection captivated the minds of life scientists all over the world. However Swamiji thought that the theory provided only a partial explanation of the evolution of the life on earth. In his view the driving force behind the evolutionary change of our species into another is the urge of the divine inherent to unshackle its bondage and to manifest its intrinsic freedom.

Commenting on an aphorism of Patanjali in his Raja Yoga and elsewhere Swamiji said that this

manifestation occurs by itself as soon as the hindrances to it are removed. Vedanta declares the essential oneness and solidarity of all the entities on the Universe can this be demonstrated scientifically?

Coincidentally around the time Swamiji was disseminating the message of Vedanta in the West, a young physicist named Jagadish Chandra Bose was performing experiments in Calcutta with the help of innovative instruments, he could record the electrical response of metal sheets, plants and animals to mechanical, thermal, electrical and chemical stimuli under varying conditions. Bose experiments showed that the response groups of diverse type of entities under identical stimuli were very similar. It is also seen that the metals when suggest to prolonged stimuli just like lissnes of living being, exhibit the phenomena of fatigue this resulted Bose to postulate that there was no unbridgeable gap between in insentient matter and senticult beings, plants and animals regarding the response to stimulation.

Drawing through their ideas we observe that if the mind is not a co-relate of the body, how in the first place it is acquired by a person? The Vedantic view is that the mind generally continues to exist after the destruction of the body, and takes birth in a new body. The mind of a person along with variety impressions, being the store house of the previous births form the new body and manifest during the whole life time of a body along with the newly acquired merits and practices.

To conclude we reiterate an important concept discussed earlier. The Mission of Swamiji's life was to uplift humanity is general and Indian masses in particular by disseminating the ideal of oneness of all existence. His interest in science arose because he saw that it can help to fulfill the Mission by rationally establishing in a present-day-language the unity that runs through all nature. This is borne out by his proclamation that the ideal of oneness is the one great life-giving ideal which the world wants from us to-day for saving the modern scientifically developed civilization.



Through spiritual practices man can overcome his evil tendencies, and divine grace can redeem even the worst sinner. Therefore one should not brood over the past mistakes, but should develop a positive outlook on life by depending on God.

-Sri Ramakrishna

It is idle to expect that dangers and difficulties will not come. They are bound to come. But for a devotee they will pass away under the feet like water.

-Holy Mother

Strength, strength it is that we want so much in this life, for what we call sin and sorrow have all one cause, and that is our weakness. With weakness comes ignorance, and with ignorance comes misery.

-Swami Vivekananda



Swami Vivekananda's Philosophy Of Service As A Way Of Life

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Revered Swami Madhavanandaji Maharaj was a disciple of Holy Mother Sarada Devi and the ninth President of the Ramakrishna Order. Once the executives of Ramakrishna Mission decided to publish the report of the recently concluded relief work in the local dailies. Hearing this Madhavanandaji called Swami Vireshwaranandaji Maharaj, another disciple of the Holy Mother and later the tenth President of the Ramakrishna Order, and asked him, "Prabhu! Why don't you publish the report of your Japa and meditation in the newspapers also!" The implication of this statement of Revered Maharaj is not lost here. He was hinting to the fact that service activities must also be held in as much respect and sanctity as our regular spiritual practices, as they are both merely different means to propitiate and serve the same Lord.

The arrival of a major figure like Swami Vivekananda in the social timeline of any nation is an important occasion not only for that particular country but for the whole contemporary world. A multi-dimensional personality like Vivekananda may be best described as a unique phenomenon whose profound impact brings about positive results in multifarious aspects of human life for generations to come. Swami Vivekananda was not a socialist or social reformer in the strict sense of the term. He may be best described as a 'Humanist' – a penniless sannyasin with a golden heart, who strongly believed in the potential divinity of the humankind and loathed to undermine him as a merely 'social' being. He was interested in everything that concerned man, as to him man was nothing but God himself, 'the only God I believe in'. Anything that undermined this potential divinity of man affected him.

Swami Vivekananda once declared, "I want to introduce the Vedantic thoughts, conceived long ago in the forest, to the poorest of poor living in cottages." For him, religion was something living and vibrant, and not merely bookish theories. He gained his vast knowledge of the Indian society not from books and journals but from direct experience. Sitting at the feet of his master Sri Ramakrishna, he learnt that religion is of no avail on an empty stomach and unselfish service to humanity is verily the service of God, the highest religion. He famously declared, "I do not care for God who cannot wipe the widow's tears and provide food to the hungry orphans." It was his life's mission to show humanity the path towards putting the lofty ideals of Vedanta into day-to-day practice. According to him the best way of putting spirituality into practice is through unselfish service – Seva Yoga.

An incident of Swamiji's premonastic days, when he was still known as Narendra Nath Dutta and used to visit Sri Ramakrishna at Dakshineswar. One day, Sri Ramakrishna was sitting in his room and talking to some of his closest disciples. Narendra was present, and so were Girish, Sarat and a few others. Sri Ramakrishna was expounding to his disciples the basic tenets of Vaishnavism – Name ruchi (Affinity to the name of God), Vaishnav puja (respect towards the devotees of God) and Jive daya (compassion towards living beings). While trying to explain Jive daya, his composure suddenly underwent a change and his mind soared to a transcendental plane. In a voice heavy with divine emotion, he said, "Hey! Who are you to show compassion to fellow living beings? You yourself are insignificant in this huge creation of God, and you think you are fit enough to show compassion! No, not compassion, but service! Serve the beings, as you serve the divine (Shiva jnane Jiva seva)!" This incident put an indelible impression on the mind of young Narendra and he pledged that given the day he will preach the significance of this utterance to the whole world. What the future Swami Vivekananda learnt that day from his Master was that the same potential divinity is present in the entire creation – both living and non-living. This immanent creation is nothing but a projection of the transcendent. If divinity is manifested in a symbol or an image, then it is hundred-fold

more manifested in a human being. Thus unselfish service to man is the highest service to God! The highest religion is applying ourselves towards selfless service of the suffering millions, the 'Daridra Narayanas', the 'Rogi Narayanas', in a sense of worship. This service may be done not only by means of providing material and pecuniary comfort, but more importantly by bringing the light of education and gift of health right to doorsteps of the needy, thus helping them in standing on their own feet. It is with this idea in view that he envisaged the great ideal of 'Atmano Mokshartham Jagat Hitaya Cha'.

Swami Punyanandaji Maharaj was another illustrious monk of the Ramakrishna Order. A disciple of Mahapurush Maharaj, he was a visionary in the field of education and the founder of the famous education complex in Rahara, Kolkata. Once a foreign delegation visited Rahara to inspect the famous institution. After a tour of the entire complex, the delegation was thoroughly impressed. They asked Punyanandaji the secret behind the excellent management of the institution. Punyanandaji took them to the shrine and showing them the image of Sri Ramakrishna told them that the secret is that Sri Ramakrishna is the only manager and the rest are only 'mis-managers'! The significance of this statement is that when we commit ourselves to any work in a spirit of service, with the belief that it is God's work, He is the doer, and we all are merely instruments in His hand, the work becomes sanctified. It no more remains merely work, but gets modified into a spiritual practice.

Swami Vivekananda had the view that the lofty ideals of Vedanta lose attraction if they are not made applicable to the common people. The major section of the society, lacking the required aptitude and leaning towards these profound philosophy, finds Vedanta dry and fail to reap its practical benefits. It is for this reason that though our country possessed this life giving panacea it was reduced to lower echelons of tamas. On the other hand we see the great prosperity in the fields of science and technology, which is overcoming the boundaries of the unthinkable on a regular basis. Although these material advancements are meant to make our lives easier and better, yet due to some particular reason they are actually failing to do so. In spite of these material advancements we are failing to achieve contentment and fulfillment in our hectic and confusing existence. It would not be out of place to state that in spite of its best efforts Science is failing to touch the core of human life. Swami Vivekananda opined that the only way out is to achieve a marriage of Vedanta and Science. While Vedanta must be made practical and applicable, based on clear-cut logic and procedure, Science must turn its face towards solving the mysteries of higher existence of mankind.

It fills our heart with joy to see that many young people have knowingly or unknowingly taken up the ideas of Vivekananda as the guiding principle of their lives and are doing their bit to make this society a better place. It has nowadays become a common news of bright young men and women leaving their lucrative jobs and comfortable lives behind, even in foreign countries, to apply themselves heart and soul towards service activities. Some of these young followers of Vivekananda are engaged in providing education to street children, some are leaving their lucrative jobs behind to introduce modern agricultural conveniences to the poor farmers, while some others are researching avenues of providing affordable healthcare facilities to the poor. A growing trend among today's youth to dedicate their life towards social welfare, in an unselfish way, not only in a sense of duty but also as a means of wholesome life experience, is a standing proof to Vivekananda's philosophy.

We have seen so many people who have responded to the eternal call of Swami Vivekananda and dedicated their lives to the philosophy of 'work as worship'. There is no need of changing your lifestyle or profession, but just to revolutionize your outlook towards the purpose of the work you are doing and the attitude of how to accomplish the same. This change in attitude goes a long way in making our life in sync with our own potential divinity and generates a wave of hope for those around us. Come on, let's come together to build up a better tomorrow.





