

"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



**Vivekananda Human Centre**

(An Organisation of Vivekananda Centre for Human Excellence)

[www.vivekanandacentre.com](http://www.vivekanandacentre.com)



Greetings & Best Wishes for  
**Vivekananda Festival 2018**



*"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 2018**  
**Sunday, 29 July 2018 from 11.00 am to 8.00 pm**  
**Logan Hall, UCL, University of London**

## **Editorial Board**

**Chief Adviser & Patron:** Revered Swami Sarvasthananda

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## Editorial

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... “Each soul is potentially divine.”

This year is a very special year for us, as it is 125 years since Swamiji’s address to the World Parliament of Religions in Chicago. We will celebrate the anniversary on 15 November 2018 at the House of Commons, with several other events planned through to September 2019.

London has long been a home to many different faith communities, which live side-by-side in harmony and peace. However, today, we are more concerned than ever about our free movement. We live with greater fear. We can see worldwide some kind of change, and we feel that tolerance and respect for others is lacking. Which is not good news for humanity, and our hopes for world peace.

Sri Ramakrishna made his life a spiritual laboratory as he experimented with religions to try to discover an underlying harmony: “As many faiths, so many paths.” Swamiji described at the World Parliament of Religions: “Each must assimilate the spirit of the others and yet preserve his individuality and grow according to his own law of growth.” It is not enough to learn it. We should believe in it and must work on fostering it.

Vivekananda Human Centre has been working in London for over 24 years to promote the message of Swami Vivekananda to make a better place for all. 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 have distributed last year around five thousand of Swamiji’s books “Personality Development” across the UK. We will distribute thousands more of Swamiji’s Chicago Address this year too. If we can read every day only one page of Swamiji’s message, then we will be able to realise our real nature and we will be able to solve many issues in our daily lives. We can solve many big and small problems, between spouses, siblings, neighbours, colleagues, business partners and so on.

We celebrated Swamiji’s Birthday on 12 January 2018 at India House, High Commission of India, London - which is the first time the High Commissioner has approved for any organisation to do so. We are very grateful to High Commissioner H.E. Shri Y.K.Sinha & Shri A. S. Rajan, Minister (Coordination) in particular for their assurance that we will be able to celebrate Swamiji’s Birthday at India House every year.

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 2018 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.

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

**Joy Swamiji!**

Thank you

Ram Chandra Saha





# VIVEKANANDA HUMAN CENTRE

## Welcome to the Vivekananda Festival 2018

29 July 2018 from 11.00 am to 8.00 pm  
at Logan Hall, IOE, UCL, University of London

### PROGRAMME

**Morning Session: 11.00am to 2.15pm**

**Theme: Human Excellence**

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

**Opening Song: Malabika Ghosh & Tanu Paul**

**Tabla: Piyas Barua**

**Group Songs:** Aarnav Hastantram, Rhea Shetty, Manya Shanbhag, Akshara Krishna,  
Kashvi Yogesha, Karunya Yogesha

**Directed By - Esha Ramesh,** Vedika Academy for Dance and Music, London

**Dance:** Rhea Shetty, Jia Kothari, Lakksiya Vadivel

**Directed By - Lena Rai-Shetty,** Vedika Academy for Dance and Music, London

**Welcome Address: Ram Chandra Saha**

### Youth Convention

Subject: Swamiji's Message for the modern Age

**President:**

**Revered Swami Atmapriyananda**

Vice-Chancellor

Ramakrishna Mission Vivekananda University, Belur Math, India

**Speakers:**

**Pranav Bhanot**

Editor of A living Bridge "The UK-India Diaspora & the Rise of the Millennials"

**Shuvo Loha**

Young Entrepreneur, City of London

**Manish Tiwari**

Young Entrepreneur, City of London

**Dr Anindya Sundar Mandal**

Consultant Anaesthetist, North Middlesex University Hospital, London

**Mrittunjoy Guha Majumdar**

PhD Student, University of Cambridge

**Shoma Dhar**

Student, English Language and Literature Department, University of Oxford

**Sudipta Das**

Medical Student, Queen Mary University of London

**Sanjoy Das**

City Professional, London

**Venkat Sikanth Anumula**

City Professional, London

**Vote of Thanks: Ashis Roy**





**Group Songs:**

Archana Chowdhuri, Gita Faujdar, Mondira Chakravarti, Saroj Chakravarti, Rina Sarkar  
Prasad Chatterjee, Sukumar Banerjee, Krishna Banerjee

**Mondira:** Nani Bhusan Faujdar, Violin: Kanu Roy

**Directed by Arati Bhattacharya,** Diganta Music Class

**Songs:** Lipika Roy Lopa, Nandita Mukherjee, Gouri Bhattacharya, Sanjoy Ghosh,  
Dr Shyamal Kanti Chowdhury

**Addresses by Guest Speakers:**

**Mr Gary Thompson**

Journalist & Writer, London

**Mr Vinoo Bhatt**

Trustee, Ramakrishna Vedanta Centre

**Dr. M.N. Nandakumara**

Executive Director, Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, London

**Group Songs:**

Neelam, Janak, Karnika, Bharti, Rashmi, Minaxi, Faguni, Pramila, Varsha, Rohini, Hasumati, Daksha, Bindu

**Directed by Neelam & Janak**

**Coordinator: Pravin Amin,** National Association of Patidar Samaj

**Address by Guest of Honour:**

**Revered Swami Sarvasthananda**

President, Ramakrishna Vedanta Centre, UK

**Group Songs:**

Basab datta, Poly, Alok, Avishek, Barnali, Shahnaz, Selina, Shahina, Sarita, Suhita, Shipra, Moushumi,  
Monisha, Trayi, Ruponti, Agomoni, Aanya, Akhi, Anindita, Poja, Tina, Tanmoyee

**Directed By Sajaji Roy,** Head of Bengali Music, Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, London

**Address by Guest of Honour:**

**Revered Bodhasarananda**

Assistant General Secretary, Ramakrishna Math & Ramakrishna Mission,  
Headquarters, Belur Math, India

**Group Songs:**

Sreyoshi Das, Ashmita Saha, Anvita Gupta, Asmita Saha Oishi, Shubhangi Dam, Sayan Roy,  
Reshmi Samanta, Sneha Roy, Priyanka Purkaysta, Sreya Roy, Swyam Dam,  
Dibbojit Bonik, Krishnil Debach, Sienna Saha, Ranjita Sen, Priyanka ghosh, Bobby Roy,  
Sonali Saha, Rummy Haque, Mandira Saha

**Directed by Gouri Choudhury,** Head of Suraloy, Music School, London

**Address by President:**

**Revered Swami Veetamohananda**

President, Centre Vedantique Ramakrishna, France

**Vote of Thanks: Dr Amita Raja**

**Lunch Break: Prasad Distribution at Jeffery Hall 2.15 pm to 2.55 pm**

## Afternoon Session: 3.00pm to 5.00pm

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

**Dances:** Parul Saha, Shreya Dey & Shreeja Dey

**Violin:** Rohan Dasgupta

**Recitation:** Suhita Saha, Asmita Saha, Anushka Das, Asmita Saha Oishi

**Song:** Sarita Saha

### Discussion:

**Subject:** Ramakrishna-Vivekananda's message for Unity in Diversity, Universal Tolerance, Harmony and peace

### President:

**Revered Swami Veetamohananda**

President, Centre Vedantique Ramakrishna, France

### Guests of Honour:

**Shri A. S. Rajan**

Minister (Coordination), High Commission of India, UK

**Revered Bodhasaranandaji Maharaj**

Assistant General Secretary, Ramakrishna Math & Ramakrishna Mission,  
Headquarters, Belur Math, India

**Revered Swami Atmapriyananda**

Vice-Chancellor

Ramakrishna Mission Vivekananda University, Belur Math, India

**Revered Swami Sarvasthananda**

President, Ramakrishna Vedanta Centre, UK

**Mr Virendra Sharma, MP**

House of Commons, London

**Councillor Richard Cotton**

The Past Mayor of Camden

**Councillor Kareema Marikar**

The Mayor of Harrow

**Rev Michael Redman**

The Church of England Interfaith Adviser and Curate at St Paul's Church, Marylebone, London

**Mr Leon Silver**

President, East London Centre Synagogue

**Votes of Thanks: Dr Subrata Gupta**

## Cultural Programme: 5.15pm to 7.45pm

Perform by renowned Artists

**Bappi Lahiri**

**&**

**Surmani Dattatreya Velankar**

**Musicians: Sandyman & Friendz**

**Vote of Thanks: Dilip Mukhopadhyay**

The Programme to be conducted by

**Uday Shankar Das & Ranjita Sen**

**"Help and not Fight", "Assimilation and not Destruction",**

**"Harmony and Peace and not Dissension".**

– Swami Vivekananda





BUCKINGHAM PALACE



8th June, 2018.

*Dear Mr. Saha,*

I have been asked to thank you for your message of loyal greetings to The Queen 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 29th July.

Her Majesty values your continued support and, in return, sends her best wishes to all those assembled at the Institute of Education, University College London, for a most enjoyable gathering.

*Yours sincerely,*

*David Ryan*

David Ryan  
Director, Private Secretary's Office

Ram Chandra Saha.



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

Via Email: [info@vivekanandacentre.com](mailto:info@vivekanandacentre.com)

24 May 2018

Contact: Marilyn Chitolie  
Tel: 020 7364 6971  
Fax: 020 7364 4999

[mayor@towerhamlets.gov.uk](mailto:mayor@towerhamlets.gov.uk)  
[www.towerhamlets.gov.uk](http://www.towerhamlets.gov.uk)

**Message of support From Mayor of Tower Hamlets John Biggs**

I am delighted that the Vivekananda Festival 2018 has been organised by the Vivekananda Human Centre, London and you will be publishing a special magazine called 'VIVEK'.

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

Swami Vivekananda was a prominent Hindu scholar 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, 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 very successful event and continue your important work.

Yours Sincerely,



John Biggs  
Executive Mayor of Tower Hamlets

*High Commissioner*



*High Commission of India  
India House, Aldwych  
London WC2B 4NA  
Tel: 020 7836 2556  
Fax: 020 7240 4688  
Email: hc.office@hcilondon.in*

May 16, 2018



**MESSAGE**

It gives me great pleasure to learn that the Vivekananda Human Centre is celebrating the Vivekananda Festival in London.

We celebrated the 155<sup>th</sup> birth anniversary of Swami Vivekananda in January this year. His message of upholding the eternal values of non-violence and universal tolerance remain very relevant today.

I would like to convey my best wishes to the organisers of the festival and to the Vivekananda Human Centre for the success of the event.

(Y.K. Sinha)





**VIRENDRA SHARMA**  
Member of Parliament for Ealing Southall



**HOUSE OF COMMONS**  
LONDON SW1A 0AA



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

20<sup>th</sup> March 2018

Dear Ram Chandra Saha

**RE: Vivekananda Festival 2018 "Human Excellence, Unity in Diversity, Universal Tolerance, Harmony and Peace"**

I want to offer my support and best wishes for your important festival and key message for the modern world of tolerance and to work for the betterment of society.

Today the message of helping the most vulnerable and worst off in society stands as an example for all. You are a shining light in a world too short of compassion.

We can learn from Swami Vivekananda and 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.

Best wishes

**Virendra Sharma MP**  
Chair, Indo-British All Party Parliamentary Group

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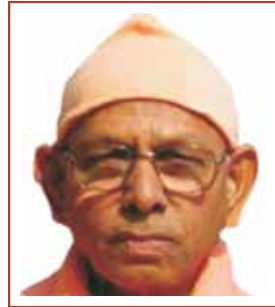


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## RAMAKRISHNA MATH

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INDIA



### MESSAGE


I am happy to learn that Vivekananda Human Centre, London, will be celebrating Vivekananda Festival 2018 and will be publishing a souvenir entitled "VIVEK" on the occasion. I am also glad to learn about the theme of the event, 'Human Excellence, Unity in Diversity, Universal Tolerance, Harmony and Peace.'

Swami Vivekananda delivered unto humanity the Universal Message of peace, harmony, tolerance, and most importantly about the inherent divinity of mankind. On the 25<sup>th</sup> of December 1896 Mrs Sara C.Bull, sent a Christmas greeting letter to the monastic disciples of Sri Ramakrishna who were then residing in the Alambazar Monastery. She wrote, "The divine message of your master, the acceptance of which brings peace to the heart & good will to men, enlightens, purifies & strengthens each believer's concept of God & the Soul, whatever be his birth or environment. The Vedanta in the light & warmth of his sacred example vitalizes & establishes the pure teachings of Jesus; the way chosen by our people as we gladly testify. You, the chosen of his heart, with whom he lived & taught, have done us here a great & brotherly service. The truths of revealed religion have been made acceptable to modern thought & agnosticism, a gift than which none could be greater. Faithfully & ably your Vivekananda & Saradananda have served us. Faithfully & affectionately may we share in your special legacy, the up building of the influence of your master's life & service."

May by the grace of Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna, Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi and Swami Vivekananda the celebrations and the publication be a grand success!

I convey my good wishes to all.

*Belur Math*  
*3<sup>rd</sup> February, 2018*

  
(Swami Smaranananda)  
President





# RAMAKRISHNA MATH, COSSIPORE

90, Cossipore Road, Kolkata – 700 002

(Sri Sri Ramakrishna Paramhansa Dev Sarani)

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Ref. No.....

Date: 03.02.2018



## BENEDICTION

Vivekananda Human Centre, London deserves heartfelt thanks for organizing Vivekananda Festival on 29<sup>th</sup> July, 2018 to be celebrated on the theme “Human Excellence, Unity in Diversity, Universal Tolerance, Harmony and Peace”, through seminar, cultural programmes and publishing a Souvenir titled “VIVEK” to propagate the message of Swami Vivekananda, embodiment of Human Excellence, which are the way to get rescue from the horror, hatred and bloodshed of the present world.

Swami says:

“Religions of the world have become lifeless mockeries. What the world wants is character. The world is in the need of those whose life is one burning love, selfless. That love will make every word tell like a thunderbolt”.

I wish and pray to Holy Trio to shower their blessings on Vivekananda Human Centre, London to carry on their programme for a better world.

*Swami Vagishananda*

(Swami Vagishananda)

To  
Sri Ram Chandra Saha, Director  
Vivekananda Human Centre  
Vivekananda House, 2A, Elmhurst Drive,  
South Woodford, London E30 1BT





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## RAMAKRISHNA MATH

( The Headquarters )  
P.O. BELUR MATH, DIST. HOWRAH  
WEST BENGAL : 711202  
INDIA



### MESSAGE

Date : 3 January 2018

Dear Sri Ram Chandra Saha,

I am extremely delighted to learn from your e-mail dated 30<sup>th</sup> January 2018, that a souvenir by the name *Vivek* will be published on the occasion of “Vivekananda Festival 2018” to be held on 29<sup>th</sup> July 2018 in London. I observe that you have kept the same theme for the festival as in the past years—“Human Excellence, Unity in Diversity, Universal Tolerance, Harmony and Peace”. Perennial truths have undiminished relevance for application to the welfare of society as a whole. And this applies more than ever to the theme you have been choosing repeatedly.

It is universally acclaimed that Swami Vivekananda’s message is more important now than ever for all sections of humanity, be it parliamentarians, inter-faith leaders, social workers, or scholars in search of approach routes of handling present crisis in several spheres of human existence and well-being. The perception of monastic members, mayors, diplomats, political and inter-faith leaders, scholars and the general public will get the much-needed re-orientation through this festival, is my earnest belief.

I wish the Vivekananda Festival and the publication of the souvenir all success.