Vivekananda's concept of Practical Vedanta and Universal Religion

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Swami Vivekananda did not attach much importance to an idea, however lofty it might be, if it could not be put in to practice and used for human good. He would brush it aside as mere “intellectual gymnastics”. During a conversation with Sister Nivedita, Swamiji once said that the Vedantic scriptures discussed the applicability of Advaitic truths for the all-renouncing monks always, and never for the householders who constitute the majority of human population. Swamiji felt deeply for them and said that it was the householders whom he mainly wanted to help with the knowledge of the Vedanta.

This is perhaps the greatest contribution of Swami Vivekananda that he could show the efficacy of truths of the Advaita Vedanta for the householders as well for the elevation of their lives. Vedantic principles can be equally practised in the silent recesses of caves and forests as well as in the din and bustle of city lives. Swamiji further pointed out that some of these Advaitic truths we received not from the monks but from the kings on the throne who undoubtedly led the busiest of lives. They were rishis or seers in spite of their being kings and busy householders. He also referred in this context to the Gita which is considered to be the quintessence of the Vedanta. The Gita was created in a battlefield and was addressed to an extremely disturbed Arjuna. All these are pointers to the fact that these lofty truths of Advaita Vedanta were meant not only for the spiritual seekers, but also for the common people engrossed in the battle of life. Just as they can solve the great mysteries of life and death, they can also throw light on the crucial problems of mundane life. Swamiji says that the Vedanta can make a fisherman a better fisherman, a clerk a better clerk and a lawyer a better lawyer. And surely it can also make any man a saint, communing with the Supreme, if he uses it for that purpose.

The phrase Practical Vedanta and its entire conception owes its origin to Swami Vivekananda. In fact, his life's message is concretized in this concept. He wrote to Sister Nivedita, then Margaret Noble, in June 1896 from London: “My ideal indeed can be put into a few words and that is:—to preach unto mankind their Divinity, and how to make it manifest in every movement of life.” He regarded Advaita Vedanta to be the pinnacle of philosophical thoughts and believed that only from the Advaitic point of view one can accept the various branches of Vedanta as well as various religions as true. It was his firm belief that if the world ever needed a Universal Religion, it would find it only in Advaita Vedanta.

While he described the Advaita Vedanta as the possible universal religion, he did not mean that it will dethrone any religion; it will only provide each religion with this realization “that holiness, purity and charity are not the exclusive possessions of any church and that every system has produced men and women of the most exalted character.” (Swamiji's concluding speech at Chicago Parliament of Religions, 1893).

By Universal Religion, one should not think that a single religion will be universally accepted. Swamiji thought it to be an absurd proposition which will never happen. But Swamiji believed that each religion has to evolve into a Universal Religion. For that, no religion has to lose anything. It has to only make a simple change in its attitude with regard to other religions that truth exists in them also and in equal extent. In a remarkable letter to Muhammad Sarafraz Hussain, Swamiji wrote on 10 June 1898: “We want to lead mankind to the place where there is neither the Vedas, nor the Bible, nor the Koran; yet this has to be done by harmonizing the Vedas, the Bible and the Koran. Mankind ought to be taught that religions of the world are but varied expression of The Religion which is Oneness, so that each may choose that path that suits him best.”

Swami Ranganathanandaji says that the root of all evils in the religion lies in the fact that we are all born in 'Religions', but not 'spiritual'. The most of us are 'religious' only on census ---that one is a Hindu or a Moslem or a Christian, but spirituality is different altogether. Vivekananda brought this concept of Practical Vedanta to change 'every religion' from 'static piety' to 'dynamic spirituality' marked by the qualities like love, tolerance and goodwill and these qualities will get expressed in active service to others. We must be a spiritual Hindu, a spiritual Moslem, a spiritual Christian or a Buddhist. Practical Vedanta can offer that.

Advaita Vedanta says that One Divine Truth permeates every being and everything and in that divine identity, we are all one. This Divinity and Oneness of existence is the central theme of Advaita Vedanta. Human beings who otherwise seem helpless victims to repeated births and deaths and various sufferings of life, have another magnanimous identity in which each one of the humankind is Brahman the Supreme. In that identity, they are beyond all limitations of body, mind and senses, and therefore, all suffering. They are the Self--- the only Divine Reality that exists. Of course, the lower animals are also Divine, but nature has given only human beings the required organic capacity to realize that Divinity. So much honour the Vedanta has conferred on man. That is why Swamiji said: of God's all temples, Man is the highest. Man not only carries Him in him knowingly or unknowingly, he can also manifest Him to the fullest if he so wishes.

But this gem of a philosophy, so full of hope and power, was long confined to the handful of saints and sages living in caves and forests. Swamiji wanted to open its access to all, in a form that will suit not only the meditative lives of the recluses, but also the active lives in the households. He said: 'The abstract truths of Vedanta must become living...in everyday life....This is my life's work.' 'This conceptions of the Vedanta must come out, must remain not only in the forests, not only in the caves, but they must come out to work at the bar and the bench, in the pulpit and in the cottage of the poor man, with the fishermen that are catching fish, and with the students that are studying.'

So the truths of the Vedanta have immense practicality. They have great relevance even to the so-called worldly matters and they can be practiced by everybody to his or her benefit, even in the din and bustle of the mundane life. What is the means to do that? To look upon every one and everything as God, to look upon every happening as a play of God. Stretching the meaning of the first verse of the Isopanishad---'Isavasyamidam sarvam yat kincha jagatyang jagat' Swamiji gave a new meaning to tyaga or renunciation. In no age, the conventional way of renunciation-- renouncing the hearth and home altogether---suits the majority. For them, renunciation will mean a change of outlook only ---seeing God in place of man and the world. The wrong lies not in the world but in the way we look at it. We are to 'renounce' our usual way of looking at it and 'deify' our vision, to see only God in this world. To renounce the world as 'world' and take it back as God. This will turn all our worldly efforts worship; nothing will be left as secular, and service of man will just be a more effective form of spiritual practice. This will be a novel form of religion, enabling it to accommodate monks and householders alike. This will not turn people 'otherworldly', as religion is often alleged to do, nor will it allow them to be 'world-centric'. While the person will not ignore his role in this world, his spirit of looking upon everyone as God and every action as an offering to that God will cause a revolution in his inner life. He will be a loving and selfless man. He cannot help being so. His Vedantic sense of Onness will make him so---to feel for others, sacrifice for others. We should note that only the Advaita Vedanta provides a rationale to this question of ethics: Why we should do good to others? We should do good to others, because whom we consider 'others' are actually 'me'. I exist in others, that is why I cannot help loving others. By hating others I hate myself; by loving, I recognize my presence in them. A religion like this covers the objectives and essence of all religions.





Sri Ramakrishna in Contemporary Eyes

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In his foreword to the Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna, Aldous Huxley regrets the dearth of reliable accounts of the lives of spiritual geniuses. It is therefore of singular importance that many of Sri Ramakrishna's disciples left authentic records of his life and teachings. There were also numerous devotees, scholars, and admirers who after meeting Sri Ramakrishna recorded their wonderful observations in journals, periodicals, and books. Some among them were famous personalities and scholars of high repute, while others were ordinary persons. They had spoken with Sri Ramakrishna, bowed at his feet, stayed with him, witnessed his divine play, listened to his conversations, and observed him closely. Thus, their writings have a historical value. They have analysed Sri Ramakrishna's life and teachings in their own way and understanding. Swami Vivekananda rightly said: 'Each devotee colours Shri Ramakrishna in the light of his own understanding and each forms his own idea of him from his peculiar standpoint. He was, as it were, a great Sun and each one of us is eyeing him, as it were, through a different kind of coloured glass'. Here we shall briefly review a few of these personalities and their views on Sri Ramakrishna's life and teachings.

'Bees' Swarm to Dakshineswar

Sri Ramakrishna used to say, 'As soon as flowers blossom, bees come of themselves. They have not to be invited. When love for and devotion to God become truly manifested in you, all who have sacrificed their lives, or have resolved to do so in quest of God, that is to say, for the attainment of truth, cannot but come to you under the influence of an inexplicable spiritual law. Indeed, there was a continuous flow of sadhakas, saints, pandits, devotees, and other people from various parts of the country to the Dakshineswar Kali temple after Sri Ramakrishna perfected himself in different sadhanas. He enjoyed their company, and some of them took spiritual initiation from him. Upon his wish, Mathur Babu, his 'sponsor' for fourteen years, arranged for various requisites of worship, a large store of goods, and comfortable accommodation for these visitors.

Vaishnavacharan goswami, a great leader of the Vaishnava community, a sadhaka versed in the scriptures and scholar of Nyaya and Vedanta, accepted the invitation by Mathur Babu and bhairavi Brahmani to ascertain the spiritual condition of Sri Ramakrishna. He came to the Kali temple and was astounded to see Sri Ramakrishna. Vaishnavacharan was the first scholar to proclaim Sri Ramakrishna's uniqueness. 'With the help of the subtle insight born of Sadhana, vaishnavacharan came to know the moment he saw him that the master (Sri Ramakrishna) was a great soul'. Further, Vaishnavacharan firmly asserted that Sri Ramakrishna had undoubtedly experienced mahabhava and that was a sure sign of the rare manifestation of God in human form.

Gauri Pandit of Indesh, a village in the Bankura district of West Bengal, was a great scholar and an eminent tantric sadhaka who paid Sri Ramakrishna a visit in 1870 at Dakshineswar.

Gauri had developed through sadhana an occult power that rendered him invincible in debate. This time also, Mathur Babu convened a meeting. Gauri Pandit saw Sri Ramakrishna's lifestyle and personality. With a keen spiritual insight born of tapas he came to know that Sri Ramakrishna was not an ordinary sadhaka, but a great soul. Not entering into any scholarly discussion Gauri Pandit unhesitatingly said, 'Does Vaishnavacharan call you an incarnation only? I should consider his estimate very low. My conviction is that you are He, from a part of whom the Incarnations come down to the world from age to age to do good to humanity, and with whose power they accomplish that work of theirs. Pandit Padmalochan, a



scholar a Nyaya and Vedanta, was the court pandit of the Maharaja of Burdwan. Once, while convalescing from an illness at Ariadaha, not far from Dakshineswar, Sri Ramakrishna went to see him along with his nephew Hriday. Sri Ramakrishna found pandit Padmalochan a liberal – minded sadhaka, well versed in the scriptures. Padmalochan also had the firm conviction that Sri Ramakrishna was a great soul who had attained an extraordinary state of spiritual evolution that went beyond the state of spiritual evolution described in the scriptures. He said to Sri Ramakrishna : ‘When I shall come round , I’ll convene a meeting of all the scholars and tell them all that you are an incarnation of God. I’ll see who can refute my world’.

Another scholar who visited Sri Ramakrishna was Narayan Shastri from Rajputana. He had led an orthodox life of a brahmachari, celibate student, for twenty-five years and studied the five branches of Indian Philosophy under competent teachers at Varanasi and some other places. He came to Navadwip to study the Nyaya philosophy. After acquiring mastery over Nyaya he came to Dakshineswar and stayed with Sri Ramakrishna for several months. He was charmed on seeing Sri Ramakrishna and decided to realize Brahman under his guidance. He witnessed Sri Ramakrishna’s wonderful spiritual experience and visions of the even spiritual planes as mentioned in Vedanta. He had read and learnt words like Samadhi and sthichidananda while Sri Ramakrishna was actually experiencing these states day and night. Narayan Shastri said to himself: ‘Ah, how wonderful! Where else shall I have such a person to teach and explain the hidden meanings of the Sastras? This opportunity must not be missed. The means of immediate knowledge of Brahman must be learnt from him at any cost. One day he got opportunity and prayed to Sri Ramakrishna for sannyasa. Sri Ramakrishna agreed to grant sannyasa to his able disciple. Narayan Shastri was the first sannyasin disciple of Sri Ramakrishna. After sannyasa he left Dakshineswar and went to Vasishta Ashrama for the realization of Brahman.

Swami Dayananda Saraswati (1824 – 83), the founder of the Arya Samaj and an independent interpreter of the Vedas, stayed at Baranagar (Sinthi), Calcutta, from 15 December 1872 to 15 April 1873. Through widely known for his scholarship, he had not started his own movement yet. On hearing of Swami Dayananda, Sri Ramakrishna visited him and later referred to his incident thus: ‘I found that he had acquired a little power; his chesr was always red. He was in the state of Vaikhari, speaking on scriptural subjects night and day’. That day Keshabchandra Sen also came to see Dayananda. Seeing Keshab, Sri Ramakrishna went into Samadhi. Swami Dayananda became spellbound at this sight and expressed his high opinion about Sri Ramakrishna to Captain Vishwanath Upadhyay; ‘We merely study the Vedas and Vedanta; but I see the fruits of the scriptures in the great soul. After seeing him it is evident that scholars only drink buttermilk by churning the scriptures and great souls like him partake of the entire butter.’

One ought not to imagine that only eminent sadhakas and pandits recognized Sri Ramakrishna’s greatness. Chinu Shankhari of Kamarpukur was among the first persons to realize Sri Ramakrishna’s divinity. Prasannamayee of the Laha family of Kamarpukur also respected Sri Ramakrishna as a man of God. Aunt Bhanu of Jayrambati knew who Sri Ramakrishna really was. Sri Ramakrishna himself was surprised to find some really advanced souls at Kamarpukur who could appreciate his spiritual eminence.

View of Brahmo Leaders

During Sri Ramakrishna’s time the Brahmo movement had great influence on people, especially on the youth. After Raja Rammohun Roy (1774 – 1833), who founded this movement in 1828, the leadership rested successively on Devendranath Tagore, Keshabchandra Sen, Shivanath Shastri, Pratapchandra Majumder, and others. Sri Ramakrishna knew them all. He went to see Devendranath (1871 – 1905) at his Jorasanko residence in Kolkata with Mathur Babu. He also paid a visit to Keshabchandra Sen (1838 -84) who was then staying with his followers in a garden – house at Belgharia, a short distance from Dakshineswar, on 15 March 1875. Although Keshab could not fully understand Sri Ramakrishna, the latter could grasp Keshab’s spiritual potential.

It was Keshab who first thought of making Sri Ramakrishna widely known through the Brahmo Samaj’s organ Indian Mirror. It was also Keshab who first collected Sri Ramakrishna’s teaching and published them in Dharma Tattwa, a Bengali journal, on 31 July 1875. The first public report on Sri Ramakrishna was published in the Indian Mirror on 28 March 1875:

A HINDU SAINT – We met one (a sincere Hindu devotee) not long ago and were charmed by the depth,

penetration and simplicity of his spirit. The never – ceasing metaphors and analogies in which he indulged, are most of them as apt as they are beautiful . The characteristics of his mind are the very opposite to those of Pandit Dayananda Saraswati , the former being so gentle, tender and contemplative, as the latter is study , masculine and polemical. Hinduism must have in it a deep sense of beauty , truth and goodness to inspire such as these.

In the 14 May 1875 issue of Dharma Tattwa a life sketch of Sri Ramakrishna was published by Keshab . Keshab continued to publish news about Sri Ramakrishna till his (Keshab's) death in 1884, and after that his disciples followed in the footsteps of their leader.

The Dharma Tattwa published news of Sri Ramakrishna's passing in the issue of 31 August 1886. It reflected the close relationship that the Brahmo devotees had with him: 'On Thursday evening before Bhadratsab (7th Bhadra) Bhai Trailokyanath Sanyal gave a discourse on the life of the late Paramhansa . That day at 7 o'clock in the morning, a special prayer services was held at Devalaya for Paramhansa. All the preachers spent that day by going bare – footed and eating vegetarian food (havishyanna).

Pratapchandra Majumdar (1840 – 1905) had travelled and preached the Brahmo ideas of religion in different parts of India , Europe, Japan and the US. Pratap went to Dakshineswar with Keshab on many occasions and enjoyed Sri Ramakrishna's holy company. Sri Ramakrishna also loved him much. Pratap wrote a fine article on Sri Ramakrishna for the Sunday Mirror of 16 April 1876, which was reproduced in the Theistic quarterly Review of October – December 1879. It also included the sayings of Sri Ramakrishna the first time these were being published in English . In this article Pratap wrote:

His religion is his only recommendation. And what is his religion? It is Hinduism, but Hinduism of a strange type. Ramakrishna Paramhansa (for that is the saint's name) is the worshipper of no particular Hindu God. He is not a Shaivait, he is not a Shakta, he is not a Vaishnava, he is not a Vedantist. Yet he is all these . He worships Shiva, he worships Kali , he worships Rama, he worships Krishna , and is a confirmed advocate of Vedantist doctrines. He is an idolater and is yet a faithful and most devoted mediator of the perfections of the one, formless, infinite Deity whom he terms 'Akhandā Sachchidananda'.

Acharya Shivanath Shastri (1847 – 1919) , another Brahmo leader whom Sri Ramakrishna loved much , recorded his reminiscences in the book Men I Have seen. He observed: 'I was convinced that he was no longer a sadhak or a devotee under exercise, but was a siddha purusha or one who had attained direct vision of spiritual truth. My acquaintance with him , through short, was fruitful by strengthening many a spiritual thought in me. He was certainly one of the most memorable personalities I have come across in life.

Acharya Vijaykrishna Goswami came from the Vaishnava tradition and was a descendant of Advaita Goswami, one of the chief companions of Sri Chaitanya. But he embraced Brahmo Dharma and had become an acharya , teacher, of the Brahmo Samaj. Due to differences in opinion with Keshab, he founded the Sadharan Brahmo Samaj and subsequently returned to the Vaishnava fold. He visited Sri Ramakrishna many times at Dakshineswar and accepted him as an incarnation. Once Vijaykrishna said, 'I have travelled to various parts of this country and across mountains, and have met many sadhus and great souls, but I have never seen any one like him (pointing to the Master) . Here I see one hundred percent spirituality . elsewhere I have seen twelve percent, sometimes six, sometimes two and sometime one percent, but I have never found even twenty – five percent in any other soul.