May Sri Ramakrishna, Sri Ma Sarada Devi and Swami Vivekananda always bless the endeavours of people of like mind as yours, who are interested in such concepts as, Human Excellence, Unity in Diversity, Universal Tolerance, Harmony and Peace, all of which will certainly make this strife-torn planet a habitable place to stay and work together for human progress in all arenas.

Yours affectionately,  
*Swami Prabhananda*  
(Swami Prabhananda)  
Vice President

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





# Sri Ramakrishna Math

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## Benediction

I am very glad to learn that Vivekananda Human Centre, London will be celebrating 'Vivekananda Festival' on 29<sup>th</sup> July 2018 and that a Souvenir "Vivek" will be brought out during the occasion.

I am happy to be informed that the Birthday of Swamiji on 12<sup>th</sup> January was celebrated at India House, High Commission of India, London this year. This is the first time in the world that any High Commission of India celebrated the Birthday of Swamiji at India House. The Centre also celebrated the Birthday of Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna as "Festival of Unity in Diversity" on 25 February 2018 in London.

Sri Ramakrishna's Message of Universal Religion and Swamiji's Message of Universal Brotherhood are more relevant now than ever. I am sure that with the participation of Swami Vitamohananda, Swami Bodhasarananda, Swami Atmapriyananda and Swami Sarvasthananda in the Festival, it would be a rare and good group for spreading the Messages of Thakur, Holy Mother and Swamiji.

On this joyous occasion, I earnestly invoke the blessings of Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna, Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi and Swami Vivekananda on all the Members & Well-wishers of the Centre and on all those participating in the Festival.

16 May 2018.

To

Sri Ram Chandra Saha  
Director  
Vivekananda Human Centre  
London.

*Swami Gautamananda*  
(Swami Gautamananda)  
Adhyaksha



Dear Sri Ram Chandra Saha,

Your mail of May 9, 2018 makes us really happy with your proposed celebration

Of VIVEK VIVEKANANDA FESTIVAL 2018 where our dear & competent brothers like Swami Bodhasarananda, Atmapriyananda, Sarvasthananda & Veetamohananda are expected to participate. I earnestly pray for its success as your enthusiastic endeavour deserve.

Sincerely Yours in Swamiji,  
Swami Shivamayananda  
Vice President, Ramakrishna Math & Mission

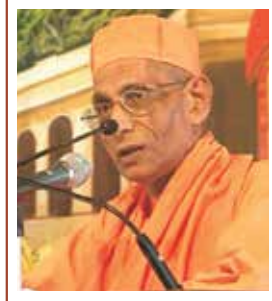


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INDIA

17.05.2018



### **MESSAGE**

Dear Sri Saha,

I am glad to learn that you are going to bring out the Souvenir "VIVEK" on the occasion of the ensuing Vivekananda Festival on 29 July 2018. On this occasion I recall Swami Vivekananda's words to Margaret Elizabeth Nobel, later Sister Nivedita, '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 word tell like thunderbolt...Bold words and bolder deeds are what we want.'

I pray to the Holy Trio that this Festival be a success.

(Swami Suhitananda)

Vice President

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4 March, 2018

### MESSAGE

Dear Ram,

Swami Vivekananda's seminal teaching, in his own words, is "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." This is the ideal Swami Vivekananda has placed before the mankind irrespective of gender, colour, creed or religion. If men and women are taught this noble idea, peace, harmony and unity among all societies and nations will be achieved as a matter of course. Further, Swami Vivekananda called for practice of a dynamic religion. He said that as our true nature is divine, it must be expressed in whatever we say or do. When divinity finds such an expression, it cannot but be excellent. This is the interpretation of human excellence we come across in the philosophy of Swami Vivekananda which has for its basis the universal truths of Vedanta.

I am glad to know that Vivekananda Human Centre is organizing **Vivekananda Festival** on 29 July 2018 to deliberate on such significant topics as "Human Excellence, Unity in Diversity, Universal Tolerance, Harmony and Peace". I wish and pray for the success of the festival.

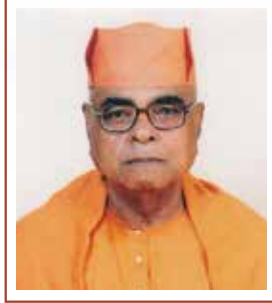
With best wishes,

Sri Ram Chandra Saha  
Director, Vivekananda Human Centre  
London

Yours in Sri Ramakrishna,

*Suvivekananda*  
(Swami Suvirananda)  
General Secretary





4 June 2018

### A Message

This is a great pleasure for me to learn that the Vivekananda Human Centre in London is observing 'Vivekananda Festival 2018'. I convey my best wishes and love to Director Ram Chandrea Saha, other organizers and participants on the auspicious occasion.

The life and message of Swami Vivekananda inspires every individual irrespective of race or nationality. Manifesting the underlying divinity an individual becomes excellent in character. Religious ideals of the world can help one to develop one's divinity within. Selfless service to all is another way to manifest the divinity within. Swami Vivekananda says, "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." This living for others is a great ideal shown by Vivekananda for the present world.

Swami Vivekananda is ever alive in inspiring all to the ideal of harmony and peace. His prediction for peace and harmony we may follow. He said, upon the banner of all religions soon shall be written: "Help, and not Fight; Assimilation and not Destruction; Harmony and Peace and not Dissention." Harmony is the vital point to be maintained in all aspects for our civilization.

May the Vivekananda Festival 2018 be a successful one. My love and best wishes to all present on the occasion.

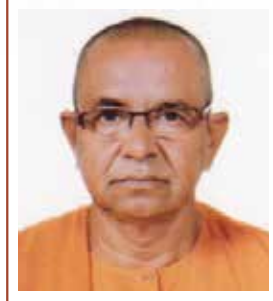
Joy Swamiji

(Swami Ameyananda)  
Ramakrishna Math, Dhaka  
Bangladesh.





4 June 2018




### A Message

I am happy to know that the Vivekananda Human Centre, London is arranging the 'Vivekananda Festival 2018'. I pray to Swamiji for the grand success of the Festival.

Any organization in the name of Swami Vivekananda has become a great help in promoting peace and harmony in the society. Vivekananda's life-giving message has a great impact on human mind. Unselfish love is the great force for maintaining harmony and peace in the world. This love comes from practical religion. All religions teach love, austerity, peace in the world. These qualities are not exclusive possession of any religion. Therefore by practicing good qualities by the followers of all faiths which are common to all, may lead the chaotic society to a peaceful co-existence. Swami Vivekananda says, "What the world want is character. The world is in need of those whose life is one burning love, selfless."

May the Vivekananda Festival inspire all participants towards universal love of Vivekananda.

  
(Swami Dhruveshananda)  
Secretary  
Ramakrishna Mission, Dhaka  
Bangladesh.



Various Facets of Vivekananda  
**Swami Chetanananda**  
President, Vedanta Society of St. Louis, USA



Sri Ramakrishna brought Narendra (Swami Vivekananda) to preach his message and he knew the true nature of Narendra. He made various remarks about Narendra on different occasions: He would say, "Narendra was one of the seven great sages who were in a perpetual state of meditation in the divine kingdom." "He is that ancient sage, Narayana, in human form." "Narendra is a great soul perfect in meditation."

One day Keshab Chandra Sen, Vijay Krishna Goswami, and other celebrated Brahmo leaders were seated with the Master. Young Narendra was also present. In an exalted mood, the Master looked on Keshab and Vijay with a kind gaze. When Keshab and Vijay had left after the meeting, the Master said: "Keshab possesses one power, which has made him world-famous, but Narendra is endowed with eighteen such powers. I have seen the divine light in Keshab and Vijay burning like a candle flame, but in Narendra it shines with the radiance of the sun, dispelling the last vestiges of ignorance and delusion."

Considering himself to be unworthy of such praise, Narendra vehemently protested, saying to the Master: "Sir, why do you say such things? People will think you're mad if you talk like that! Keshab is famous all over the world. Vijay is a saint. I am an insignificant schoolboy. How can you speak of us in the same breath? Please, I beg of you, never say such things again!" Pleased, the Master responded: "But what can I do about it, my child? You don't suppose I'd say such things of my own accord? It was Mother who showed me the truth about you, and so I had to tell it. Mother has never lied to me."

One day Sri Ramakrishna took Narendra to the Panchavati and told him: "Look, I possess the eight main occult powers. But I decided long ago that I would never use them, and I find no need for them. But you will have to preach religion and do many other things. I have decided to give those powers to you. Please accept them." Swamiji asked in reply, "Sir, will they help me to realize God?" When he understood from the Master's reply that they might help to some extent in preaching religion, but would not help him to see God, he declined those powers. Swamiji later said that the Master was extremely pleased by his refusal. However, before leaving his body, Sri Ramakrishna empowered Narendra and said, "Today, giving you my all, I have become a beggar. With this power you are to do much work for the good of the world before you return."

Once someone asked Swami Saradananda what were those 18 powers of Swamiji, he replied that he did not hear anything about those from the Master. At any rate, the Master listened to the Bhagavata scripture and there Krishna mentioned to Uddhava those 18 powers in the book 11, chapter 15: "The sages, who are yogis, have said there are eighteen qualities. Out of these I have eight and the remaining ten emerge from the sattva tendency. Anima, mahima, laghima, prapti, prakamya, ishita, vashita and kamavasaita -- these are natural to me.

"Freedom from pangs of hunger or thirst, ability to hear and see from afar, speed like mind, ability to take any form and enter anyone's body, to die according to one's wish, to watch the devas playing with the apsaras, to achieve whatever one resolves and to have access to anywhere -- these qualities are born when the sattva tendencies are brought to perfection. Besides, there are eight small siddhis including knowledge of the past, present and future. My devotees are endowed with these qualities naturally."

Moreover, Patanjali mentioned in the chapter on Powers that the yogis achieve various kinds of occult powers by practising samyama on concentration, meditation and samadhi. Like Sri Ramakrishna, Swamiji would consider occult powers are obstacles to spiritual life. But he used power a few times out of compassion for some suffering people without any ulterior motive.

Power or energy is one and it manifests in many ways. Such as, the same electricity is behind the function

of the light, fan, car, computer, generator, and so on. Similarly the divine power of Vivekananda manifested in many ways. Seldom is it found that so many talents are manifested in one person. Sharat Chandra Chakrabarty, a disciple of Swamiji, wrote: "In knowledge, Swamiji was Shankara; in large-heartedness, Buddha; in devotion, Narada; in the knowledge of Brahman, Shukadeva; in debate, Brihaspati; in beauty, Kamadeva; in heroism, Arjuna; and in the knowledge of scriptures, Vyasadeva."

Hardly one can see the accumulation of so many diverse qualities in one person. Swamiji was a man of wisdom, ideal worker, yogi, and devotee; he was a monk, ascetic, rishi, and mystic; he was a leader, orator, poet, artist, writer, conversationalist, debater, singer, musician, humorist; he was a philosopher, linguist, educationist, patriot, humanist, and reformer. In the words of Swami Turiyananda, Swamiji was a perfect man.

We never get tired of listening to a person whom we love. The more we hear about our beloved the more our desire to hear increases. This is the sign of love. In this article we shall try to depict a few incidents, which have revealed various facets of Vivekananda. Some of these scattered interesting episodes of Swamiji's short life were published, some were hidden in some old magazines, and some were unpublished in the diaries of the monks. Unless these lesser-known facts come to light, it will not be possible to get a complete picture of his gigantic personality.

Swamiji wanted to see the manifestation of the greatness of the people through their little actions, such as how do they eat or put on, how they treat their servants. A meek, cowardly person can also become a hero when he comes under limelight. A great man should show his greatness in each and every deed — big or small. In this account, we will chronicle some incidents from Swamiji's life that seem insignificant but in which his divinity and love for humanity are amply revealed. Swamiji was such a beautiful perfect man that no one could desist from loving him. He had an attractive overwhelming personality. The more one thinks of this blissful free soul, the more one will experience joy.

A few years before he gave up his body, Swamiji began to sing the swan song. In 1900, he told an American devotee in San Francisco, "See, I have to take birth again." "Why Swamiji?" asked the devotee. "Because," he replied, "I fell in love with human beings." This is the inmost feelings of Vivekananda -- Narayana in human form, a universal man, and a lover of mankind.

### **Vijaya Dindima: The Triumphalist Drumbeat**

Mahendranath Datta (Swamiji's brother) reminisced: "The main goal of Naren's penance was not to show occult powers but to control of such powers. He sought to detach himself completely from the objective world. At that time his thought was: Who will win? I, the pure consciousness or you, the objective world? The world cannot overpower me, I will conquer it.

"I have heard from Girish Ghosh that once Naren, sitting in his room, said to Girish, 'Maya is trying to overpower me and I am also trying to overpower her. There cannot be any compromise in the middle. Either maya will die or I will die. Both can't exist together.' Girish later said, 'What a lofty idea Naren had! What a firm determination! I have never heard such things. He wanted to trample the world of maya and establish his real Self over it. This is a new idea! Only Naren can say such thing, as he is a man of strong determination. But not many liked his ideas. Some criticized him.'

"This was the mood in the first stage of his sadhana. Acquire power and preserve it in a deeper recess of the heart. This was the attitude of Naren, which deeply imbibed many of his brother disciples.

"Once Naren lamented to Girish: 'I can forget everything, even the body, except that crazy brahmin of Dakshineswar. He has become my obstacle. Without forgetting him, I can't have the supreme knowledge of Brahman, which is beyond the name and form.' Girish Babu was dumbfounded as he was a great devotee the Master.

"On another occasion Girish Babu said: 'What is Naren saying? He will leave his guru!' Then he continued: 'I can't even imagine what a lofty plane Naren had ascended! He is saying that the crazy brahmin of Dakshineswar is the hindrance to his goal. This kind of attitude is possible only for Naren and not for others.'"



## Service and Sadhana

One day during a conversation a gentleman pointed out that Swamiji emphasized on renunciation. Swami Turiyananda replied, "Yes, it is true. But he also initiated seva dharma (service to humanity). If you want to accept Swamiji's ideas, take him in totality and not partially. There are some people who do not want to work at all. Sri Ramakrishna used to say about them: 'Put readymade butter in their mouth.' These people want to lead an easygoing life. Such people cannot make progress even after taking monastic vows. They remain in the same place. One cannot do good to others without sacrificing one's own life. It needs unbounded compassion and patience. One needs good health to serve others, otherwise one feels angry and frustrated within oneself.

"Swamiji was a man of sattva guna. Who else had such noble qualities like him? It is not hearsay. I have seen living with him. He sat for meditation at nine o'clock at night and got up at five in the morning, and then went for bath. Mosquitoes covered his body in such a large numbers that it seemed as if a blanket. He looked like Lord Shiva meditating. These are the signs of sattvic qualities -- full control over the senses and the mind, and complete tranquility. He observed that India will not make any progress without going through rajas, activity. So he introduced nishkama karma (unselfish action). This rajas is blended with sattva.

"It needs a great endeavour to serve the common people. One should go to the level of those people and then lift them slowly to the higher plane."

## The Guru and the Disciple

Swami Shuddhananda recalled: "It is extremely difficult to build one's life according to Sri Ramakrishna's ideals. So the compassionate Master out of grace said the ordinary people like us: 'I have done sixteen parts, you do one sixteenth of that.'" It reminds me an incident which took place between Sri Ramakrishna and Swamiji. Swamiji, then Narendranath, used to visit Sri Ramakrishna regularly. Narendra had a stylish haircut. Without saying anything Sri Ramakrishna pointed out his foppishness. Narendra responded by pointing in turn at Sri Ramakrishna's fancy sandal, the hubble-bubble, mattress and bolster. Sri Ramakrishna then told him: 'Listen, I have practised severe austerities for God-realization. If you can do even one-sixteenth part of that, I will make you sleep mattress over mattress on a fancy bedstead.' Inspired by the Master's life, Swamiji practised sadhana and austerities for many years. After spreading the message of Vedanta in the West, when Swamiji returned from America, his Western disciples gave him a spring bed and soft mattresses. (These are still in his room at Belur Math.) While using that bed, Swamiji remembered those words of the Master, which he would relate to the monks and shed tears. While replying to the address of Calcutta reception he said referring to his guru Sri Ramakrishna: 'If I have said something good, which has helped someone, then know for sure that those were his words. And if it caused any harm, then I am the only one to be blamed for it. Please do not assess him by what you see of me. If I or his other disciples do sadhana for even millions of years, we will not be able to match his standards.'

## Check the quote

Swami Vimalananda recalled: "When Sri Ramakrishna was afflicted with throat cancer, Mahendralal Sarkar had warned the disciples, who were nursing him, to take care as the disease was then thought to be infectious. Some of the young disciples became nervous. Swamiji noticed it and went to Sri Ramakrishna's room. He picked up the cup in which Sri Ramakrishna had spat and drank the mix of blood and saliva in it in front of everybody. The disciples never complained of infection again."

## Check Golden Memories

Swami Nirlepananda recalled: "I remember that old abandoned house in Baranagore, which was notorious as a haunted house. In fact Swami Turiyananda told me that he had seen ghost there. Narendra would call the indwellers of the Baranagore Math dana or demons, who did not care for the sense world at all. If you wish you can meditate on Narendra, the leader of that group. Imagine him as a shaven-headed, well-built, lively, beautiful, ochre-clad sannyasin (not his American picture with stylish haircut). Even the poet Kalidasa, the favourite son of Saraswati, will be incapable to describe his beauty with appropriate words. It seems as if he was a creation of an eminent artist. His large lotus-like eyes were beyond comparison.



Once referring to Swamiji's eyes, Swami Saradananda remarked "how can I describe those eyes" and then remained silent. One disciple said, "When Swamiji slept in Balaram Basu's hall, I saw his eyelids were not fully closed. In fact his eyes remained partly open like Lord Shiva's.

"I had the good fortune of seeing Swamiji a couple of times at Belur Math. I found him a very reserved person. The members of the Math were afraid of him. One evening we went to Belur Math by boat and Pulin was singing for us in the living room. But music stopped when we heard that Swamiji was coming downstairs. We heard from the Master's disciple that Swamiji had a very deep and serious personality. While walking on the bank of the Ganges, he began to chant in his melodious voice the invocation of Gayatri mantra -- ayahi varade devi -- O adorable goddess Gayatri, do thou reveal to us. Then he came under the mango tree in the courtyard and went into samadhi. Swami Premananda and other disciples were extremely concerned. Swamiji's eyes were red like hibiscus and his steps were faltering as if he was drunk. Gradually that mood dissipated and he began to pace in the courtyard for a long time. Sometimes he loudly said something. We observed him from a distance. But when he was in a good mood he was very warm and friendly; even animals would flock to him. He had a magnetic personality. One can rightly say about him: when he laughed, all laughed; and when he cried, all cried. Once he instructed me to be self-reliant: 'Do not take service from anybody. Do your own work. Know for certain, no work is insignificant.'"

### Feeling for Others

Swami Vimalananda writes, 'Once during his stay at the Baranagore Math, Swamiji fell ill. He was asked to get a change of air for a quick recovery. His brother monks arranged for his travel and stay at Shimultala in north-east Kolkata. One day, when Swamiji was about to have his meal, he spotted a few beggars waiting near his door. They begged him for the starchy water usually drained after cooking rice. Swamiji gave them whatever food he had for himself. When he realized that he did not have the means of feeding them every day, he came back to Kolkata. Swamiji could not stand others' woes. Once he was going somewhere in Kolkata. He had only the tram fare in his pocket. When he was about to board the tram, a beggar asked for alms. Swamiji gave him the money and walked all the way to his destination.'

### Check Swamiji's Humility

Prabodh to Brother Ramlal (Sri Ramakrishna's nephew): "Where have you been at the time of Swamiji's death? It is said that blood came out from his nose?" Brother Ramlal: "No, I was not present at the time but I got the news of his death. No, I don't remember that he had any bleeding from the nose. I had visited Belur Math four-five days before Swamiji's passing away. I took a boat which was about to capsize. My clothes got soaked by turbulent water. On reaching the Math, I found him sitting in a chair under a mango tree and talking to the devotees. Seeing me, he got up and bowed down to me. He said, 'Guruvat guruputreshu, guruvat tatsuteshu.' He also asked his disciples to bow down to me. I said, 'Practice is better than preaching.' Then I went upstairs with Swamiji. He said to his disciples to bring some dry clothes and asked me to change the wet ones. He then asked them to make a bed for me. They made a bed for me in an adjacent room. Swamiji told me, 'Brother, please come with me.' He held my hand and took me to his room. He made me sit on his spring bed and asked me to lie down. I said: 'No, no, they have made my bed in the other room. I will be comfortable there.' Despite my protest, Swamiji said, 'No, no, please take rest here.' Then he held my arm, made me lie down in his bed, and began to massage my feet. I told him, 'Swamiji, what are you doing?' I tried to dissuade him but he said: 'Keep quiet or else I will hit you. Why should you be afraid? Brother, you have done so many things for me -- you have made my bed, set my mosquito net, prepared the hubble-bubble for me. Shall I ever be able to repay your debt?' He told me all these words with great humility."

### Swamiji and Truthfulness

Brother Ramlal to the devotees: "When Swamiji was leaving Dakshineswar, he told the Master that he would visit him again the next Wednesday. The Master asked, 'What time?' and Swamiji replied, 'At three o'clock.' The following Wednesday, Swamiji arrived at Dakshineswar at two o'clock and waited outside the gate. He did not come to see the Master then, as he had promised to see him at three o'clock. The Master was talking to devotees in his room. When he was informed that Swamiji was waiting outside the gate, he asked the devotees to wait, and he walked towards the gate. Seeing Swamiji, the Master asked: 'Hello, Naren. When did you come? Why are you standing here? What happened?' Swamiji replied: 'Sir, I

promised you that I would come at three o'clock, but I left home earlier and when I arrived here I found that it was two o'clock. For the sake of truth I am waiting here.' The Master was very pleased to hear that. They remained there talking for some time, and then at three o'clock Swamiji went with the Master to his room. (21 October 1931)

### Swamiji's Lullaby

Swami Vireswarananda recounted this story: "At that time Swamiji was travelling across western India as a wandering monk. He stayed as a guest at a lawyer's house in Mahabaleswar. The lawyer had a child who cried a lot at night. Nobody could sleep. One day Swamiji told his parents, "I can take care of him tonight." The mother said, "Swamiji, we do not have any problems but how will you make him sleep? I am his mother and yet I cannot do anything. How will you manage him?" Swamiji said, "Let me try." When the child was given to Swamiji he took him on his lap and started meditating. He meditated the entire night and surprisingly the child had a sound sleep."

### Check Shiva as Guru

Sharat Chandra Chakrabarty was a great devotee of Nag Mahashay and later wrote his biography. One day he begged Nag Mahashay to initiate him, but he refused, saying: "I am not a brahmin. A non-brahmin is not supposed to initiate a brahmin. You are a brahmin and scholar and I am an illiterate man. How can I initiate you?" Thus Nag Mahashay dissuaded Sharat Babu. One day Nag Mahashay went to the market and Sharat Babu followed him. They reached a spot where the road was not wide enough and cane bushes were on both sides. In that secluded place Sharat Babu held his feet and begged initiation. Observing Sharat Babu's yearning, Nag Mahashay said: "Don't lose heart. Lord Shiva Himself will be your guru." Overwhelmed with joy Sharat Babu understood that Nag Mahashay had given him a boon and he would definitely get Lord Shiva as his guru. He had no doubt about Nag Mahashay's words, because he was a man of truth. From then on Sharat Babu never pestered Nag Mahashay for initiation and waited for the right time.

It was sometimes in April 1897. Swami Vivekananda was staying at the Alambazar monastery after returning from the West. Sharat Babu went to see Swamiji and found him resting in his room. He sat down to wait for Swamiji to get up, but all of a sudden he saw that Lord Shiva was lying where Swamiji had been. He could not believe his own eyes at first, but as he stared at the figure he could not doubt what he saw. He then remembered the boon Nag Mahashay had given him. Swamiji later initiated him on 1 May 1897.

### The Non-sectarian Vivekananda

Sarat Chandra Chakrabarty wrote in a Bengali article, titled Avataravad (Doctrine of Incarnation): "Will a separate sect come into existence following the teachings of the present avatar Sri Ramakrishna? On this topic what Swamiji had said at Lahore in 1897, I heard from my brother disciple Swami Shuddhananda that I would mention here: During the course of his discussion on various religious issues with Lala Hansaraj, the leader of Arya Samaj, Swamiji told him: 'Sir, you emphasize that there can be only one interpretation of the Vedas, which I consider a kind of fanaticism. I know it helps to spread a sect rapidly. Again a personality cult spreads faster than scriptural dogma. I have the power to bring one-third of the population of the world under the banner of Sri Ramakrishna, but I have no intention of doing that, because that would counteract my guru's great message of harmony, "As many faiths so many paths." And a new sect would originate in India.'

"Swamiji was deeply concerned that a new sect might come into being in the name of Sri Ramakrishna, so after establishing the Belur Math, he did not install the picture of the Master on the altar for worship. Instead, a symbol of 'OM' was printed on a piece of silk cloth that was worshipped there. Later one night Swamiji had a vision, and on the next day he installed the picture of the Master on the altar, which is still worshipped in Belur Math (1921). Swamiji was apprehensive that a new sect might crop up in India in the name of the nonsectarian Master. But after closely associating with the Master's disciples for the last thirty years, I realized that the spirit of harmony of religions and the nonsectarian idea were fully alive in the Order."

### In the Background

Swami Akhilananda told this story to Hillary Holt: Once Swamiji delivered a lecture at Harvard University.





When he was coming out through the isle of the lecture hall, Professor William James was just behind Swamiji and he overheard the conversation of two students who had attended the lecture.

First student: "I am disappointed with today's lecture."

Second student: "Why?"

First student: "We were told that the person, who would deliver the lecture, was very learned and an eminent philosopher."

Second student: "But why do you think that the ideas which he talked about were not significant enough?"

First student: "Because I understood every word he said."

### Check In a Cheerful Mood

Swami Atulananda recalled: "Once in London, Swamiji was smoking a big cigar. Some young men watched him and made comments: 'What sort of yogi is he? Even now he is a slave to smoking.' Swamiji overheard their conversation. One of the youths asked Swamiji, 'What is the name of the cigar?' Swamiji replied, 'Well, don't you know a slave should not utter the name of his master?'"

Swami Akhilananda said: "Swamiji delivered a lecture on yoga at the Ethical Society. But he did not mention anything about pranayama (breath control) or dietary restrictions. During the question-answer session, a lady asked him, 'Swami, what do you think about breathing and eating?' Swamiji replied, 'I assure you, Madame, that I am in favour of both.'"

Swami Akhandananda said: "Once someone asked Swamiji in Rishikesh, 'To which monastic sect of Shankara do you belong -- Giri or Puri?' Swamiji replied, 'Kachuri (spicy stuffed fried bread).'"

### Two Lost Memories

A student from San Francisco remembers: 'Swamiji's lecture was an intellectual and spiritual treat for us, as it used to take our thoughts to a higher level. One afternoon there was a question-answer session with Swamiji. The issues raised were flimsy but Swamiji responded courteously. One student asked Swamiji, "Should one take onion?" Swamiji said, "Onion is not good for a spiritual aspirant. But when I was a boy, it was my favourite. Not only did I have onion but also wanted to relish the smell that used to come from the mouth." The remaining thirty minutes were set aside for meditation. Swamiji withdrew himself into his inner world through meditation. He had a divine presence. When we were coming back home, we felt as if we were flying—our feet were not touching the ground. It seemed as if Swamiji had given us nectar.'

An English lady recalls: 'In 1900, I took Swamiji to visit Napoleon's tomb in Paris. He leaned above the tomb with great curiosity and said, "What a magnificent achiever! What a powerful person! Shiva, Shiva!" That moment is etched in my memory. When he saw St. Peter's Church in Rome, he said, "How wonderful!" I was surprised. I asked him, "Swamiji, do you believe in all these religious rituals?" Swamiji replied, "If you have a personal God and love him, you can offer him incense, flowers, ornaments or other fineries." Swamiji was really amazing.'<sup>17</sup>

### Check A Great Lover of Humanity

Sister Christine recalled: "His love and compassion were reflected in so many small incidents even in America. Once he started taking French classes from a gentleman. When I asked him why, Swamiji said, 'He is very poor. He does not have any other source of income.' In another incident, he gave a ten dollar note to somebody and said, 'Please give it to that person and do not tell him it is from me.'

"A member of the Vedanta Society was accused of stealing money from the society's fund. When Swamiji came to know about this, he said, 'Don't talk about it. I will compensate that amount.' In another incident, a lady was accused of cheating people of their money with Swamiji as pretext. When told about it, Swamiji said, 'Poor lady! Shiva, Shiva!' As soon as he uttered 'Shiva, Shiva,' the entire incident was wiped from his mind. We have noticed several times that whenever such incidents were brought to his notice, for the first few minutes he tried to sort it out and then he would dismiss it by saying, 'Shiva, Shiva.' It was his way of withdrawing from the humdrum and duplicities of the outer world."





World Wars.

### The Infinite in the Finite

Excerpts from an unpublished letter dated 23 June 1928 of Swami Shuddhananda (Swamiji's disciple) to Swami Ashokananda (the then editor of Prabuddha Bharata):

"The Bengali gentleman whom you have referred to in your letter is Kaliprasanna Chattopadhyay. In 1912 when I was in Varanasi, I went to invite him for giving a lecture on Swamiji at Advaita Ashrama, he told me this story:

"I used to visit Sri Ramakrishna and knew Swamiji well from that time on. Once there was a discussion with him on how the Infinite can exist in the finite -- in reply Swamiji had said that this truth could be realized only through sadhana. Then in the later part of 1897, when Swamiji visited Lahore after returning from America, he stayed with Nagendra Nath Gupta, the editor of Tribune. I was the sub-editor of that paper. To understand the truth of religion, I explored Islam, Arya Samaj, and other religious sects. Swamiji was very fond of me and every morning he would call me, saying humorously, "Come Kali Babu, let's take Khoda's (Lord's) name."

"One morning when Swamiji called me, I asked him, "Swamiji, do you remember when we were with the Master, we had a discussion how the Infinite could be in finite?" He said: "Of course, I do. I learned a technique from an American in Philadelphia, through which I can demonstrate this theme in a practical way." I pleaded with Swamiji to show me, but he said, "I am not keeping well now. But let me give it a try." Then he sat for meditation for a while and held my hand for a minute. I had the following vision:

"I felt as if I was flying over a vast ocean. I was flying ages after ages through rain and thunderstorm. I was not aware how long I moved that way and finally I got exhausted. As I started looking for a shelter, I found a raft. I boarded in it, which took me to Dakshineswar where I saw Sri Ramakrishna and the devotees."

The purport of this vision was the experience of a long period took place within one minute.