In the Eyes of Christians and Muslims

Two Christian missionaries , Rev. Joseph Cook and Miss Mary Pigot , met Sri Ramakrishna with Keshabchandra Sen aboard a steamer cruising on the Ganga on 23 February 1882. The two were charmed to see Sri Ramakrishna in ecstasy , something they had never seen before. This incident was published in the New Dispensation and Dharma Tattwa on 26 February 1882:

On Thursday last there was an interesting excursion by a steam launch up the river to Dakshineswar. The rev. Joseph Cook, Miss Pigot, and the apostles of the New dispensation together with a number of our young men embarked at about 11 O'clock . The revered Paramhansa of Dakshineswar, as soon as he heard of the arrival of the party, came to the riverside, and was taken on board . He successively went through all the

phases of spiritual excitement which characterize him. Passing through a long interval of unconsciousness he prayed, sang, and discoursed on spiritual subjects. Mr. Cook watched him very closely, and seemed much interested by what he saw. Mr. Cook represented the extreme culture of Christian theology and thought. The Paramhansa represented the extreme culture of Indian Yoga and Bhakti in short the traditional piety of the East. And the apostles of the Brahmo Samaj in bringing together the two proved that they combined both in all inclusive harmony of the new dispensation.

Dr Abdul wajid of East Bengal – now Bangladesh while studying medicine in Calcutta met Sri Ramakrishna in 1885 through his friend Ramchandra Dutta and became a devotee. In 1898 Dr Wajid visited Ramchandra Dutta at Kankurganchhi and was received cordially by the devotees. He removed his shoes and socks, went to the shrine, and bowed down three times to Sri Ramakrishna. The memory of Sri Ramakrishna brought tears to his eyes. At the devotees' request Dr Wajid narrated his reminiscences: 'Our holy Koran mentions some signs of a prophet. We noticed those signs in Sri Ramakrishna. After seeing and listening to him we believed that he was a prophet. I still had some attachment to lust and gold, so I did not dare visit him again at Dakshineswar.

Impressions of Poets, Educationists, and writers

We shall now present the impressions of three celebrated personalities on Sri Ramakrishna. The first is Ishwarchandra Vidyasagar (1820 – 91), whom Sri Ramakrishna visited on 5 August 1882 at his Badurbagan residence in Calcutta. Vidyasagar was a great scholar, educator, writer and philanthropist. He gave shape to modern Bengali, wrote a book on Sanskrit grammar that still remains a standard text, and founded the Metropolitan Institute knowing that M, the recorder of the Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna requested him to arrange a meeting with Vidyasagar. With the latter's consent, Sri Ramakrishna visited him at home in the company of M, Bhavanath Chattopadhyay, and Pratapchandra Hazra. Vidyasagar was then sixty-two, while Sri Ramakrishna was forty – six. As soon as Sri Ramakrishna met Vidyasagar, he smiled in an ecstatic mood and asked for a glass of drinking water. Vidyasagar himself brought some sweets for Sri Ramakrishna to take with the water. The conversation that followed was interspersed with humour when Sri Ramakrishna explained the nature of a pandit, Vidyasagar listened to him in silence. The others too were attentive to every word he said. When he remarked that Brahman is the sole entity undefined by speech Vidyasagar exclaimed: 'Oh! That is remarkable statement. I have learnt something new today'.

Sri Ramakrishna went on discussing on topic after another. Vidyasagar remained a keen listener. Sri Ramakrishna also sang two songs in his melodious voice. M observed, 'While singing, the Master went into Samadhi. He was seated on the bench, facing west, the palms of his hands joined together, his body erect and motionless. Everyone watched him expectantly. Vidyasagar, too, was speechless and could not take his eyes from the master.' Sri Ramakrishna invited Vidyasagar to visit Dakshineswar. Vidyasagar agreed, but the visit never materialized.

Next year, on 2 May, the young Rabindranath Tagore (1861 – 1941) met Sri Ramakrishna at a Brahmo Samaj festival in Kashishwar Mitra's house at Nandan Bagan, Calcutta (9219). Later Tagore composed beautiful poems on Sri Ramakrishna in Bengali and English to commemorate the latter's birth centenary in 1936. In these poems he expressed his views on the life, spirituality, and universal teachings of Sri Ramakrishna, and also on his contribution to religious history.

A parliament of religions was held in Calcutta between 1 and 8 March 1937, in connection with the centenary celebration of Sri Ramakrishna. Eminent speakers from across the globe participated in the fifteen sessions of the parliament. Tagore presided over the evening session of 3 March at University Institute Hall, College Square. He paid tribute to Sri Ramakrishna in these words:

I venerate Paramahansa Deva, because he, in an arid age of religious nihilism, proved the truth of our spiritual heritage by religious nihilism, proved the truth of our spiritual heritage by realizing it, because the largeness of his spirit could comprehend seemingly antagonistic modes of sadhana, and because the simplicity of his soul shames for all time the pomp and pedantry of pontiffs and pundits.

Great souls, like Ramakrishna Paramahansa, have a comprehensive vision of Truth, they have the power to grasp the significance of each different form of the Reality that is one in all – but the masses of believers are unable to reconcile the conflict of codes and commands, Their timid and shrunken imagination, instead

of being liberated by the vision of the Infinite in religion, is held captive in bigotry and is tortured and exploited by priests and fanatics for uses hardly anticipated by those who originally received it.

Another great contemporary literary figure was the deputy magistrate and author bankim Chandra chatterjee (1838 – 94). He wrote many novel and social, religious, and historical themes. He was a friend of Adhar Sen (1855 – 85), a staunch devotee of Sri Ramakrishna , whose house the latter blessed with his presence on several occasions. It was at Adhar's house that Sri Ramakrishna met Bankim on 6 December 1884. Adhar introduced bankim to Sri Ramakrishna as a greater scholar and author of many books. ' He has come to see you,' he added . The conversation began with the meaning of the name 'Bankim.' Sri Ramakrishna was in a humorous mood and there was penalty of laughter . trailokyanath sanyal of the Brahmo Samaj sang for the devotees.

Presently Sri Ramakrishna stood up and lost consciousness of the outer world. He became completely indrawn, absorbed in Samadhi . The devotees stood around him in a circle. Pushing aside the crowd , Bankim came near the Master and began to watch him attentively. He had never seen anyone in Samadhi. After a few minutes Sri Ramakrishna regained partial consciousness and began to dance in an ecstatic mood. It was a never – to – be – forgotten scene. Bankim and his Anglicized friends looked at him in amazement.

When Bankim was about to leave , he bowed down to Sri Ramakrishna and said , 'I have a prayer to make. Please be kind enough to grace my house with the dust of your holy feet' (675) .

Sri Ramakrishna agreed to this proposal , but also pointed out that it depended on the will of God. Bankim's desire was never fulfilled. To respect Bankim's invitation, Sri Ramakrishna sent Girish and M to his Calcutta residence. Bankim had a long discussion with them about Sri Ramakrishna , as he was charmed by this God – man of Dakshineswar (676).

What His Doctors Said

The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna records the names of around twenty – one medical practitioners Ayurvedic (Kaviraj), homeopathic , and allopathic – who came to treat Sri Ramakrishna for his various ailments at different times. Among them were Gangaprasad Sen (1824 – 95) , Bhagawan Rudra, Rajendralal Dutta (1818- 89) , and mahendralal Sarkar 1833 – 1904). All of them expressed their high regards for Sri Ramakrishna.

Sri Ramakrishna had been placed under the treatment of Dr sarkar from October 1885 up to his mahasamadhi. Through Dr Sarkar was a very busy physician , he spent six or seven hours a day in conversation with Sri Ramakrishna gave him rational answer that he had to accept. He looked upon the devotees Sri Ramakrishna as his own kith and kin. The association with Sri Ramakrishna gradually transformed Dr Sarkar . About Sri Ramakrishna's teachings he once remarked : ' Why do his (meaning the master's) words go straight to our hearts? He has experienced the truths of different religions . He himself has practiced the disciplines of the Hindu , Christian, Mussalman , Sakta . and Vaishnava religions. The bees can make good honey only if they gather nectar from different flowers' (876-7)

One day one of the doctor's friends said to him, 'Sir , I hear that some speak of the Paramahansa as an Incarnation of God. You see him every day. How do you feel about it? Dr sarkar answered , 'I have greatest regard for him as a man" (879).

What the Journalists Wrote

Journalist Nagendranath gupta (1861/62-1940) was a follower of the Brahmo Samaj and a writer of a repute. He held editorial posts with the Phoenix, the tribune, the Leader , Pradip and Prabhat. He was a lifelong member of the bangiya Sahitya Parishad and also wrote many books.

Nagendranath saw Sri Ramakrishna during his steamer cruise in 1882 . He wrote in his book Reflections and Reminiscences:

The Paramhansa was wearing a red – bordered dhoti and a shirt, unbuttoned. The Paramhansa was dark – complexioned with a beard, and his eyes , never wide open were introspective . He was of medium height , slender almost to leanness and very frail – looking . As a matter of fact, he had an exceptionally nervous

temperament, and was extremely sensitive to the slightest physical pain. He spoke with a very slight but charming stammer in very plain Bengali, mixing the two 'yous' frequently. Practically all the talking was done by the Paramhansa, and the rest, including Keshab himself, were respectful and eager listeners. I have never heard any other man speak as he did. It was an unbroken flow of profound spiritual truths and experiences, welling up from the perennial spring of his own devotion and wisdom. The similes and metaphors, the apt illustrations, were as striking as they were original.