### A Recollection

Brahmachari Praneshkumar wrote: "During the Vivekananda festival at Lahore, Gokulchand Narang, the principal of D.A.V. College, gave an inspiring lecture in Hindi. He told me this new story of Swamiji: Narang said that in 1900 when Swamiji came to Lahore and gave lectures, he was then a college student and a volunteer. The lecture was arranged in the Town Hall of Lahore. He and his two friends went to bring Swamiji half an hour before the lecture. Reaching there they found Swamiji was in deep sleep. They did not dare to wake him up. After waiting anxiously for about twenty minutes, they noticed that Swamiji suddenly got up, went to the bath room, then put on his ochre robe, and began to fix his turban. Then an English gentleman knelt down to tie Swamiji's shoe laces. Narang felt embarrassed seeing an Englishman tying the shoe laces of an Indian; he rushed to tie Swamiji's shoes. But Swamiji stopped him, saying, "No, no. Just see, if you are worthy, even an Englishman can tie the laces of a native." When they reached the venue with Swamiji, only a couple of minutes left for the beginning of the meeting. They felt as if there was an in-built alarm clock in Swamiji. His punctuality and love for countrymen were truly remarkable."

### In Belur Math

Swami Ambikananda recalled: "I was then fourteen-fifteen years old and would visit the Belur Math regularly. I noticed Swamiji used to lie down on a cot beneath the mango tree. One day he asked me, 'Can you massage my feet?' When I started giving him massage, he said, 'What kind of massage is this? Don't you have any strength in your body?' I said, 'No, I do not have that much strength.' Swamiji asked, 'Don't you eat sufficient rice?'

"On another occasion, Swamiji was taking a stroll along the bank of the Ganges. He was wearing socks and hunting shoes, a loin cloth and a shirt, and smoking his hubble-bubble. I was with him. Suddenly he looked towards Dakshineswar and became motionless. Dumbfounded, I looked at his face from the front and stood by his side. After some time he came back to his normal state. He then said, 'What happened, nobody gave me tobacco?' Someone prepared a smoke for him? It seemed he was ruminating those olden days.



“Swami Brahmananda was very fond of gardening and Swamiji had several pets, such as goat, dog, duck and crane, and so on. Whenever the animals strayed into the flower garden, Swamiji and Maharaj had a friendly fight. Maharaj drew the boundary and said, ‘This is your side and this is mine. Your goat should not enter my garden.’ It was hilarious. Swamiji used to lie on his camp-cot in the courtyard and the goat would jump up on it. When his pets roamed around the Math, it looked like a passing regiment. With the ringing of the bell at mealtimes, they used to make a beeline and wait in front of the kitchen for food. Swamiji used to sing, ‘Let’s go to the city of Varanasi.’ and his pet goat Matru would jump in joy as if it was dancing to his master’s tune.”

### **A Knower of Brahman Becomes Brahman**

Swamiji was truly a phenomenon. He looked like a human being but in fact he was a knower of Brahman. His true nature would radiate through his words and deeds.

Vijaynath Majumdar recalled: “One Sunday I went to the Belur Math after visiting Dakshineswar. I asked Swamiji, ‘Maharaj, what is the duty of mankind?’ He replied, ‘Not doing anything.’ I could not get his point. He said: ‘You didn’t understand? It is the nature of a man always to do something; he cannot help it. But when a man attains this knowledge that the duty of mankind is not to do anything -- he is capable of doing nishkama karma, selfless action. It is not possible for him to work coveting the results. Always tread the path to Brahman. Meditate on Brahman only. This is the duty of mankind.’”

Brahmachari Ram Maharaj told this story to Swami Bodhatmananda in Almora: “One day, I went to the Belur Math. Swamiji was trying to milk his goat Matru. But he was in difficulty to milk it as its udder was hanging low. He told me, ‘Hey dumbbell, what are you looking at? Lift these two rear legs of this goat.’ I obeyed him. He milked the goat as if he was pumping something. Having finished, he said, ‘Did you feel bad because I called you dumbbell? Don’t mind. That is only a name. Look, names and forms are all false. Brahman alone is the truth.’” This teaching of Swamiji penetrated in the mind of Ram Maharaj.

### **Vivekananda as a Worshipper**

Sometimes Swamiji was in an exalted mood. Bodhananda, a disciple of Vivekananda, recalled: Once Swamiji said that he would do the worship of Sri Ramakrishna that day. So all of us went to watch Swamiji do it. We were curious to see how he would perform the ritual. First, in the usual way he took his seat as worshipper and meditated. We meditated too. After a pretty long time we sensed that someone was moving around us. I opened my eyes to see who it was. It was Swamiji. Taking the tray of flowers meant to be offered to Sri Ramakrishna, he got up. But instead of placing them before the Lord, he came to us, and touching the flowers with sandal paste, placed one on the head of each disciple.

Considered from the ordinary traditional standpoint, this was an anti traditional act. Imagine flowers meant for the Lord, offered by Swamiji to his disciples! Generally after the worship service, the leftover flowers are set aside to be thrown away. But instead of doing this, Swamiji approached the altar and offered what remained in the tray before the picture of Sri Ramakrishna. He also carried out the usual rites. Then he indicated that the time had come for food offering; so we all got up to leave the room. It is a custom in India that during the food offering no one should be in the shrine except the worshipper. We heard from outside Swamiji saying, addressing Sri Ramakrishna, “Friend, please eat!” Then he came out of the shrine and closed the door. His eyes were bloodshot with emotion.

Bodhananda later explained the significance of Swamiji’s worship: “Actually Swamiji did not worship the disciples. In placing a flower on the head of each one of us, he really offered the flower at the feet of Sri Ramakrishna in each disciple. Thereby he awakened his presence in us. That presence took different aspects in everyone. Some were devotional; others had the jnana [knowledge] aspect predominant. By his act of worship, Swamiji awakened the Divine in us. The remaining flowers were not in any way defiled. The same divine presence, which Swamiji saw in the photograph of Sri Ramakrishna on the altar, he also saw in his disciples; and at the altar he offered the remaining flowers. Lastly, Swamiji’s relation to his Chosen Deity was that of a friend. That is why, in offering the food, he addressed Sri Ramakrishna by that term.”

[Swami Siddheswarananda heard this story from Swami Bodhananda in 1924 when the former was in Ramakrishna Math, Madras. Swami Bodhananda was the head of the Vedanta Society, New York, from 1912 to 1950. Swami Siddheswarananda founded the Vedanta Society in France in 1937 and breathed his last in 1957. Swami Chetanananda, head of the Vedanta Society, St. Louis, recently discovered this account in Swami Siddheswarananda's personal papers in Paris.]

Swami Bodhananda reminisces: 'Let me tell you about an incident. One day, Swamiji told us in Belur Math that he would worship Sri Ramakrishna on that day. All of us went to the shrine to watch him worshipping. We were all very curious. First, he sat on his seat and started meditating. We followed him. After sometime I felt someone going around us. When I opened my eyes I saw it was Swamiji. He had got up from his seat holding Sri Ramakrishna's flower pot. Instead of offering those flowers to Sri Ramakrishna he put sandal paste on those flowers and put them on our head. It was against the traditional norms of worship. The flowers meant for the deity were offered to the disciples. Flowers in the pot, which were not used, were disposed off. But Swamiji put those left-over flowers and worshipped him according to the traditional norms. Then he indicated that it was time to offer food to him. As per rules, only the priest was authorized to stay in the shrine at the time of food offering. We came out and heard him saying, "Friend, please accept it." Then he came out of the prayer room and closed the door. His eyes were blood red with emotion.'

Swami Bodhananda was so overwhelmed and emotional while recounting this experience that he stopped talking for sometime. When someone asked him about the reason for Swamiji worshipping disciples in this way, Swami Bodhananda said, "Swamiji did not really worship the disciples. He recognized the truth that Sri Ramakrishna is present in all his disciples and while putting flowers on our head he was worshipping Sri Ramakrishna within us. It was through this process he invoked Sri Ramakrishna in us. This was manifested in different ways in different disciples. While a few manifested it through their surge of devotion, others showed an intense penchant for knowledge. Swamiji sought to awaken the divinity within us. The left-over flowers, which were put in front of Sri Ramakrishna's picture, could be used as Swamiji could see the same Sri Ramakrishna in us. Swamiji regarded his chosen deity as a friend or Ishta and that was why he addressed Sri Ramakrishna as friend while offering him food."

### Check Lord Forgive Me

Swami Shuddhananda's eyewitness account: "One afternoon Swamiji was giving a class on Panini's Sanskrit grammar. When it was time for the vesper service, Swami Premananda came and said: 'Hallo, boys, it is the time for vesper service, please come to the shrine.' Swamiji angrily told him, 'Is not this class also worship to Sri Ramakrishna?' Without saying a word Swami Premananda left, and performed Sri Ramakrishna's Arati alone. Afterwards, Swamiji went alone to the shrine and started striking his head on the marble altar. He repeatedly said: 'Master, forgive me. Forgive me. Forgive me, Lord.' He kept on striking till his forehead bled." (Swami Shuddhananda related this incident to Swami Prabhavananda and the latter recounted this incident in Hollywood on 24 November 1973.)

### At the Time of Farewell

Swami Bodhananda reminisced: "Many years later, Swamiji said to one of his disciples: 'One eye shed tears of grief when I left home, because I hated to leave my mother, grandmother, brothers, and sisters; and the other eye shed tears for my ideal (Sri Ramakrishna).'" [On another occasion, Swamiji said that if he would not renounce home, the Master's message would not spread other places.]

"A few days before Swamiji's passing away, one of his boyhood friends came to him asking for money. At that time I was Swamiji's personal attendant and it was my responsibility to maintain his personal fund. He asked me to give his friend two rupees from his wallet. I said, 'If I give him two rupees, nothing will be left.' He said, 'Do you think I care for that? Give him two rupees plus a little more.' Then he continued: 'In a room, if one window is open and the corresponding window is closed, there is no ventilation; so let it go by one window and it will come by the other.'

On the fourth of July 1902, when the vesper bell was rung at 7:00 p.m., he got up and went to his room upstairs. Bodhananda, who was Swamiji's secretary and kept his little bit of cash, recalled: "I was standing by the stairway down on the ground floor. It was the month of July. In India the mosquitoes are so numerous and so dangerous that you get malaria from them, and no one can sleep in bed without the curtains. He

had discovered that the curtains of some monks were torn, and his last command to me was, 'See that they all get new mosquito curtains.'" Even in his last moments Vivekananda showed his great love and concern for the monks!

\* \* \*

Swamiji wanted people to mould their lives according to his ideas and teachings. Once he jokingly said to his disciple Swami Achalananda: "If you people declare me an avatar after my death and start worshipping my picture by waving lamps, I will certainly return as a ghost and break your necks."

\* \* \*

Swami Shuddhananda recalled: "You may talk about Swamiji that he has done this, or said that. But this is my firm conviction that whatever he had done or said was not his true nature. His real nature was revealed through meditation and austerities. There is a reason behind my conviction. Towards the end of his life, I was fanning him in his room. He had to be fanned throughout the night. Generally, it was not my duty. But on that day, there was no one available, so I took up that assignment. As I was fanning him, I could hear him saying a few words in sleep. I could not understand everything, but could get only a few words. He was saying, 'The ego has to be crushed completely.'"

\* \* \*

Swami Vijnanananda said: "When Swamiji lived in Belur Math, I felt that the whole monastery was full of light and joy and when he was not there it appeared a little gloomy. Entering the Math, one could feel whether Swamiji was there or not." Swami Vijnanananda's room was at the north side of Swamiji's room. One night he went out of his room in the eastern veranda and heard piteous cry from Swamiji's room. At this, he thought that perhaps Swamiji was sick. He entered Swamiji's room and found him crying distressingly on the cement floor. Swami Vijnanananda asked him, "Swamiji, are you sick?" Startled, Swamiji came to his senses and said, "Peshan, I thought you were sleeping." Vijnanananda then asked him the cause of his cry. Swamiji replied in tearful eyes: "I cannot sleep thinking the suffering and poverty of our countrymen. My mind is extremely disturbed out of agony and anxiety. So I was praying to the Master for the welfare of our country." Swami Vijnanananda consoled Swamiji and requested him to sleep on his bed. Thus suffering and poverty of the people would pierce Swamiji's heart.



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**

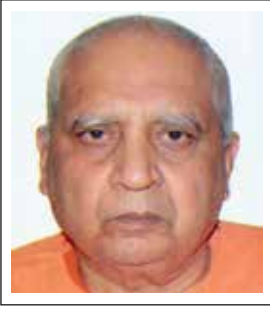
It is idle to expect that dangers and difficulties will not come. They are bound to come. But for a devotee they will pass away under the feet like water.

**-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**





## Essence Of Vivekananda Swami Girishananda

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



Swami Vivekananda is the construction of Sri Ramakrishna the God intoxicated embodiment of all pervading deity 'MOTHER KALI' worshipped by millions of Hindu Society people and verified, scrutinized by all other doubtful societies through their seers, luminaries and intelligentsia.

On Sri Ramakrishna there was a divine command from that 'KALI', that religion eternal will embrace the multiplicity with their multifarious paths for attaining that 'RELIGION' which are expression with adjectives and specifications of The Same Truth which the Vedas declare 'EKAM SAD VIPRA BAHUDHA VADANTI' 'Truth is one, the sages call it by various ways'

Vedas are the depository of Timeless, nameless, spaceless, colourless, formless Truth. Such Truth yet never denies the name etc because they are not hindrance to the pursuit of revelation and rather motivate with the right perspective towards the infinite. Because Sri Ramakrishna reiterated that 'Name and Possessor of the name are identical' and possessor is no other than and no less a representative of the eternal possessor called 'Brahman', Allah, God, Yehova etc.

It is the love and devotion to the particular deity representing God with utter steadfastness or alternatively in the discriminatory faculties to purify, mind- intelligence complex pointing to the 'OTHER DEITY' as we may term it which can pull the soul onwards and onwards to reach the target so that it absorbed the non-dual Brahman

Swami Vivekananda is recognized as the eternal awakener by Sri Ramakrishna himself, the following vision implies as follows:- "Absorbed one day in Samadhi, Ramakrishna had found that his mind was soaring high going beyond the physical universe of Sun Moon and Stars and passing into subtle region of ideas. As it continued to ascend, the forms of God and Goddess were left behind, and it crossed the luminous barrier separating the phenomenal universe from the Absolute, entering finally the transcendental realm. There Ramakrishna saw seven venerable sages absorbed in meditation. These, he thought, must have surpassed even the gods and goddesses in wisdom and holiness, and as he was admiring their unique spirituality he saw a portion of them undifferentiated absolute become congealed, as it were, and take the form of a divine child, gently grasping the neck of one of the sages with his soft arms, the child whispered something in his ear, and at this meagre touch the sage awoke from meditation. He fixed his half-open eyes upon the wondrous child, who expressed a great joy. "I am going down to Earth. Won't you come with me?" With a benign look, the sage expressed assent and returned into deep spiritual ecstasy. Ramakrishna was amazed to observe that a tiny portion of that sage, however, descended to Earth, taking the form of a light, which struck the house in Calcutta where Narendra's family lived. When he saw Narendra for the first time, he at once recognized him as the incarnation of the sage. He also exclaimed that the divine child who brought about the descent of the rishi was none other than himself.

It is interesting to note that Marie Louise Burke mentions in this respect. She quotes the following conversation between Swamiji and Mrs. Allan, 'I have to come back once more. My Master said I am to come back once more with him. Mrs. Allan to Swamiji, you have to come back because Shri Ramakrishna says so to Swamiji. Souls like that have great power, Madam. Similarly in conversation with Mrs. Hansborough Swamiji said, "My Master said he would come again in about two hundred years — and I will come with him. When a Master comes, he brings his own people".

What has been narrated in the foregoing is authenticated by Brahma Sutra 'Yavad Adhikari Kehm' (3(32))



which means that those who have Mission to fulfill continue in the corporeal state as long as the Mission demands it. Josephine Macleod in one of her letters says You know Swamiji said he was Shankar (SHIVA)! He came back after 800 years.