Nagendranath left a graphic account of Sri ramakrishna's mahasamadhi in the same book:

As I was going out of the house in the afternoon, a printed slip was handed to me announcing that Paramhansa Ramkrishna had passed into final Maha – Samadhi. I drove straight to the garden house at Cossipore where the august patient had passed his last days, surrounded and tended with unremitting love and devotion by his disciples, admirers and worshippers. There he lay on a handsome bed covered with a fresh white sheet and flowers, in front of the portico of the house, under the open sky. He lay on his right side, a pillow under his head and another between the legs. The lips which has never ceased teaching even during the months he had been suffering from the intolerable agony of cancer of the throat were stilled in the silence of death. The final serenity, the calm, the peace and the supreme majesty of death were on the face, now smooth and relaxed in its last repose. The smile on the lips showed that the spirit had passed in the rapture of Samadhi. Narendranath (Vivekananda),

Mahendranath and other disciples, Trailokya nath of the New Dispensation Church of the Brahmo Samaj and other were seated on the ground. As I sat down beside them and looked at the ineffable peace of the face before us, the words of Ramakrishna came back to me, that the body is merely a sheath and the indwelling real self is difficult of realization. And as we sat in the waning afternoon, waiting for the heat of the day to pass before carrying the remains to the cremation ground, a single cloud passed overhead and a small shower of very large drop of rain fell. Those present said this was the pushpa – vrishti, the rain of flowers from heaven, of which the ancient books write, the welcome of the immortal gods to a mortal man passing from mortality to immortality, on of the great ones of the earth and heaven.

Krishnaprasanna Sen (1849 – 1902) was an orator, patriot, singer, poet and preacher, the founder of Aryadharma Pracharini Sabha and the editor of Dharmapradharak. He took sannyasa in 1859 from Sri Ramakrishna at Dakshinewar. He collected material from Ramchandra Dutta and wrote a thoughtful article, Mahatma Ramakrishna in the Dharmapradharak of 6 August 1884: One whose father (shiva in the cremation ground) is mad, mother (kali) is mad, cannot help being mad. Whoever goes to a fair of mad people, a mart of mad persons, commerce of madness, turns mad. Mahatma Ramakrishna is a mad man of this market. He does not wear an ochre loin cloth, his head is not tonsured; so why have people taken him to be a Paramahansa? He is not a Paramahansa by virtue of his insignia, but a Paramahansa by his action. Wonderful is his mood and wonderful nature. His words are so simple, so sweet, and so touching that hearing them leads to an outpouring of devotion even in a stone heart. Truly, he is a man without foes. By sitting near him for a while one receives through conversation such lofty and penetrating wisdom as is hard to acquire even after studying the scriptures for a long time. His life is a living book, worthy of study by all seekers of welfare. Bhavanicharan Banerjee alias Upadhyay Brahmanandhava (1861 – 1907) was a remarkable personality. A staunch follower of Keshab Chandra Sen, he embraced Roman Catholicism in later life before finally reverting back to Hinduism. He was a journalist, patriot, orator and Vedantist who travelled across Europe to deliver lectures on Vedanta. He met Sri Ramakrishna with his friends at Dakshineswar and wrote articles on him in the Bengali daily Sandhya and the monthly Swaraj, both of which he edited. Brahmanandhava expressed his ideas beautifully in Swaraj:

Who is this Ramakrishna? He is the prince of sadhakas, who through his spiritual practice, so rich with emotion and fervor, gathered round him all the peculiar spiritual attitudes of the different sects and faiths of the world, and thus demonstrated the all – comprehensiveness of his Brahman – realization. In his personality have been synthesized and unified the superconsciousness of the Yogis, the sweetness of the love of the Gop of Brindavan, and the aweinspiring attitude of the Sakti Worshipper. He practiced Islam and realized the Christhood of Jesus. Fully established in his consciousness of the immutable Brahman and keeping intact the continuity of the Eternal dharma of Aryas, Sri Ramakrishna welcomed with open arms all the new spiritual forces and orientating them all to Advaita.

In the February 1886 number of Vedavyas , the organ of the Hindu revivalists , the editor wrote: 'We used to visit him frequently to hear his nectar like instructions. We used to see his place frequented by men of all religions . Besides Christian, Mussalmn , Busshist, Brahmo, Jaina , Hindu , countless men of other religions used to come to him and respectfully bowed at his feet.

Adoration of Devotees and Disciples

It was but natural that the devotees and disciples of Sri Ramakrishna , both lay and monastic, preached his glory during his lifetime. They are the eternal companies of Sri Ramakrishna . M recorder the conversations and acts of Sri Ramakrishna Kathmritra. Swami Saradananda is an authority both as a philosopher and as an historian. His books are rich in metaphysical sketches, which place the spiritual appearances of Ramakrishna exactly in its place in the rich procession of Hindu thought . Ramchandra Dutta , Akshay Kumar Sen , Priyanath Sinha (alias Gurudas Barman) , Vaikunthanath Sanyal , Dr Shashibhushan Ghosh and Sureshchandra Dutta – each of these lay disciples recorded their obsevation on the life and teachings of Sri Ramakrishna . Which have great historical relevance. Mahendranath Dutta 91869 – 1956) , Swami Vivekananda's brother , and Ramlal Chattopadhyay (1858 – 1933) , Sri Ramakrishna's nephew , also chronicled the life and teachings of Sri Ramakrishna .

Ramachandra dutta complied the teachings of Sri Ramakrishna in his book Tattwasara in 1885. Later he elaborated upon Tattwasara and pub lished it as Tattwa – Prakashika in 1886 – 7. He also published Bengali magazine tattwamanjari to spread Sri Ramakrishna's teachings. After Sri Ramakrishna's mahasamadhi , Ramchandra wrote his first Bengali biography Sri Sri Ramakrishna paramahamsadever Jivanavrittanta, which was published on 8 July 1890. He also delivered eighteen lectures on Sri Ramakrishna in Calcutta between 1893 and 1897.

Mahendranath Dutta saw Sri Ramakrishna of many occasions . He was a gifted thinker and wrote around eighty – six books an different sub jects . In Sri Ramakrishner Anudhyan (Recollection of Sri Ramakrishna) he wrote: when I went to eat on the roof (of the house where Paramhamsa Mahashaya was visitings) found that brahmanas kayasthas , and all were sitting together and partaking of the food. It was not the custom in those days for people of different castes to eat together. It was also the practice then to invite people at their homes ; but here I found people eating uninvited . And it was not a feast of merry friends. Here everyone was partaking of the food with reverence and devotion; none was disrespectful. There was a feeling of attraction between the people talking food; feeling that everybody there was one's own.

A glow or power would emanate from the person of paramahamsa Mahashava. It would fill the whole room and then the courtyard; It would even pass through the windo grills and spill on to the road in waves 9under its influence) one would lose one's usual thoughts, even the thought of one's home. The mind would leave the body and go to a different realm. The world and its activities would be left far away, 9 and would appear0 like an image. All desire for an attachment to the world would be lost; even the consciousness of one's hand, feet, body would vanish. One would get into a disembodied state, as it were.

Paramahamsa Mahashaya silently brought about a (new) consciousness in society through his love, without anyone noticing it. The social customs and practices that others could not change through rational arguments and lectures, Paramahamsa Mahashaya gradually modified through his influence ; and yet , even the orthodox could not say anything against this change'.

Ramlal Chattopadhyay – popularly known as ramlaldada – was Sri Ramakrishna's morning routine at Dakshineswar:

The Master usually got up at three or three thirty in the morning , and as soon as he got out of bed , I would wake up . When he went to the pine grove I would either lead the way or follow him with a jug and towel . He would then go to the pond, through off his cloth , and sit on the ghat, danglings his loegs. I would bring him water and he would return to his room After that he would take a little Ganga water on his palm and sprinkle it on his head, saying, 'brahma-vari, Brahmavari! Ganga ganga! Hari Om Tat Sat! (The water of the Ganga is as a pure as Brahman. God is the only Reality Then he would take some Prasad of jagannath and Kali and also a few bits of dried bel leaves that had been offered at the shrine of Tarakeshwar Shiva , which he kept in a small bag. With joined palms he would salute all the holy pictures in his room and then sit down on the small cot. At about nine or ten in the morning , after he had finished talking with the devotees,

I would rub oil on his body. But I would put oil on his head only his permission...

After oil had been rubbed on him, he would go to the chandni ghat on the Ganga for a bath and then go to the Kali temple. There he would decorate the Mother with flowers or offer flowers and bel leaves at her feet . Sometimes he would put flowers on his own head and then merge into Samadhi.

Swami Adbhutananda – Sri Ramakrishna’s “Leto” – an unschooled shepherd boy whom Swami Vivekananda once described as “Sri Ramakrishna’s greatest miracle ‘ . was his faithful attendant . The observations of Swami Adbhutananda on the significance of the master’s life are remarkable. He said to the devotees:

Sri Ramakrishna embodies an ideal for everyone. He was an ideal householder , an ideal monk , an ideal guru , and an ideal disciple. Moreover , his life can serve as an example for all faiths and all sects. He is an ideal for the worshippers of Shakti as he practiced and attained perfection in all the important Tantric sadhanas . He is an ideal for the Vaishnavites , for his devotion to Hari is unparalleled. He is also an ideal for the Shaivites, as he attained the vision of Lord Shiva too. He is an ideal for the devotees of Ramachandra , for he saw Rama and Sita. He is an ideal for the Vedantins as well, having experienced nirvikalpa Samadhi, the culmination of the Vedantic sadhana , within three days . He is also an ideal for the Christians and Mohammedans because he had the vision of Christ and also of the Prophet.

Rani Rasmani (1793 – 1861) , the proprietor of the Dakshineswar Kali temple , and her son – in – law Mathur Babu (d.1871), recognized the divinity of Sri Ramakrishna early during his stay at Dakshineswar . To them, the Divine Mother’s play was wonderful , and so was her worshipper. Both of them regarded Sri Ramakrishna as their guru.

Since then a multitude of scholars , monks and Brahmo devotees met Sri Ramakrishna . Long before his close companions arrived , Sri Ramakrishna would summon them in the evenings from the roof of the building where he stayed , saying, ‘ Come my children ! Oh, Where are you? I cannot bear to leave without you.’ These disciples came to Dakshineswar between 1879 and 1885. Whenever he heard about any person of renown. Sri Ramakrishna would visit him. He also visited the houses of the devotees and sang and danced with them. These devotees were an assorted, rich and poor; of diverse castes, faiths, and social status ; theists and atheists, Christians and Muslims, intelligent and sober, as well as drunk and mad. They were all blessed. Some of them became his intimate disciples, and some who had been living a brutish life were turned into gods. They all served him wholeheartedly as they saw their own god in him. All of them remembered their holy association with Sri Ramakrishna . Their reminiscences, marked by deep insight and authenticity, have a special value. It is because of their writings that we know better who Sri Ramakrishna was.



Religion is realization; not talk, not doctrine, nor theories, however beautiful they may be. It is being and becoming, not hearing or acknowledging; it is the whole soul becoming changed into what it believes.

-Swami Vivekananda





“Every individual soul is potentially divine”,
proclaimed Swami Vivekananda.

David Russell

Trustee, Congregation of Jacob Synagogue in Stepney, London

It is this emphasis on the importance of each and every human life which is at the heart of human rights. As John Donne famously wrote: “Any man’s death diminishes me, because I am involved in mankind.” Therefore, “never send to know for whom the bell tolls; it tolls for thee”.

As Donne teaches us, no man (or woman) is an island “entire of itself”. We are all interconnected, more so in this technological age than ever before. Nothing is any longer far away – both in time of distance or time, relative to the bygone era. We are all members of the global village, all seven-and-a-half billion of us

Chief Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks reminds us poignantly that he used to think “the most important line in the Bible was “Love your neighbour as yourself”. Then I realised that it is easy to love your neighbour because he or she is usually quite like yourself. What is hard is to love the stranger, one whose colour, culture or creed is different from yours. That is why the command, “Love the stranger because you were once strangers”, resonates so often throughout the Bible. It is summoning us now.”

The Bible far more often commands us to love the stranger, than it does to love our neighbour. That the Jewish people should learn from our experience of having been strangers then slaves in the land of Egypt, and the many inflictions that we endured is evident. Though sadly not always the case. Though regardless, we are called upon to support any one different from ourselves, in a way that we ourselves would like to be helped.

Thus we are called to welcome refugees to our shores, as at one time we all were once refugees too. Those in need have as much right as we do to shelter, peace and prosperity – and a life free from fear. Sadly, this is a reality more distant than ever for those in ongoing conflict zones such as Syria. Though at a time when it is more important than ever to consider how we can keep open our borders, we are closing them as we head towards brexit.

As Swamiji recounts: “You are God, I am God, and man is God. It is this God manifested through humanity who is doing everything in this world.”

God created all of us in his image, and it is up to us to recognise that in one another. To teach that to our children, in line with Universal Declaration of Human Rights to “promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups.” It is to that end that we are also collectively working as supporters of the Vivekananda Human Centre. To ensure that our children recognise the humanity and rights of others, even those who do not look the same, speak the same or believe the same as they do.

It is this focus on education, on teaching our children, the next generation, that is central and fundamental to the Jewish tradition, and its continuing existence. Not necessarily to teach by rote, but to transfer a love of knowledge and inquiry. So that our children may think for themselves - not just to obey the law, but to understand the law; to assume responsibilities and respect the rights of others; to make sacrifices when required for the common good.

This is what I strive to teach my children, and in turn what Swamiji taught us too: “The education which does not help the common mass of people to equip themselves for the struggle for life, which does not bring out strength of character, a spirit of philanthropy, and the courage of a lion— is it worth of the name? Real education is that which enables one to stand on one’s own legs.”

Such education, real education, is what is so desperately needed to ensure that we not only understand the rights of the stranger, but to ensure that they are respected too. In so doing, we not only will stand on our own legs, but enable others to stand, and stand taller, too.





Thoughts & Inspirations From a Letter Swami Purnananda

Spiritual Director, Eire Vedanta Society, Ireland



This article explores the qualities and phrases that the Swami used in a well-known letter to Sister Nivedita. After enumerating a number of combined ideal qualities that would be uniquely useful for the elevation of Indian womanhood and the restoration of the ancient dignity and societal role of women in the land of Bharat, Swami Vivekananda highlights the supreme attribute to be Celtic Blood.

Let us dwell a little on the contents of his letter to her. After narrating to Margaret Noble the pitiable condition of the women in India, he writes clearly and powerfully: “Let me tell you frankly that I am now convinced that you have a great future in the work for India. What was wanted was not a man, but a woman—a real lioness—to work for Indians, women especially. India cannot yet produce great women she must borrow them from other nations. Your education, sincerity, purity, immense love, determination and above all, the Celtic blood make you just the woman wanted.”

Firstly, we see the prophetic clarity of Swamiji’s vision for individuals in the overall scheme of his “plan of campaign” for India and he sees Margaret Noble as a vital player. He goes beyond a mere request and boldly tells her about it. In saying “What was wanted” in the past tense, he deems it a “fait accompli”. It is a wonderful device that any modern positive thinking approach would recognise or in the words of Lord Jesus “believe that it is already accomplished” . Then, he skilfully provides a rationale. The implicate reference to women, it seems, evoked a sense of Divine Shakti in Margaret Noble that is evident in an approach to answering the question of proof of the impermanence of the universe and the reality of Brahman where she says the following: “Everything inside and outside the mind is reducible to a single force. But the force is relative. When we say that this thing is in motion, we mean that it moves in comparison with a thing that is stationary. Now, if there is only one force and nothing else whatsoever in the universe, this force must be absolute. We cannot say that it is in motion, for we have no second thing which is stationary to compare with, and therefore this force must be real and permanent.” It is notable that Sister Nivedita’s first famous book was “Kali the Mother” written in 1900 which was a wonderful celebration of this aspect of Shakti. Perhaps this overall reference to womanhood, the lost glory of women and Swami Vivekananda’s great thoughts on uplifting women left an indelible impression on Sister Nivedita that expressed itself in a leonine way. Her own inherent assertiveness and intellectual acumen resulted in her membership of the famous Sesame Club, a network of many intellectuals of the day.

Finally, we come to the poetic superlative phrase “Celtic Blood” that has puzzled many. Even without examining the words in great detail, we somehow get an instinctive sense of what this phrase means. Feistiness, strength, courage, leonine qualities all come to mind, and were indeed qualities that Sister Nivedita had aplenty, but are these really what the great Swami meant?

It is well known that the Swami had an idea that certain countries were, historically and culturally, somewhat like personalities. “Each nation has a main current in life; in India it is religion”. On visiting England, Swami Vivekananda, who was always keen on familiarisation with the historical background of place, must surely have known about the Celtic Queen Boudicca, known in the Celtic Welsh as Buddug. She was a queen of the Celtic Iceni tribe who led an uprising against the occupying forces of the Roman Empire in about AD 60. The Swami may well have dwelled on the comparative situation of his own beloved India occupied by the British and how, ironically, the English people at their root had been similarly occupied. When Queen Buddug’s husband, an independent Roman ally died, his kingdom was annexed and the Queen and her daughters brutally assaulted . It is easy to see how comparative thoughts about Sita’s abduction and treatment in the Ramayana or Draupadi’s humiliation in the Mahabharata can arise and how in both cases war ensued; this incident and the repressive actions of Roman governor Gaius Paulinus’s complete



humiliation and elimination of the sacred Celtic druids in Anglesey provided a sense of outrage and desperation among the Britons and Boudicca led her Iceni tribe and others in revolt. Boudicca led 100,000 Iceni, Trinovantes, and others to fight and succeeded in routing the Roman army and destroying London and other places. The great heroine, while eventually defeated, had made a significant impact that was romanticized from the English Renaissance and contemporised. By the time Swami Vivekananda visited England, Queen Boudicca and her courage and revolutionary spirit of justice was in vogue. The greatest significance of this feminine vigour, lost in the romanticism, is that the foreign conqueror knew that by breaking the deep religious aura of Druidic religion, a whole nation would be vanquished and so indeed it was left to unsullied Ireland and Scotland to carry on the Celtic traditions. It seems that it is no mere coincidence that Margaret Noble carried both Scottish and Irish blood. Above all, in every such story we see a characteristic of self- sacrifice and renunciation. Swami Vivekananda saw that Indian national prosperity was commensurate with its ideal of renunciation in line with the greatness of sacrifice that is extolled in the famous Bhagavad Gita passage 3.9 &10.