There is also the experience of Swami Shivananda (Mahapurush Maharaj) confirming that Swamiji was indeed Shiva. Quoting in his own words in this context, 'One night I had fallen asleep beside Swamiji, There was also Swami Ramakrishnanda and others sleeping nearby. In the dead of night, I suddenly awoke and found the whole inside of the mosquito net flooded with light. Looking behind me for Swamiji, I could not find him, but in his place were a number of Sivas lying asleep all of them were seven or eight-year boys beautiful of white complexion and with matted locks on their heads, It was the light of their bodies that illuminated the room. This sight amazed me profoundly The whole night I spent more or less in meditation. When morning came I found Swamiji sleeping there as in the beginning of the night. Later in the morning when I had told him everything, he laughed a great deal. I unexpectedly came across the Sanskrit hymn address to Shiva Vireswar and in it I found Shiva described exactly as I had seen him that night, then I knew I had had a true vision. He is born of the being in Shiva that is what I saw in this vision.

What is the principal message of Swamiji and how his message and influences are of enduring relevance? In his message on the rising of yore, he explored through Samadhi, the solution for removing sufferings as in Buddha. The solution is realization that one is the SELF and not body. Swamiji's constant endeavour was through his lecture, conversation and writing was to direct the humanity for urging to realize the ATMAN, the source of all power, freedom and eternal peace. Wisdom cutting assunder the Veil of illusion (Maya)

In his lecture 'my Master' Swamiji puts stress on acquiring spirituality. Acquiring spirituality can only be the panacea for all problems of the modern world he says, 'This is the message of Sri Ramakrishna for the modern world'. Do not care for doctrines do not care for dogmas, or sects or churches or temples. They count for little compared with the essence of existence in each man, which is spirituality and more this is developed in a man, the more powerful is he for good.

Swamiji referred upanishad as the prime authentic document where impersonal aspect is derived very rationally. He said, it is true that the upanishad have this one theme before them, what is that knowing by which we know everything else. In modern language, the theme of the Upanishad is to find out an ultimate of things. Knowledge is nothing but finding unity in the midst of diversity. Every science is based upon this. All human knowledge is based upon the finding of unity in the midst of diversity and it is the task of small fragments of human knowledge which we call Sciences, to find out unity in the midst of different phenomena, the task becomes stupendous when theme before us is to find unity in the midst of this marvellous diversified universe, where prevailed unnumbered differences in name and form, in quality or characteristics – each thought differing from every other thought, each differing from every other form. Yet to harmonize these many planes and unending lokas, in the midst of infinite variety to find unity, is the essence of upanishad. So, it is the conclusion taught by Sri Ramakrishna to Swamiji (The young Naren), "The bowl is God and the pitcher is same God" contradicting the critical version of Hazra and experiencing such revelation for consecutive days.





Swami Vivekananda for the present - day world

**Swami Veetamohananda**

President, Centre Vedantique Ramakrishna, France



Swami Vivekananda represents the need of inner discipline and one - pointed love of truth. Life that is fresh, full of vigour, fearless is what is needed everywhere. Wisdom and serenity are the qualities that lead to success in life. The veritable science of spirituality presented by the swami is the unified heart, intelligence and reason strength and fearlessness unity and harmony. love and service are central theme of swami Vivekananda's life and mission.

The state in which the mind succeeds in stilling the glamour of the senses, becomes concentrated, steady and pure. The old ego is totally transformed and a new man - a universal man is born. A man of creativity is what Swami Vivekananda wanted. "Liberty of thought and action is the only condition of the life of growth and well being", are the inspiring words of the Swami. The ultimate goal of all mankind the aim and the end are reunion with the divine nature which is every man's true nature.

The search for the highest and the best makes the personality great. The joy of research into the higher life manifests itself as youthful spirit. All inferior entertainment excitations and exhaustion are annihilated by the youthful force. Growth, development and realisation become foremost in life. Labour and leisure become creative and educative is what Swamiji revealed to everyone.

Everyone has the capacity to overcome all the problems of life. Pangs of emotional tensions, joy and sorrow, elevation and depression, love and hate, are all fleeting experiences. The tension in life is the organism's struggle for freedom. Intense will power to go beyond problems is the mark of the true human spirit. Fullness of being should be an ever-present fact in all activities of life.

Excellent zest in life is to be sweet and lovable. The greatest joy in everyday life comes when we do not affirm ourselves egoistically. We are to see everything, everyone with a pure heart, eyes and mind. A separatist ego should be eliminated. Honest labour, the higher values of life-like be good and do good-should be the ways of life. When we are free from the spirit of selfish exploitation, we truly enjoy the fullness of life.

Richness in quality, in knowledge, love and joy, is possible only by disciplined life activities. Activities of life are to be directed towards fullness of the heart and the soul. Feelings of loneliness, frustration, stress and the burnt-out state, are due to lack of a true deep interest in making the right progress in life. The trivialities of life should not become a great concern. How to become full should become the greatest concern. Strength and fearlessness is the secret of infinite bliss.

Our body is an instrument in which to achieve the delights of social existence and spiritual emancipation. Life should not become static only with the pleasures of the world. Heavenly pleasures are also temporary. Creative life is that which moves towards truth, towards perfection. Self-actualisation and self-realisation alone can bring us everlasting joy.

There is a great challenge to human intelligence. The attainment of human excellence is the challenge. It is such a significant challenge, ever pleasing to the heart of everyone. The great joy of living comes from newer and newer vistas of life's beauty. Maturity in life, a sense of compassion, egolessness, and love for all are signs of growing human intelligence which culminates in wisdom. Wisdom removes all evils from the personality.

We need to keep control over our life. The way is to use every action, every opportunity, as a means of freeing ourselves from the clutches of tendencies and emotions. Life actions are to be transformed by considering them as abiding guests, and thus to give them a deeper meaning and significance. It is the quest for higher life that destroys all bondages. "All action in it's entirety, attains its consummation in

wisdom”, says the Bhagavad Gita.

The tensions and struggles, privations and sorrows are to be transcended. The mental, the moral, the aesthetic and intellectual planes of existence are not permanent. The innermost core of the human soul is the centre of whole universe. It is the awareness of this, his spiritual nature, which increases fearlessness, largeness of vision and leads the individual to the realisation of his true selfhood in the universal self.

The thoughts and insights of the people of Vedic period is the foundation and the stimulus of all later cultural and religious developments. The dynamic force of vedic culture is sustaining even today inspite of various upheavals. Man was the theme of the vedic society-man struggling to overcome external obstacles, man seeking delight in social and personal existence. Politics, economies, art, science, music, dance, religion, and philosophy – all are so enriching even for the present day world. It is cultural values that attracted the world. It is why it is appropriat to our world of today.

The spirit of inquiring dominates all human spirit. Questioning the existence of God reality, traditional faiths and their tenets, the application of values in everyday life, progress in life ect. are all important factors of vedic culture. The mystery of external universe deepen of the mystery if human inner world is neglected. Data of external world experience and inner world experience is important to progress. Self evolving cause behind the Universe was the discovery of spiritual scientists of vedic period. The Universe is not static but dynamic cosmic mind, nature and whatever one may call as super-natural. The vedic culture is free from all kinds dogma, doctrines etc.

Universality and humanism are two essential characteristics of the present day world. The achieveemnt of highest excellence is what the world needs today. The excellence is achieved through manifesting spiritual potentialities of man. Human excellence alone can overcome obstacles of life, establish a healthy enironment, physical and social to enjoy the delights of culture and civilisation. Let me quote Dr Radhakrishnan autor of Eastern Religious and Western thought « The destiny of human race, as of the individual, depends on the direction of its life forces, the lights which guide it, and laws that mould it ». The ultimate reality of man and universe is spiritual. This is the rapport.

The vedic discovery of the spiritual unity of all existence, and the emphasis on spiritual realization of the goal of religion is very important factor for the world of today. The inter human relationship is made possible by mutual tolerance and acceptance. This freedom in religious field is very much expressed in the Baghavat Gita Chap. IV : « Through whatever paths men come to me, I receive them through those very paths, all paths, O Arjuna, eventually come to me only ». This echo of vedic seirs « Truth is one, sages call it by various names ». What more evidence can we give ?

The values practised should not be contradictory. We need to readjust our vision and work according to the need and temperament of the present day world. This are the visions of Swami Vivekananda

The conception of religion is to awaken spiritual hunger. Spiritual awakening comes from conviction and endeavour. It is to transcend the sphere of theories, creeds and formulas. Here is a quote from Swmi Vivekananda : « To him all religions, from the felishism to the highest absolutism mean so many attempts of human soul to grasp and realize the Infinite, each determined by the conditions of its birth and association and each of these marks a stage of progress ; and every soul soul is a young eagle soaring higher and higher, gathering more and more strength till it reaches the glorious sun ». Each soul is potentially divine. Let us be up to Swami Vivekananda’s ideal of being.

Swami Veetamohananda







## Saints as Beacon Lights Swami Dayatmananda

Former President, Ramakrishna Vedanta Centre, UK



**D**urga Charan Nag, popularly known as Nag mahashay, was one of the greatest house-holder devotees of Sri Ramakrishna. Once he went to see Sri Ramakrishna and expressed his agony that he had not yet been able to surrender himself to the Lord. The Master consoled him, saying, "If you love 'this' [pointing to himself], everything will be all right." But that did not satisfy him. So he asked:

"Sir, how shall I pass my days at home?"

"You will not have to do anything. Only remain in the company of the holy."

"I am a simple, uneducated man. How shall I recognize holy men?"

"Listen, you will not have to look for them. You stay at home, and the real holy people will come to you of their own accord."

This advice of Sri Ramakrishna points the way to all sincere spiritual souls who are forced to remain in the world but are longing to advance in spiritual life.

Worldly or spiritual, everyone longs to attain happiness. The question is whether one knows how to be happy. Happiness is not a commodity one can buy, borrow or steal: happiness is a condition of the body, mind and environment. When the body and the mind are fit and healthy, and circumstances are peaceful and harmonious one experiences happiness.

And our scriptures declare that happiness is attained only when one lives life according to the dictates of Dharma, i.e., a righteous life. This is where the saints can help and guide us. Saints are like beacon lights. According to the dictionary a beacon is a person, an act, or a thing that warns or guides; a person or a thing that illuminates or inspires.

And all saints without exception act as beacon lights and help us with their inspiration, example, guidance, and warning.

And Nag Mahashay asked Sri Ramakrishna how do we find saints? How do we recognise them? What are the common characteristics they possess? The answer is simple. If we are sincere, earnest and do our best to live a good life as directed by scriptures, God himself will arrange the rest. There is a law of which Swami Vivekananda used to say that 'when the field is ready the seed must come'. When we are ready, unfailingly, the guidance and teaching will come at the right time and place in the right way.

"As I take it, universal history, the history of what man has accomplished in this world, is at bottom the history of the great men who have worked here...the soul of the whole world's history was the history of these."

*(Thomas Carlyle)*

All of us are hero-worshippers whether we know it or not. For, most of us need examples whereby we can set our goals, mould our lives accordingly and thereby make them meaningful and fulfilled. And the greatest of these heroes are saints.

I think it was Ralph Waldo Emerson, who said 'There is properly no history, only biography.' He meant all of us are influenced for good or evil by powerful people. In other words common people are all imitators at best. So those who are striving to lead an ideal life must exercise discrimination to find out an ideal person. This is where saints or even sincere spiritual seekers can help us much. **So who is a saint?** Certainly the scriptures enumerate the characteristics of saints in great detail. A saint is one who lives, moves and



has his being in God. To him, the whole world appears as a manifestation of God. He remains equanimous amidst all dualities like pain and pleasure, praise and censure, heat and cold. He knows nothing but God, speaks of God, and is intoxicated by the thought of God. Instinctively he knows what is right and wrong. Even the greatest suffering cannot unbalance him for he accepts all circumstances as the will of God.

The places where saints live and move become holy and pure.

A saint is a blessing on earth. They are the living demonstrations of scriptural teachings. Saints are the true benefactors of humanity. Throughout history, saints have played a great part in preserving spiritual values in the world.

**As Swami Sivananda puts it so beautifully:**

“A saint is a spiritual washerman. He applies the soap of devotion and knowledge, and removes the spots of sin in worldly people. In his presence, man becomes holy.

“The moment the mind thinks of a sage, immediately all evil desires, base passions, are brushed aside. Meditation on the lives of saints is equal to holy company. Study of their teachings is equal to holy company.

“To think of saints, to live in their company, to have good fortune of receiving their blessings, is to draw forth upon yourself a shower of purity, inspiration and divine consciousness.

“Love is the very breath of a saint. Mercy is his very nature. His heart overflows with compassion. He does not look to the faults of others. He returns good for evil and blesses those who curse him.”

What do we gain by the study the Lives of Saints?

In this world we see much discrepancy between profession and practice. We may not ourselves be honest and truthful, yet we would like to see honesty and truthfulness in others. When we look for these in others we are bound to be disappointed most of the time. It is only in a saint that we see perfect honesty and sincerity.

Again even though we may read all the scriptures in the world, we may not feel inspired to put their teachings into practice. As Swami Vivekananda says ‘religion is not talk but realization’. Inspiration can come only from a living soul. A lighted lamp alone can light other lamps. Only a saint can inspire men to lead a holy life. Every true saint inspires numberless people to tread the spiritual path.

Moreover many are the scriptures and varied are their teachings. One can easily get confused and lost. The lives of saints alone can give us correct understanding and guidance.

Again how do we know that the teachings of the scriptures are true? It is only by seeing them carried out in the life of a saint that we can have faith that they are true. The experiences of saints also authenticate the truth of the scriptures.

As mentioned earlier the lives of saints inspire and guide us. When we look at them the first thing that we notice is that the life of every saint is invariably centred in God. They see God everywhere. Their thoughts, actions, dreams, all are about God. They know nothing beside God. They are innocent of worldliness. They are the embodiments of purity and holiness.

We cannot but be struck by their simplicity and overflowing joy. Simplicity does not mean merely lack of things. There are enough poor people in this world who are unhappy and unfulfilled. Simplicity is to have a definite goal and live for it joyfully. Every page of The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna proclaims loudly the joy of living. And this in spite of the simple life Sri Ramakrishna led. How could saints be so joyful? Because they live, move and have their being in God who is Ananda-swarupa, bliss embodied

Many of us talk glibly of universal love. We know little of love, not to speak of universal love. But every saint is an embodiment of love. For they have become one with God who is of the nature of supreme love. They look upon all beings with equal eye as manifestations of God.

Love manifests in joy, knowledge, care and responsibility. Saints do not proclaim their service. Whatever they do becomes the greatest service; for every action of theirs points to God alone.

We may think saints are otherworldly and dreamy visionaries. No. Saints are the most practical people in the world. We become amazed when we find how practical and efficient they could be. It is because their minds are not clogged like ours. They can see and understand everything better than us, and we find no cobwebs in their brains. They perform all actions with great care and concentration.

Saints radiate joy, tranquillity and peace. And yet even saints have their fair share of troubles and trouble-givers. Every saint's life testifies to it; it may be that they have even more suffering than what we experience. But the way they face and react to suffering is what makes them saints. Pain and pleasure, good and evil, praise and censure— all these they accept as part of the process called living. And they react to all events with equanimity. Whatever happens they take to be the will of the divine. They have the capacity to integrate evil, pain and suffering into their lives and enjoy everything.

There is no doubt whatsoever that the study of the lives of saints is of the greatest benefit. As Carlyle puts it: 'Great men, taken up in any way, are profitable company. We cannot look, however imperfectly, upon a great man without gaining something by him.'

All of us may not be fortunate in getting a living saint. But their biographies, which are abundant, can help us as well. We can get their biographies in the form of books, ebooks. That is digital Satsanga i.e., holy company.

Let us seek the company of sages and evolve. Satsanga with sages is unfailing in its results. They alone can show the way to eternal bliss and immortality.