The Celtic influence in Ireland remained, so that even in the 9th century CE, while western Christian art was a revival of the Byzantine style, in Ireland, biblical books such as the famous Book of Kells used ornately decorated lettering in distinctly Celtic designs. This uniqueness reflected a kind of cultural and artistic continuity

Mark Gospel 11.23

Vedanta Kesari March 1992 p 104 – the Vibrant Math at N. Mukherjee's Garden House

The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda by Swami Vivekananda

Volume 4, Writings: Prose

Tacitus Annals 14.31

Notes of Some Wanderings, op.cit., July 20, 1898

Gospel of Holy Mother, page 10



The Ultimate Reality can be realized through various paths taught in world religions. All religions are true in so far as they lead to the same ultimate Goal.

-Sri Ramakrishna

Through spiritual disciplines the ties of past karma are cut asunder. But the realization of God cannot be achieved without ecstatic love for him.

-Holy Mother

If you have faith in all the three hundred and thirty millions of your mythological gods, ... and still have no faith in yourselves, there is no salvation for you. Have faith in yourselves, and stand up on that faith and be strong; that is what we need.

-Swami Vivekananda





Ramakrishna-Vivekananda's Nivedita **Swami Sthiratmananda**

Sri Ramakrishna Ashrama, Chandpur &
Editor, 'The Prabodhan', Dhaka.



Listening Swami Vivekananda

Miss Margaret E. Noble of Wimbledon, a twenty-eight year's brilliant young journalist and educationist, attended a lecture of Swami Vivekananda at Lady Isabel's house. He was then in England (1895) after the lecture in the Parliament of Religions in Chicago (1893) and instructing disciples there. This Margaret Noble became Sister Nivedita after coming in intimate spiritual contact as disciple with her Master Swami Vivekananda. She was one in the group who were unwilling to believe in their core of their heart.

Sri Ramakrishna (1836-1886) made his life a spiritual laboratory. There he experimented with religions of the world and had the first hand knowledge of the Eternal Truth in all religions. Narendranath Dutta came in contact with Sri Ramakrishna in Kolkata and became his disciple to realize the Truth for himself. For propagating the ideal of Sri Ramakrishna for the well-being of the whole world become a monk with the name Swami Vivekananda. He joined the World Parliament of Religions in Chicago in 1893 where he became a prominent figure. After lecturing in Vedanta in many places in America, he came to England following some invitation from there.

Coming close to Vivekananda

From the Swami Vivekananda's inspiring London lecture of November 1895, Margaret Noble discovered world-stirring fact that both the mind and the body were moved and dominated by a third, called the Self. He (Vivekananda) had also insisted on the word "realization" as the crux of religious experience, rather than "faith".

The first class she attended was on bhakti yoga ("The Religion of Love"). She attended the second class on 'the divinity of man' ("Jnana and Karma"). She pointed out that the Swami in both the classes spoke of a religion without dogmas, without liturgies, without penances. He spoke of renunciation and of realization and of faith in oneself. Even there in the very beginning Margaret's ear seems to have been tuned to these teachings. Later on, these ideas made her life-long disciple of Swami Vivekananda.

Margaret's past

Glorious life was of this illustrious disciple of Swami Vivekananda. Sister Nivedita's previous name was Margaret Elizabeth Noble. Nivedita means 'one who is dedicated'. She was born on October 28, 1867, at Dungannon in far-off Ireland. She was the first daughter of Samuel Richmond and Mary Isabel Hamilton. She inherited from the father religious zeal and passionate love of service to people. At the age of 34 years father died. In Halifax she studied in college staying in the college hostel. At the age of 17 Margaret completed her study and in 1884 she went to England and became a teacher in a school at Keswick. In 1890 she went to Wimbledon to open a school for her own and named Ruskin School. She inspired her students with enthusiasm. Within a short time she came to be known among the leaders of the intellectual society of London as forward-looking educationist.

She loved Jesus with her whole heart. She came to understand that religion did not mean belief in the doctrines. It meant search for Divine Light---Eternal Truth. This made her doubt the truth of the Christian doctrines. She found no peace anywhere. She happened to read the life of Buddha then. But it was not enough to dispel all her doubts. Then something happened that changed her whole life. A 'Hindu Yogi' arrived at that time in London. His name was Swami Vivekananda.

Some Amazing Realities noted

Miss Margaret Noble noted some facts in life expressed in the lectures of Swami Vivekananda in England thus:



- a. In the highest love, union is only of the spirit. All love of another kind is quickly evanescent. Only the spiritual lasts, and this grows.
- b. Deepen your own power of thought and love.
- c. Bring your own lotus to blossom: the bees will come of themselves.
- d. Believe first in your self, then in God.
- e. A handful of strong men (human beings) will move the world.
- f. We need a heart to feel; a brain to conceive; and a strong arm to do the work.
- g. Yesterday competition was the law, today, co-operation is the law. Tomorrow, there is no law.
- h. Let sages praise thee, or let the world blame. Let fortune itself come, or let poverty and rags stare thee one day, for food; and the next, share a banquet of fifty courses.
- i. Looking neither to the right hand nor to the left, follow thou on!

The feeling of renunciation became prominent in Vivekananda's thoughts. Margaret had the resolving thoughts: But does renunciation demand that we shall become ascetic? Who then is to help the others? Renunciation is not asceticism. Are all beggars Christ? Poverty is not a synonym for holiness, often the reverse. Renunciation is of the mind...

Even forgiveness, if weak and passive, is not true; fight is better. Forgive when you could bring legions of angels to the victory...

The way to be followed was: As a lotus-leaf, living in the water yet untouched by it, so should the soul be, in the world.

Swami Vivekananda about England's work

Swamiji became very much pleased with the quality of the seekers of Truth who attended his lectures in London. He wrote to Alasinga Perumal, one of the disciples in Chennai (then Madras) on Nov. 18, 1895, 'In England my work is really splendid; I am astonished myself. The English people do not talk much in the newspapers, but they work silently. I am sure of more work in England than in America. Bands and bands come, and I have no room for so many. ...I shall have to go away next week, and they are so sorry.' We can understand the eagerness of the listeners of Swami Vivekananda.

The Call of inspiration

One day in question-answer class Vivekananda told: 'What the world wants today is twenty men and women who can dare to stand in the street yonder, and say that they possess nothing but God. Who will go?' He wrote in a letter also to Margaret: 'The earth's bravest and best will have to sacrifice themselves for the good of many, for the welfare of all. Buddhas by the hundred are necessary with eternal love and piety.'

Another day Swami Vivekananda was talking about the women of his country. They never went to school. He wanted them to be educated. He turned to Margaret and said: 'I have plans for the women of my own country in which you, I think, could be of great help to me.'

Following this divine call of sacrifice Margaret decided to go to India and serve the people there. This was a very important decision. London lost a worker, but it gave to India one of the greatest friends the country has ever had.

Towards India

Swami Vivekananda left England in December 1896. But he did not take Margaret with him. He had faith that she had a great future in the work of India. He had to think of her health and comfort, her likes and dislikes too. India is a tropical country, it is hot most of the time in the year. Would she be able to stand the climate? There is no European comforts, the English in India would hate her for befriending Indians and Indians would doubt her good intentions. Would she be tolerating all these? Swami Vivekananda made clear the points to Margaret in a letter. And then he made her a promise: 'I will stand by you unto death



whether you work for India or not, whether you give up Vedanta or remain in it.'

Margaret arrived in Kolkata on January 28, 1898. She stayed in a hotel in Chowringhee, Kolkata, for the first few days where the English people lived. Then came to India after a few days Mrs. Sara Bull and Miss Josephine MacLeod. They all met him in America and were very much devoted to the Swami and his work. A bond of love and friendship grew between Margaret and the ladies. They all went to stay in a cottage at Belur. That cottage belonged to the monks of the Ramakrishna Order which had been founded by the Swami. He would go to the cottage every morning and talked about his ideal and his work.

Later Swami Vivekananda wrote in one of his letters on June 7, 1896 to Margaret (Nivedita) : "My ideal indeed can be put into a few words and that is: to preach unto mankind their divinity and how to make it manifest in every movement of life." "Let us call and call," he wrote in this same letter, "till the sleeping gods awake, till the God within answers the call."