When we study the lives of saints we are inspired at once, when we remember their sayings we are elevated immediately; when we walk in their footsteps we are freed from pain and sorrow.

Let us take all the help we can and become blessed. The very company of sages and saints has a tremendous transforming effect on the lives of all true seekers. It lifts us up to heights of sublimity, purity and spirituality.



**Do not let worldly thoughts and anxieties disturb your mind. Do everything that is necessary in the proper time, and let your mind be always fixed on God.**

***-Sri Ramakrishna***

**If my son wallows in the dust or mud, it is I who have to wipe all the dirt and take him on my lap.**

***-Holy Mother***

**The history of the world is the history of a few men who had faith in themselves. That faith calls out the Divinity within. You can do anything. You fail only when you do not strive sufficiently to manifest infinite power. As soon as a man or a nation loses faith in himself or itself, death comes. Believe first in yourself, and then in God.**

***-Swami Vivekananda***



## Literary Genius of Swami Vivekananda

### Swami Bodhasarananda

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Swami Vivekananda was a multi-faceted personality, but most of all, a great spiritual teacher, who worked ceaselessly for the good of all. Whatever he said or did was directed not only for the salvation of India, but also for the removal of suffering all over the world. Above all, his goal was to see that all human beings could attain knowledge of their divine nature. Swamiji's message, therefore, was not for one period of time, but for all times; not for one country, but for all countries.

In India, many people are drawn to Swamiji because of his great love for his country. To them he was a 'patriot-saint'; he was more an awakener of India than an awakener of souls. But to the devotees and admirers of Swamiji in other parts of the world, the story is different. Their joyful discovery of his message is an endless source of strength, courage, and inspiration, and this is why they love him.

In spite of the fact that his public life spanned only nine years, Vivekananda's literary output was vast. He gave hundreds of lectures, many of which were transcribed and published. He wrote many articles and poems, and also carried on correspondence with people all over the world. By 1907, five years after the Swami's passing away, the first edition of his collected works had been prepared for publication. This was printed on a hand press at a Himalayan monastery called Advaita Ashrama, which Vivekananda himself had established a few years before his passing away. This initial compilation consisted of four volumes, but as new material kept coming to light, several more volumes were added. At present Vivekananda's Complete Works comprise 9 volumes.

It is well known that Swamiji's name first became prominent in 1893 when he delivered his first speech at the World's Parliament of Religions in Chicago. Ever since then his rousing message of character building—a message that encompasses all religions and races—has been a source of inspiration to people all over the world, especially to those who endeavour to improve the lives of human beings everywhere. Universally recognized as a global spiritual teacher with a deep humanistic approach, he has been imperceptibly leading human beings as much after his passing away as he did when he was alive.

When Sri Ramakrishna said, "Naren will teach," it was after he himself had trained Vivekananda and made him fit for his work. Further, Swamiji had equipped himself well by immersing himself in the current of English literature when he was a student, while at the same time holding firm to the cultural and spiritual moorings of his motherland.

Wherever he went he spoke with utmost sincerity. He became one with his listeners, and seemed to enter into their very thoughts. Thus, in his talks, he could lead people to a realm of joy and hope. He was a powerful orator, and had also mastered various styles of prose and poetry, both in English and Bengali.

We have heard of the tremendous impact that Vivekananda created when he addressed the audience at the Parliament of Religions as 'Sisters and Brothers of America'. We are told that as soon as he had spoken these words, there arose thunderous applause that lasted for several minutes. He was called 'an orator by divine right'. Among the many tributes paid to him on this occasion, one that especially deserves quoting is that by the famous poetess Harriet Monroe. She recorded in her autobiography: 'But the handsome monk in the orange robe gave us in perfect English a masterpiece. His personality, dominant, magnetic; his voice, rich as a bronze bell; the controlled fervor of his feelings; the beauty of his message to the Western world he was facing for the first time—these combined to give us a rare and perfect moment of supreme emotion. It was human eloquence at its highest pitch.' Even if there might be some exaggeration in this, it still reveals much about Vivekananda as an orator.

Similarly, Miss Kate Sanborn, a popular American writer, got a hint of the fire in Vivekananda when they were travelling together by train from Chicago to Boston. She wrote: "Most of all was I impressed by the



monk, a magnificent specimen of manhood ... with a lordly, imposing stride, as if he ruled the universe, and soft, dark eyes that could flash fire if roused, or dance with merriment if the conversation amused him.... He spoke better English than I did, was conversant with ancient and modern literature, would quote easily and naturally from Shakespeare or Longfellow or Tennyson, Darwin, Muller, Tyndall; could repeat pages of our Bible, was familiar with and tolerant of all creeds. He was an education, an illumination, a revelation!"

Mrs. John J Bagley, whose husband was a former two-term governor of the state of Michigan, hosted Vivekananda at her residence in Detroit. She was so fascinated by this charming guest that she wrote to her friend, "... He is a strong, noble human being, one who walks with God. He is simple and trustful as a child.... Wherever he spoke, people listened gladly and said, 'I never heard man speak like that.' He does not antagonize, but lifts people up to a higher level.... Every human being would be made better by knowing him.... I want every one in America to know Vivekananda, and if India has more such let her send them to us."

The fact is that Swamiji was a born orator; he knew what he was saying and he knew how to say it in a masterly way. Apart from the fact that he had a wonderful command of the English language, his voice was musical and his logic penetrating. The other noteworthy point is that he not only talked about the grand truths of his own religion but also mentioned the shortcomings of it in their practical application. At the same time, he had great respect for other people's religions. To him religion was life and not mere thought. It had to be lived.

For the first time in the history of humanity, the Chicago Parliament of Religions facilitated the coming together of representatives of all religions under a single roof, thus clearing the mist that enveloped the religious firmament of the world. When Swamiji told John Henry Wright, a professor of Greek at Harvard University, that he had no credentials to speak at the Parliament, the professor replied, "To ask you, Swami, for your credentials is like asking the sun to state its right to shine!" Prof. Wright then wrote to the chairman of the committee for selection of delegates, "Here is a man who is more learned than all our learned professors put together." Such was the brilliant personality of the Swami. Through his addresses at the Parliament, and later through his lectures, interviews, class talks, and informal conversations, Swamiji injected into the collective mind of humanity the ideals of universality and harmony. It is doubtful whether even those who heard him and applauded him knew that the young monk before them was not merely 'an orator by divine right' but also a prophet for the modern age.

Yet one of the greatest examples of his eloquence took place after his return to India from the West, when he was presented an address of welcome in Kolkata. His reply to this address has become famous as a masterpiece of oratory and fervent patriotism. It marked him out as the 'Prophet of Modern India'. In it he defined the whole scope of Indian consciousness in a new form, and he presented entirely new ideals for the national and public life.

Now let us study Swamiji as a writer. We find that he had a gift for writing even in his young days. According to Romain Rolland, somewhere between the years 1881 and 1884, Swami Vivekananda, as the young Narendranath Datta, carried on a correspondence with the world famous English philosopher-sociologist Herbert Spencer (1820-1903). Narendranath wrote to Spencer seeking permission to translate his book on Education into Bengali for the publisher Gurudas Chattopadhyaya. Remarkably, however, in one of his letters, the young Naren challenged one of Spencer's ideas. "Spencer was astonished, so it was said, by his daring criticisms, and admired the precociousness of his philosophical intellect."

Swami Vivekananda wrote hundreds of letters, some of which depict the plan of his work and the means he wanted to adopt for the fulfillment of his divine mission. These letters contain guidelines for present and future workers, showing how the nation should be directed. At the same time, since he was conscious of his own divinity, he wanted others also to rise to the full stature of their divinity.

Vivekananda was a dynamic personality and a fiery soul, so we can imagine what powerful effects his letters had upon those to whom they were addressed. His letters contain so many stirring passages, a single one of which might bring about a great revolution and complete transformation in the recipient's life. The same fire is seen in them even now, though they were written more than a hundred years ago. There is no doubt that the smouldering fire in them might blaze forth at any time and inspire a person's

life anywhere. Moreover, his letters can well be quoted as examples of literary excellence.

The following are excerpts from letters that he wrote to Mary Hale and Miss MacLeod: "I have a message to give, I have no time to be sweet to the world, and every attempt at sweetness makes me a hypocrite. I shall die a thousand deaths rather than lead a jelly-fish existence and yield to every requirement of this foolish world.... You are mistaken ... if you think I have a work. I have no work under or beyond the sun. I have a message, and I will give it after my own fashion. I will neither Hinduize my message nor Christianize it, nor make it any 'ize' in the world. I will only my-ize it and that is all. Liberty, Mukti, is all my religion, and everything that tries to curb it, I will avoid by fight or flight." "I have bundled my things and am waiting for the deliverer. Shiva, Shiva, carry my boat to the other shore..." In another letter written towards the end of his life, he said in a reflective mood: "After all, Joe, I am only the boy who used to listen with rapt wonderment to the wonderful words of Ramakrishna under the banyan at Dakshineswar. That is my true nature; works, activities, doing good and so forth are all superimpositions. Now I again hear his voice; the same old voice thrilling my soul."

Again, many of his essays, such as Aryans and Tamilians, The Problem of Modern India and Its Solution, The Education that India Needs, reveal his gift for prose writing, and even now are examples of great essay writing. Moreover, his knowledge and understanding of history was both deep and extensive. Although he wrote only a few short essays on historical subjects, his penetrating insight into historical evolution is revealed in numerous passages throughout his speeches and writings. On language his ideal was unequivocal: "Simplicity is the secret. My ideal of language is my Master's language, most colloquial and yet expressive. It must express the thought which is intended."

Though Vivekananda wrote mostly in English, his literary style is best judged by his writings in Bengali. These works include Vartman Bharat (Modern India), Parivrajaka (Memoirs of European Travel), Prachya O Paschatya (The East and the West), Bhabbar Katha (Points to Ponder), as well as some of his letters and poems in Bengali. Apart from the rich store of thoughts and information contained in these writings, they are even more remarkable for the simple colloquial language in which they were written. In those days, during British rule, it was generally believed that serious topics could not be written about in the colloquial language. But Swamiji showed how it was possible. In fact, it was the great poet Rabindranath Tagore who first appreciated the merit of the new Bengali style introduced by Swamiji. He cited Swamiji's Prachya O Paschatya as a model for showing how colloquial Bengali can be a lively and forceful language.

But first and foremost are Swamiji's philosophical works. In addition to his Harvard address on Vedanta Philosophy, Swamiji's volumes on Karma Yoga, Bhakti Yoga, Raja Yoga, and Jnana Yoga are outstanding contributions to philosophical literature. They reveal such a depth of understanding of each subject, and yet are presented in such simple language that they rank as classics and would have brought him fame and honour on their merits alone.

In addition, we find Vivekananda the poet. There are many Indian saints who have produced great poetical works in one or another vernacular language in India. But Vivekananda was the first to write in English. Some of his English poems have reached a level of sublimity of a very high order. Probably the best is 'Kali the Mother,' which depicts in rich and elegant imagery the divine aspect of terror and destruction. Sister Nivedita gave us a vivid picture of the depth of Swamiji's fervour when he wrote this poem. He was immersed in an intense spiritual experience, and as he wrote the last words, his pen slipped from his hand and he fell on the floor, losing consciousness. His soul soared to the highest spiritual state. Other poems like 'My Play is Done', 'Song of the Sannyasin', and 'Hold on yet a While' are also outstanding. As his Complete Works runs into nine volumes, and the corpus of his writings and speeches is so overwhelming in depth and magnitude, his identity as a poet has almost been lost to readers. He is often remembered more for his nationalistic and philosophical lectures.

We cannot forget, however, that Vivekananda was also a wonderful storyteller. His stories are a vivid reminder of the Indian storytelling tradition that is thousands of years old. All through his talks and writings we find numerous anecdotes and illustrations. Though some of these are well known, they are all relevant and thought-provoking, revealing his profound knowledge of human nature. He has narrated, among others, the stories of Sita and Savitri, the Ramayana, Mahabharata, and Vilvamangal with a telling effect.

Going through the works of Swami Vivekananda, Romain Rolland, his French biographer, wrote: "His words are great music, phrases in the style of Beethoven, stirring rhythms like the march of Handel choruses. I cannot touch these sayings of his ... without receiving a thrill through my body like an electric shock. And what shocks ... must have been produced when in burning words they issued from the lips of the hero!"

Swami Vivekananda was only 39 when he passed away. In about nine years, from 1893 to 1902, his most meaningful and active years, he immersed himself in extensive preaching work and also put the Ramakrishna Mission on a sound footing. He had neither the time nor the interest to devote himself to the pursuit of a career as a poet or a writer. He was in essence a saint, a spiritual teacher, and an interpreter of Vedanta. His occasional writings of poems and articles were purely the consequence of an individual's urge for self-expression. He himself said: "I was born for the life of a scholar—retired, quiet, poring over my books. But the Mother dispenses otherwise—yet the tendency is there." Moreover, he knew he would not live long. In a letter written in October 1898 from Lahore, he wrote: "I have three years more to live, and the only thought that disturbs me is whether I shall be able to give effect to all my ideas within this period." At the same time, the poet in him could not help but give expression to his inner feelings through lines such as the following:

'Listen, friend, I will speak my heart to thee:  
I have found in my life this truth supreme--  
Buffeted by waves, in this whirl of life,  
There's one ferry that takes across the sea.'

This almost seems to form a refrain in most of his speeches and writings, calling upon human beings to seek God. Similarly, he exhorts us in his poem 'To a Friend' to remember that God is there in His manifold forms before us all, but we, in our ignorance, cannot see him:

'There are His manifold forms before thee,  
Rejecting them, where seekest thou for God.  
Who loves all beings, without distinction,  
He indeed is worshipping best his God.'

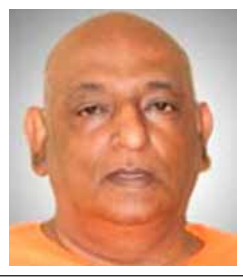
While in America, he said: "Never forget the glory of Human Nature! We are the Greatest God. ... Christs and Buddhas are but waves on the boundless Ocean which I am." In all his writings and speeches, we constantly find that he speaks of the Divine in human beings at their best. His religion was for all. In fact, he believed that religion was of no avail if it 'cannot wipe out the widow's tears or bring a piece of bread to the orphan's mouth.' Imbued with a liberal socialistic humanism, he confessed that 'religion is not for empty bellies.' He also said, 'If you want to find God, serve man.'

Such a celestial combination of a prophet, a philosopher, a humanist, a patriot, an orator, and a literary genius is indeed matchless!



**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**



## Swami Vivekananda's Message to the World – on Universal Tolerance

**Swami Divyananda**

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It took a long journey of thousands of years for progression of mankind from nomadic to social life. It was another few thousand years, mankind took to establish civilization from agrarian society. The term civilization has some broad meaning and may be said as 'the process by which a society or place reaches an advanced stage of social development and organization'. In other words, the civilisation may be considered as a complex society that is defined by social, political, cultural, educational, scientific, technological and economic features in some place and time. The major oldest human civilizations were Mesopotamian, Indus Valley and Egyptian civilization dated back four thousand to six thousand five hundred years.

A society consists of people. In a civilized society usually, there are thousands even millions of people living together. Managing such a large mass needs strong governance with well framed constitution, laws, rules and regulations, maintenance of law and order and making necessary arrangements for providing at least basic and other needs of society people. In a society everybody has definite role to play. There must be a well-balanced distribution of work and employment amongst people according to qualification and skill and everybody is expected to perform his duty satisfactorily. All the society people should have good moral and social life. Such an ideal civilized society can only grow and sustain for a prolonged period of time and for this the basic pre-requisites are peace and harmony.

To survive on earth, mankind requires several needs which are physiological, social as well as mental. The basic physiological needs are food, water, clothing and shelter. After these basic needs, mankind seeks social needs like safety, security, belongingness, love, intimate relationship and friendship etc. These needs led man to form society. As the basic needs are more or less fulfilled, mankind goes to fulfil the higher mental needs like self-esteem, confidence, achievement, need to know and understand etc. and self-actualization like morality, creativity, spirituality etc. There are also exceptions where some people may give more priority to self-actualization than social needs.

Apart from basic physiological needs, mankind for his survival seeks safety and security. For the sake of defense against enemies and ferocious wild animals, he realized the value of integration and thus formed groups. In pre-historic days, when men were cave-dwellers, they felt the need of being united. People in those days were nomadic and lived on hunting only. So, they used to fight always with each other for food and shelter and thereby weakened themselves. This made many ancient tribes being extinct. To save mankind from extinction due to natural calamity, attack from predator animals and inter-group fighting – the early people learned to form society – they realized the philosophy of integration. The concept of integration freed early people from uncertain nomadic barbarian life - made them civilized and gave them roadmap of development. A number of individuals formed a group - a number of groups formed a society - a number of societies formed a nation and a number of nations formed a state or a country. Thus, many powerful states or countries have been formed by strong integration of its nations. Larger the country – stronger and more powerful it is.

Now mankind's struggle to fulfil his needs makes him competitive and to possess diverse attitudes and views. Moreover, the distribution of work amongst different people of a society, depending on knowledge and skill, also creates different working class with varying economic status. Those, who are in governance and administration, enjoy more power and sometimes intentionally create division amongst people for their own benefits and vested interests. Thus, often in a civilized society where everybody is expected to have equal opportunity, one finds privileged and unprivileged class people of varying degrees. Thus, disharmonies and disintegrations are created in a society.



Another strong source of disintegration in society is created by religion. A true and properly understood religion is the greatest source of integration, harmony and peace in a society or nation. But historical experiences show that, misunderstood and misinterpreted religion and sometimes use of such religion in social, cultural and political life for vested interests, created disintegration and disharmony in society and that led to bloody riots and even ethnic wars.

Now in pre-historic era, mankind formed groups or societies, so as to live together for their own safety, security and belongingness. But he was totally unable to protect himself and his group, or society failed to provide him any help and security, from natural catastrophes like flood, earthquake, storm, thunder or forest fire. People in those days believed that behind these natural threats, there ought to be some kind of highly powerful beings. To get protection from natural threats, people started worshipping and praying to those invisible powers who later took shape in the form of different Gods. In ancient world Gods got different names and forms in different civilizations. In course of time religions developed centered around those Gods. Basically, the traits of religion are some moral codes of conduct for everybody so as to live a sacred life, to have faith in God either in form or formless, scriptures and by following rituals so as to bring peace and harmony in society.

The traditional religions of the ancient world like Hinduism, Indo-Iranian religion (Zoroastrianism), Judaism, Taoism, Shintoism grew in their natural way over centuries in different parts of the world although they were reformed by great saints and philosophers periodically. History shows that from time to time more and more people became materialistic and greed, jealousy, corruption, power-craze of people led to moral degradations in societies that sometimes, caused total destruction and annihilation of established civilizations. There came in earlier times a limited few great souls in the history of mankind who were true religious teachers with great heart full of love for mankind like Gautam Buddha, Jesus Christ, Hazarat Muhammad, Mahavir Jain, Guru Nanak, Sri Chaitanya and in modern age Sri Ramakrishna who advised people of their societies how to lead a true moral and spiritual life for sustenance. In fact, none of them were founder of any new religion – what they did to common mass were to remind them the eternal moral codes of conduct for living a pure sacred life. They preached to love all people, showed them the way for how to live in peace and harmony. None of them instituted any new religion - rather they reformed the existing one to suit the era. The close followers of these great men and their subsequent generations of followers, who carried his teachings, gradually created new religions at a much later stage. Thus, apart from traditional religions, new religions like Buddhism, Christianity, Islam, Jainism, Sikhism were born. But with time, the differences in thoughts, philosophies and beliefs of different religious leaders created further sects and sub-sects in each religion. To gain supremacy and authority in society there were socially and politically motivated frequent inter-religion and intra-religion fighting, riots and even wars resulting in loss of properties and human lives and destroying integrity, peace and harmony in society or country to a large extent.

Mankind was involved in group clashes and small-scale wars long before the dawn of civilization. As civilization progressed, more and more empires were established. For the greed of more wealth, more power, more kingdom, mankind faced, for thousands of years, frequent violent wars destroying innumerable human lives and properties. In the magnum scale, mankind had to face two devastating world wars in the last century. In the second world war alone 7 to 8.5 crore people died. Although no official data are available it can be assumed safely that crores and crores of people were wounded. Even today in the era of democracy the world is never free from wars, conflicts and insurgencies.

The most pathetic is that religion, which is supposed to guide mankind in the path of peace and harmony, itself sometimes caused small as well as largescale infightings, riots, arsons and even long drawn wars, destroying human lives and properties. Misunderstanding and misinterpretation of scriptures along with utilizing religion for vested interest and personal gain by some so-called religious leaders, devalued every religion which is evident from the visible gulf between their spiritual ideals and the activities of religious communities. Our practical life contradicts the spiritual ideals we endorse in theory. Selfishness, greed and power-loving mentality are the sources of injustice, cruelty and exploitation and are responsible for corruption in public life and communalizing politics.

History is the witness of series of western holy wars known as Crusades that lasted for almost two hundred years. Jews who follow Judaism were severely oppressed since the time of Egyptian Civilization

three thousand years back. Even in the last century, in second world war six million Jews were killed by Nazi Germany. Since the time of British Period, India faced frequent Hindu-Muslim riots. Religion is playing an increasingly significant role in the present continuous conflicts across the Middle East. Considering different major religions and large number of different sects in every religion there are at present over four thousand religions in the world. Those who are fundamentalists always try to establish their faiths and doctrines over others, sometimes forcibly, which often lead to clashes. This was pointed out by Swami Vivekananda in his legendary introductory speech in World Parliament of Religion in 1893 held in Chicago - "...Sectarianism, bigotry, and its horrible descendant, fanaticism, have long possessed this beautiful earth. They have filled the earth with violence, drenched it often and often with human blood, destroyed civilization and sent whole nations to despair. Had it not been for these horrible demons, human society would be far more advanced than it is now". So Swamiji said - "Religion must be studied on a broader basis than formerly. All narrow, limited, fighting ideas of religion have to go. All sect ideas and tribal or national ideas of religion must be given up. That each tribe or nation should have its own particular God, and think that every other is wrong, is a superstition that should belong to the past. All such ideas must be abandoned".



The World Parliament of Religion was held at Chicago from 11th to 27th September, 1893 for the first time in the history of mankind. The objective behind this convention was to develop harmony and peace amongst different institutional religions, religious sects and spiritual communities through mutual discussion so as to create a conscientious, peaceful and sustainable world. Although Swami Vivekananda was not an invited speaker and he got a wild card entry yet he stole the entire limelight of the convention by his angel like appearance, profound knowledge and enchanting delivery of speech. There were quite a large number of erudite speakers from different religions and sects and most of them highlighted their own spiritual philosophies. Swami Vivekananda popularly called by Swamiji although represented Hinduism - but mostly promoted the tolerance and concept of universal brotherhood that started from his first famous five-word address - "My Sisters and Brothers of America" for which he received a tumultuous ovation lasting for few minutes from listeners.

Swamiji said in his introductory speech - "I am proud to belong to a religion which has taught the world both tolerance and universal acceptance. We believe not only in universal toleration, but we accept all religions as true. I am proud to belong to a nation which has sheltered the persecuted and the refugees of all religions and all nations of the earth. I am proud to tell you that we have gathered in our bosom the purest remnant of the Israelites, who came to Southern India and took refuge with us in the very year in which their holy temple was shattered to pieces by Roman tyranny. I am proud to belong to the religion which has sheltered and is still fostering the remnant of the grand Zoroastrian nation. I will quote to you, brethren, a few lines from a hymn which I remember to have repeated from my earliest boyhood, which is every day repeated by millions of human beings: "As the different streams having their sources in different places all mingle their water in the sea, so, O lord, the different paths which men take through different tendencies, various though they appear, crooked or straight, all lead to Thee."

Now what is tolerance? The term tolerance is to recognize and respect other's beliefs and rituals or other practices without sharing in them or it can also be described as a respect, acceptance and appreciation of the rich diversity of our world's religion, cultures, forms of expression and ways of being human.

Swamiji's spiritual master Sri Ramakrishna Paramhansa, whom famous British-American novelist Christopher Isherwood described as a 'phenomenon', is the only one in the history of mankind who did his spiritual sadhana following the paths of major religions Islam and Christianity apart from Hinduism and also following different paths of religious sects that exist in Hinduism. He attained highest realization states in each and every spiritual path he followed in quick succession in twelve years of his sadhana period.

Finally, from his spiritual experiences Sri Ramakrishna proclaimed his famous maxim - "Jato Mat, Tato Path" which literally means - as many religions, sects, faiths with different philosophies or doctrines there are, so many spiritual paths there will be. The paths that are all proven, may be different but lead to same goal. God is one, people call Him by different names, worship Him in formless or in forms of various deities. Sri Ramakrishna explained his ideas in lucid language and through parables and examples from

everyday life.

What Sri Ramakrishna primarily advised in his teachings is the tolerance. Intolerance is one of the major causes of disharmony and turmoil faced by human being for a long time and sadly facing even today. He repeatedly warned his disciples, followers and admirers not to be dogmatic as all religions are true which he himself verified through spiritual realization.

All institutional religions have three basic parts – Spirituality, Scriptures and Rituals. In terms of spirituality there is no basic difference between the religions. Scriptures also say more or less the same thing in different way. The differences and all sorts of disagreements arise in case of rituals as these depend on time, location, nature, status, culture, education, beliefs prejudice etc. of people. Moreover, as Swamiji said – “Each religion brings out its own doctrines and insists upon them as being the only true ones. And not only does it do that, but it thinks that he who does not believe in them must go to some horrible place.”

Unfortunately, people educated or uneducated mostly regard rituals as the religion. Now the problem is that in the name of rituals there are a few activities and do’s and don’ts that are utterly superstitious and bear no logic. Naturally many people with progressive and scientific bent of mind find and consider these, losing more and more faith on religion and becoming atheist. Living a religious life does not imply to follow blindly all the rituals in vogue as prescribed by priests and socio-religious heads. For living a true religious life, one must practice and maintain all moral values and as far as possible to be pure in body and mind. Surely some rituals that lead man to be pure in body and mind have relevance in one’s religious life. The misunderstanding and misinterpretation of the significance of the term religion lead to all the troubles faced by as well as caused by religion.

Today there are increasing number of people who think religion has absolutely no role in human life and what is said as God does not exist at all. Following the famous comment of German Philosopher and economist Karl Max, they believe that “Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world, and the soul of soulless conditions. It is the opium of the people”. Yes, it is true, that religion has caused human being to suffer a lot, yet those who really understood what religion is, it helped them to get true love and peace. Said Swamiji – “...each religious sect has claimed the exclusive right to live. And thus, we find that though there is nothing that has brought to man more blessings than religion, yet at the same time, there is nothing that has brought more horror than religion. Nothing has made more for peace and love than religion; nothing has engendered fiercer hatred than religion. Nothing has made the brotherhood of man more tangible than religion; nothing has bred more bitter enmity between man and man than religion. Nothing has built more charitable institutions, more hospitals for men, and even for animals, than religion; nothing has deluged the world with more blood than religion”.



Now what is religion? Swamiji said – “Religion is the manifestation of the Divinity already in man”. Swamiji also said – “Each soul is potentially divine”. One must try to understand the meaning and significance of religion from these two one liners from Swamiji. It is true that Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda did not come on earth to establish and promote a new religion or doctrine – they only reestablished the eternal spirituality basically based on ancient Vedanta philosophy reexplaining it as suitable as for modern age. Swamiji was trained and educated in his spiritual master Sri Ramakrishna’s thoughts and ideas. After his phenomenal success in Chicago convention Swamiji, mostly preached in America and Europe, the concept of Vedanta as Vedanta is such a philosophy whose scope is universal in its application and is relevant to all countries, all cultures and all religious backgrounds. Vedanta may be called as the science of spirituality.

#### **What Vedanta teaches us are primarily:**

- The ultimate Reality or ultimate Truth termed as Brahman is formless, attribute-less, impersonal, unchangeable, invisible, inexpressible, indivisible and infinite. It is of the nature of Satchidananda meaning Sat, Chit and Ananda – Existence, Consciousness and Bliss. Brahman is the only being that exists in the universe and there is no second being (Ekamebadwitiyam).



- Brahman is both the immanence and transcendence cause of the universe. It manifests through all the living beings, all matters, all our knowledge, thoughts and feelings in this universe.
- The infinite being, we call God (Ishwar – Brahman with attributes – Saguna Brahman), may be regarded as the all-pervasive energy (Shakti) that creates, fosters and annihilates everything in the universe and is the creative or working form of Brahman. Thus, every individual being, every matter is nothing but the waves with name and form in the infinite ocean of energy. Every individual soul called Atman is nothing but a part or reflection of Brahman (Paramatman). So Swamiji said “Each soul is potentially divine.” Every individual being is a degenerated God with varying degree of divinity and energy. The oneness of God, the universe and the human being is the central theme of Vedanta.
- Vedanta is absolutely free from any sort of dogmatism and affirms that all world religions are valid paths which can lead one to realize the absolute truth.

Vedanta is not a mere theoretical concept, it is very much pragmatic and can be applied in practice. Swamiji in his lecture on Practical Vedanta delivered in London on 10th November, 1896 said: “...theory is very good indeed, but how are we to carry it into practice? If it be absolutely impracticable, no theory is of any value whatever except as intellectual gymnastics. The Vedanta, therefore, as a religion must be intensely practical. We must be able to carry it out in every part of our lives. And not only this, the fictitious differentiation between religion and the life of the world must vanish, for the Vedanta teaches oneness – one life throughout. The ideals of religion must cover the whole field of life; they must enter into all our thoughts, and more and more into practice.”

If a person understands the concepts of Vedanta properly and practices them in his daily life, that is what Swamiji called practical Vedanta, he will consider every other people irrespective of religions, sects or castes or philosophies or doctrines, as a manifestation of same Supreme Entity called Brahman or Iswar (the dynamic form) or God, or Allah or Jehovah in whatever name people may call. He will never indulge in intolerance, fanaticism or any sorts of inter-religious or intra-religious clashes. Today the tremendous advancement of science and technology has narrowed down the world with rapid transport systems, high-speed tele-communication and internet. People of different countries, nations, cultures can know each other well and contact each other easily. The idea of globalization can wreath all countries of the world of diverse characteristics with the possibility of a universal mankind society. But unfortunately, the greatest hindrances in this approach are intolerance, religious as well as political fanaticism, creating disharmony and trouble for vested interests, political or other personal gains, power game etc.

Although we speak of tolerance Swamiji had objection for this term. He preferred the term acceptance to tolerance. He said categorically – “Our watchword, then, will be acceptance, and not exclusion. Not only toleration, for so-called toleration is often blasphemy, and I do not believe in it. I believe in acceptance. Why should I tolerate? Toleration means that I think that you are wrong and I am just allowing you to live. Is it not a blasphemy to think that you and I are allowing others to live? I accept all religions that were in the past, and worship with them all; I worship God with every one of them, in whatever form they worship Him...”