Three Important Events

In Kolkata Swami Vivekananda made an arrangement for a meeting to introduce Margaret to the people of Kolkata. The meeting was held on March 11, 1898. The Swami presided over the meeting. She spoke at the meeting on 'The influence of the Spiritual Thought of India on England.' The listeners all were delighted and inspired with her eloquence.

In Nivedita's diary she wrote for an event as 'a day of days', and that was the day of 17 March 1898 when she met Holy Mother Sri Saradmoni Devi who was Sri Ramakrish's spiritual consort. Margaret wrote to a friend in London afterwards: 'She is the very soul of sweetness, so gentle and loving.' Sri Sarada Devi took Margaret as her own family member brushing away all the ill-feelings of the society toward foreigners.

The third event took place on March 25, 1898. It was a Friday. On that day her Master Swami Vivekananda gave her the beautiful name 'Nivedita' meaning one who is dedicated or offered to God. Her own mother had promised God that if her child was safely born she/he would be dedicated to the service of the Lord. Her mother's vow was fulfilled. Margaret---now Nivedita---felt doubly blessed.

On the formation of true Nivedita

In the summer of that year the Swami, Nivedita and others left for a journey in the Himalays. In this journey Nivedita practised austerities like all pilgrims. She had first hand experience about the people and ideal of Indian spirituality and culture. In conversation with Swamiji, Nivedita had arguments, protests, understanding and acceptance and then submission required for discipleship. She wrote later the wonderful book 'The Master as I saw Him'. Nivedita went to live with the Holy Mother in her house at Bagbazar on her return to Kolkata. After about a week she moved to her own house at 16, Bosepara Lane. She decided to start a school for girls. It opened on 13 November 1898 and the Holy Mother performed the opening ceremony. She prayed that the blessings of the Divine Mother might be upon the School, and that the girls it trained should be ideal girls.

The dread disease plague raged in Kolkata next year. Swami Vivekananda set his monks and his followers to work. They formed a plague service and Nivedita was in charge. Nivedita herself took a broom and started to clean filth and rubbish in the street. She also gave public lecture on 'The Plague and the Duty of Students'. A little boy in a poor man's hut was suffering from plague. Nivedita nursed him with great devotion. But all efforts were in vain, the boy died in her arms. Nivedita received love and respect of the people for her selfless noble work.

After the starting of school she realized that she would need more money to continue it. Swami Vivekananda was then going to Europe and America. Nivedita went with her Guru. She learnt many more things from him. They reached London on July 31. In September Nivedita went to America following her Guru. She gave a series of lectures in New York, Chicago, Detroit, Kansas City, Boston and other cities to give a real picture of Hindu women to the women of America. The women usually went away from these meetings with a clearer idea of life of India than they ever had.

With the blessings of Swami Vivekananda, Nivedita went to London to continue her work of raising money. She gave as many as thirty-five lectures in London, Manchester, and Edinburgh in Scotland. In America she

had given up her European dress and took the graceful simple gown of white flannel with a girdle fastened at the waist. A rosary of beads always adorned her neck.

Nivedita was back to India in February 1902. On reaching Kolkata she went to Bagbazar and rented a house at 17, Bosepara Lane. That was her home, her school and a meeting place of many great people of that time. It was visited by the Holy Mother, Swami Vivekananda, many other monks of the Ramakrishna Order. Poets, painters, politicians, scholars, scientists, and statesmen flocked to her house.

Nivedita again opened her school. The people were not willing at first to send their daughters to it. Then slowly, one by one, the parents became convinced of Nivedita's goodness and sincerity, and they sent their girls to her. The children came to love her because she was so kind to them. Nivedita named the school 'Ramakrishna School for Girls'. But later it was named 'Ramakrishna Sarada Mission Sister Nivedita Girls' School.' With the help of Sister Christine from America she opened a section for women also.

It was on July 2, 1902. Nivedita visited Swami Vivekananda at Belur Math. After her meal the Swami poured water on her hands. Nivedita protested, as he was her Master; she, his disciple. But the Swami replied solemnly, 'Jesus washed the feet of his disciple!' But that was the last time. Nivedita got news like thunderbolt that the Swami passed away last night (4th of July 1902). She went to Belur Math and joined the cremation to the spot which he himself had chosen. The death of the Swami strengthened Nivedita's resolve to throw herself heart and soul into her work for India. Nivedita's love for India was her heritage she had received from her Master. She felt about Swami Vivekananda: 'He is not dead, he is with us always.'

Immortality through Patriotism

Nivedita spent all her energy on her school work until now. The school has become the pioneer educational institution for female students. She decided then to lend support henceforward to the national movement for political independence which was growing rapidly. For this purpose she resigned from the Ramakrishna Mission which was purely a spiritual organization. She visited many cities in India and gave inspiring lectures. She was so noble hearted and was doing such good work that the Government did not take steps against her. She was one of those patriots for whom the youth of India had great respect. She told them, 'The good of your country should be your true aim. ...Think that the whole country is your country and your country needs work. Struggle for knowledge, for strength, for happiness and prosperity. Let all these be your aim in life.'

Many educationists, artists, scientists were inspired by Nivedita. Nivedita Girls' school was the nucleus of the overall revival of the country, especially revival of the womenfolk. The inspiration will lead the women of the world at large to the highest realization of the Eternal Truth which her Guru Vivekananda wanted for the good of the world through the revival of the womenfolk in India.

Amongst the closest friends of Sister Nivedita were Dr. Jagadish Bose and his wife Abala Bose. Nivedita inspired Dr. Bose in his scientific research. She helped him in publishing his research papers. She spent all her holidays with the Boses. In 1911, it was in their home in Darjeeling that she breathed her last.

Sister Nivedita often chanted prayers from Upanishad: From the unreal lead us to the Real, from darkness lead us to Light, from death lead us to Immortality. She served the people of India with burning and selfless love. Her service selfless made her Immortal. She left vivid inspiration behind.



HOMAGE

to



Revered Swami Bhuteshanandaji Maharaj

The 12th President of Ramakrishna Order

His blessings and inspiration will always be the guide for the Vivekananda Human Centre. He was very dear to all who came in contact with him.

We offer our heartfelt gratitude and homage to the sweet memory of Revered Swami Bhuteshanandaji Maharaj



Revered Swami Ranganathanandaji Maharaj

The 13th President of Ramakrishna Order

His blessings and inspiration will always be the guide for the Vivekananda Human Centre. He was very dear to all who came in contact with him.

We offer our heartfelt gratitude and homage to the sweet memory of Revered Swami Ranganathanandaji Maharaj



Revered Swami Gahananandaji Maharaj

The 14th President of Ramakrishna Order

His blessings and inspiration will always be the guide for the Vivekananda Human Centre. He was very dear to all who came in contact with him. He came to visit the UK and delivered his message at the 150th Birthday Celebration of Holy Mother in London.

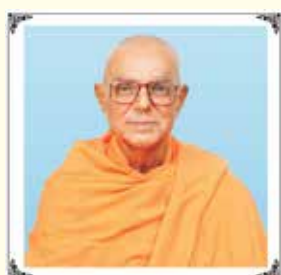
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Revered Swami Aksharanandaji Maharaj

The Vivekananda Human Centre was established in the UK in 1994, inspired by Revered Swami Aksharanandaji Maharaj. His blessings and inspiration will always be the guide for the Vivekananda Human Centre. We miss him so much, especially when we organise any festival, more so when we organise a landmark festival like the Vivekananda festival. He was very dear to all of us who knew him. He came to visit the UK twice and each time delivered his message at the Vivekananda Festival in London.

We offer our heartfelt gratitude and homage to the sweet memory of Revered Swami Aksharanandaji Maharaj.



Revered Swami Prameyanandaji Maharaj

His blessings and inspiration will always be the guide for the Vivekananda Human Centre. He was very dear to all who came in contact with him. He wrote the letter which introduced Ram Chandra Saha for the first time to Swami Dayatmananda. He came to visit the UK couple of time and delivered his message at the Vivekananda festival in London. We miss him so much, especially when we Visit Belur Math.

We offer our heartfelt gratitude and homage to the sweet memory of Revered Swami Prameyanandaji Maharaj.



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Swami Vivekananda dedicated his life to provide for the under privileged members of human kind in the universe. Whether, ailing or downtrodden humanity, Swamiji gave away his own life to show the right path of a universe of love. The time for the humanity to join forces and embrace this universal message is now. Your donations will help the continued activities at home and abroad to give funds to our great causes.

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150th Birthday Celebration of Sister Nivedita



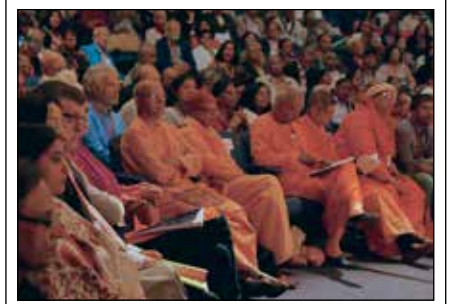
"Suppose he (Vivekananda) had not come to London that time! Life would have been like a headless dream, for I always knew that I was waiting for something. I always said that a call would come."

--Sister Nivedita



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150th Birthday Celebration of Sister Nivedita**

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