Now Sri Ramakrishna strongly advocated and his prime disciple Swami Vivekananda vehemently preached the Harmony of Religion which explains the idea of acceptance. It is very true that many people including high level intellectuals, scientists and educationists are becoming non-believers and opine that God does not exist and so there is absolutely no need of any religion for mankind, it is nothing but an illusion to him. Studies and statistical data shows that presently the percentage of atheists and agnostics in different countries of the world vary from 1% to almost 50%. Even there are few countries in the world which are atheist countries as declared by their Government. One thing must be remembered that religion whether out of love, illusion, by force or due to blind faith, is flowing in the blood of mankind for the last few thousand years and it is next to impossible to filter it out completely.

Moreover, religion teaches us how to lead a moral life, how to maintain our values and ethics. It guides man to attain the highest level of purity of his own soul which is pre-requisite for realization of the Supreme Truth. Religion teaches love, kindness, truthfulness, honesty and other positive qualities. How it can cause trouble and sometimes devastation in human life unless religion is deliberately or ignorantly misinterpreted and preached fanatic bizarre ideas in the name of religion by so called guardians of



religion and leaders in the society? Then why should one blame religion for this? With the help of a lamp one may print fake currency notes. Should anyone blame lamp for this? Swamiji said – “Religious quarrels are always over the husks. When purity, when spirituality goes, leaving the soul dry, quarrels begin, and not before”.

Following Swamiji’s lecture on universal religion it can be said that although some philosophers and others dreamt of universal religion but it already exists. Each religion has an inner soul. And inner souls of all religions even if they may differ from one another are not contradictory rather supplementary. Essentially, they each explain some parts or other of the same Eternal Absolute Truth, may be from different angles of view. Swamiji explained this with example saying that if snaps are taken of a church from four different corners they would look different but they are all photographs of the same church.

Let there be hundreds of religions, sects or belief systems. Each one of them is a different path and all path lead to same goal. It is also to be remembered that each one of them has produced high spiritually enlightened souls who reached the pinnacle of their sadhana stage and achieved the highest level of realization of supreme truth. Sri Ramakrishna has proved this by experimenting in his own life. He advised that there is no need to change one’s religion. Swamiji said – “The Christian is not to become a Hindu or a Buddhist, nor a Hindu or a Buddhist to become a Christian. But each must assimilate the spirit of the others and yet preserve the individuality and grow according to his own law of growth”. With strong faith and devotion in one’s own religion along with deep reverence for other religions and philosophies if someone earnestly seeks for the supreme truth, he will surely get it one day – so assured Sri Ramakrishna.

At the concluding session of the Parliament of Religion on 27th September, 1893 Swamiji said – “...It (the conference) has proved to the world that holiness, purity and charity are not the exclusive possessions of any church in the world and that every system has produced men and women of the most exalted character. In the face of this evidence, if anybody dreams of the exclusive survival of his own religion and the destruction of the others, I pity him from the bottom of my heart, and point out to him that upon the banner of every religion will soon be written in spite of resistance: “Help and not fight,” “Assimilation and not Destruction,” “Harmony and Peace and not Dissension.”



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 As The Apostle Of World Peace

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In a world that is torn asunder by strife and conflict, peace is the healing balm that every human being is seeking with tearful eyes and an anguished heart. 'Peace, O Peace' is the song of the soul everywhere—East or West, North or South. Terror-stricken and panic-driven, the human heart throbbing in any part of the globe cries for peace and tranquility, harmony and concord. This beautiful earth, the sun, the moon and the stars display remarkable harmony and beauty. The scientists from time immemorial have been trying to probe into these awe-inspiring patterns of symmetry and harmony, of beauty and sublimity. The utter sense of wonder that this investigation evokes in their hearts and minds has driven them to 'stand and stare' in mute awe before the infinite majesty of Nature. The symmetry and beauty hidden in the depths of the atoms, the nuclei and the elementary particles of the microcosm on the one hand, and the vast, mind-boggling majesty of the suns, moons, stars and nebulae of the macrocosm on the other, lift the human mind to a world altogether different from the one that selfish human beings have created on this beautiful earth. The pursuit of science then reaches its pinnacle. At its dizzy heights, pursuit of physical science no longer remains a materialistic endeavour, but fades into mystical metaphysical realization. Human being feels so small, human intellect finds itself so inadequate to fathom the depths of the cosmic mystery, be it at the micro-level or the macro. This has been the experience all the great scientists the world has seen. The words of Newton and Einstein are well known. Newton said: "I seem to myself like a child, playing on the seashore, picking up a pebble here and there, while the vast ocean of Truth lies undiscovered before me." And Einstein said: "One of the greatest emotions the human mind could feel is the sensation of the mystical. It is truly the tower of all science. He who can no longer wonder and stand in rapt awe at the cosmic mystery is as good as dead. To know what is Impenetrable really exists, manifesting Itself as the highest Wisdom and the most radiant Beauty, which our dull faculties can comprehend only in the most primitive form, is the centre of scientific pursuit. This cosmic religious consciousness is truly the mainspring of all scientific research." What is this 'religious' consciousness that Einstein is referring to? Is it anachronistic or antagonistic to scientific temper? The answer could be found in Einstein's own words: "My religion consists of a humble adoration of an Illimitable Intelligence, which our dull minds can comprehend only in the most primitive terms."

Peace comes only when the human mind can get some taste of this Cosmic Existence "that is manifesting Itself as the highest Wisdom and the most radiant Beauty". To be "in tune with Infinity", to be able to lose oneself in the Vast and Unfathomable, to be able to dissipate one's little ego, and merge one's relative existence in the Absolute is the only way to peace, the "Peace that passeth understanding" in the words of Jesus Christ. When the human mind can "wonder and stand in rapt awe" it feels enveloped by peace and blessedness. It perceives peace everywhere—in the sky, in the inter-space, in the earth, in the waters, in the plants and herbs, in all the human and sub-human species. It would appear that the entire universe is saturated, is soaked in supreme peace. The Upanishadic rishis, who felt this 'cosmic religious consciousness' awakened in them in full measure therefore sang in a mood of overflowing peace and joy: Dyoush shantih, antariksham shantih, prithvi shantih, apah shantih, oshadhayah shantih, visve devah shantih, sarvam shantih, shantireva shantih. There cannot be joy without peace. The Bhagavadgita interrogates: Ashantasya kutah sukham—'where is joy for one without peace'? All pervading peace and joy, palpably perceived as vibrant, living objects, were called madhu—literally, amrita or 'nectar'—by the rishis. The famous shanti-mantra (Peace Chant) that these seers sang describes their experience of seeing everything in Nature as saturated and soaked in Bliss and Joy: Madhu vata ritayate, madhu ksharanti sindhavah; madhveenah santvoshadih; madhu naktamutoshasi, madhumat parthivam rajah; madhu dyourastu nah pita; madhu manno vanaspatir madhumam astu suryah; madhveergavo bhavantu nah; Om shantih, shantih, shantih—"May the winds be blissful; may the rivers overflow with bliss; may the trees and plants be filled with bliss; may the night and the day be blissful; may the earth be full of bliss; may the sky, protecting us like a kind father, shower bliss upon us; may the herbs be blissful; may the sun irradiate

us with bliss; may the cows pour bliss on us. Om Peace, Peace, Peace.”

Such were the great sentiments and feelings expressed by our ancient rishis, as well as the modern rishi-scientists like Newton and Einstein. It is in this context that we would like to study Swami Vivekananda, the rishi of this age, as an apostle of peace.

Swami Vivekananda is an embodiment of harmony and synthesis. Romain Rolland wrote: “In the two words, equilibrium and synthesis, the whole of Vivekananda’s constructive genius may be summed up...He was the embodiment of the harmony of all human energy.” He has also been described as a “man without frontiers”. No narrowness of any sort, no bigotry, no mean fanaticism, no one-sidedness, no unreasonable clinging to one’s own thought to the exclusion of others’ views, no negative exclusivist attitude, but all positive, all embracing, all inclusive, infinitely open heart and mind—this sums up Vivekananda’s world-view. In his world, “no one is a stranger; all are his own”, as Sri Sarada Devi pointed out. War begins with in the human mind that is filled with hatred. Hatred arises from narrow bigotry—from the feeling that ‘I alone am right; others are all wrong’. Narrowness arises from lack of expansion of the mind and heart beyond one’s own self. Lack of expansion is another name for contraction. “All expansion is life; all contraction is death. All love is expansion and hatred, contraction. Love, therefore, is the only law of life,” said Vivekananda. Contraction comes when one is self-seeking and self-centred. Thus, non-self-consciousness or absolute selflessness is the very essence of life and existence. In fact, a la Buddha, Swami Vivekananda boldly proclaimed: “Unselfishness is God.”

Thus, world peace emanates from the hearts of a few absolutely selfless individuals—those who just do not want anything for themselves. In Vivekananda’s words: “Give, give; give away everything you have. Give help, give service, give love, give away all that you possess. But beware, do not seek anything in return.” “You are the heir to the Infinite. In your heart resides the ocean of pure, selfless love. Give, give away; do not seek anything in return. If ever you seek any return, the infinite ocean in your heart would get reduced to a mere drop.” “Man wants to hold with clenched fists; but Nature puts her hands upon his throat and make his fists open. So, give gladly; give willingly.” Swami Vivekananda’s talks and writings abound with such passages, whose central message is infinite expansion of one’s heart, mind and consciousness, to be able to embrace the whole universe, all of creation, in a profound feeling of undying love.

Why is it that we are unable to practise this simple truth, knowing full well, though, that this practice is the only way to peace and blessedness? Swami Vivekananda told a simple beautiful story in one of the sessions of the famous Parliament of Religions at Chicago in 1893. There was a small little frog which lived in a small well. This well was all that it knew and its little world consisted of this well alone. One day it suddenly saw another big frog falling into the well. The small frog asked the bigger one coming from outside: ‘Where do you come from?’ ‘From the sea’ was the reply. ‘From the sea? What is that, by the way?’ asked the small frog. The bigger one laughed aloud and said, ‘How can you make you understand, confined as you are in this narrow little well for life, about what the sea is?’ The small frog then leaped from one side of the well to the other, and then asked: ‘Well, is your sea as big as that?’ The sea frog laughed louder and said, ‘O what conception can you form of the sea from here?’ Then the small frog took another leap end to end and asked with a touch of irritation: ‘Now tell me, is the sea as big as that?’ The sea frog shook its head and brushed aside the question. ‘You can form no idea of the sea by being confined in this little narrow well for life. Come out and see for yourself what the sea is. I would take you there.’ Then the small frog was irritated and angry beyond measure. It cried aloud, ‘This fellow is a liar. There cannot be anything bigger than my little well, where I have been living all life long. Turn this liar away or kill him.’ Swami Vivekananda added: We are all like this little frog. We live in our own narrow little wells and think that this is all the world. If anybody tells us that the world is much bigger, much richer, much more bountiful than we can ever conceive of in our own little well, we try to hate that person, consider him a stranger and fanatically try to push him away and even kill him. All the hatred and peacelessness in the world is on account of this ‘frog-in-the-well’ attitude. Disharmony, tension and war are the inevitable result of this ‘frog-in-the-well’ psychology, while harmony, tranquility and peace would flow naturally from the renunciation of this narrow ‘frog-in-the-well’ outlook. After all, peace and war arise from mental attitudes of individuals who represent nations and countries. Pious wishes and lip service to peace resolutions cannot take us far unless we are psychologically committed to this broadening of outlook, unless we develop an ever-expanding heart that is a continuous spring of an all-embracing current of love.

Thus, Swami Vivekananda's peace mission on earth is a direct and inevitable consequence of his global vision, universal outlook and all-embracing love. Apart from the psychological aspect discussed above, there is a distinct and unique philosophical side of this global vision of Vivekananda that is rational, scientific and based on certain fundamental universal principles. Unless we have some conception of this wonderful world-view—weltanschauung—we can hardly catch a glimpse of the mind and heart of this World Teacher, this great Apostle of Peace. We have discussed this global vision of Vivekananda elsewhere in detail and would therefore only mention that the scientific principle of microcosm-macrocosm identity is the basis of this worldview. The philosophical and rational side of this new weltanschauung is complementary to the psychological and emotional aspect. Interested reader may refer to the detailed article by the author: Swami Vivekananda's Global Vision—the Microcosm-Macrocosm Identity, published in the book Swami Vivekananda—His Global Vision, edited by Shanti Nath Chattopadhyay, published by Punthi Pustak, Calcutta (2001).

Swami Vivekananda's concept of peace is not the calm of the desert or the chilling silence of the cremation ground. It has a vibrant quality; it is an ocean-like state of consciousness in which there is an incessant activity on the surface but unruffled peace in the deep recesses. This kind of peace is not the opposite of turmoil, but is something that transcends, and therefore subsumes, both the calm and the ruffle. It is a state of heightened awareness in which all the apparent contradictions of life—the 'pairs of opposites', dvanda-s as Vedanta would call them—meet and lose their 'contradictoriness'. It is thus a state of equilibrium, of balance, of harmony and synthesis. But this equilibrium is not a static equilibrium where all activity ceases, but a dynamic equilibrium wherein there is incessant, self-smashing activity poised in an Eternal Rest. It is a state of the mind lapsing into an Eternal Void—or Infinity, to put it positively—where staticism and dynamism become inseparable and indistinguishable. Swami Vivekananda's famous poem Peace puts forth these ideas eloquently:

“Behold, it comes in might,  
The power that is not power,  
The light that is in darkness,  
The shade in dazzling light.

It is joy that never spoke,  
And grief unfelt, profound,  
Immortal life unlived,  
Eternal death unmourned.

It is not joy nor sorrow,  
But that which is between,  
It is not night nor morrow,  
But that which joins them in.

It is sweet rest in music;  
And pause in sacred art;  
The silence between speaking;  
Between two fits of passion—  
It is the calm of heart.

It is beauty never seen,  
And love that stands alone,  
It is song that lives un-sung,  
And knowledge never known.  
It is death between two lives,  
And lull between two storms,



The void whence rose creation,  
And that where it returns.  
To it the tear-drop goes,  
To spread the smiling form  
It is the Goal of Life,  
And Peace—its only home!”

(Ref: Swami Vivekananda’s Complete Works, Vol. IV, pp.395-6)

To be able to feel and enjoy the kind of Peace envisaged by Swami Vivekananda in the poem quoted above, one’s heart and mind need to be emptied of all selfish emotions. The citadel of Peace would have to be built with the ashes of the burnt desires and on the bedrock foundation of absolute void of self. ‘The Peace that passeth understanding’ can come only when all egoistic projections have ceased forever and the soul is bathed in an ethereal light born of dethroning of the ‘puny ego’ from the kingdom that belongs to the Supreme Reality.

On the darker side of the picture, by the same logic, any disturbance, any turmoil, any impediment to world peace has come from men whose hearts and minds were the throne of the ‘puny ego’ as the absolute monarch—selfish, self-seeking and self-centred, these men knew nothing but their own self interest. When these men become—alas for the world—leaders of a society or a nation, there are wars and conflicts and dissensions galore. History is a silent witness to this terrible truth. Self-centredness breeds non-accommodation of others and their views, intolerance, hatred, cruelty and war. To be able to come out of one’s own self, with its accretions of prejudices and opinions tinged with one’s own bias, and look at reality from a non-self perspective is to operate from a deep inner Void that contains, as it were, the whole universe within It. It is this ‘Void’, which is perpetually getting filled up to overflowing when the personality’s—the ego’s—emptying is complete, that Buddha called Nirvana, Nagarjuna called Sunya, Shankara called Purna, Christ called the Kingdom of Heaven, Upanishads called Advaita-jnana, Chaitanya called Parama-prema (Supreme Love) and so on. It is this self-emptiness that Swami Vivekananda preached at the Chicago Parliament of Religions more than a century ago, when he proclaimed, “Help and not fight; assimilation and not destruction; harmony and peace and not dissension”.

Now that man is most panic-stricken, insecure and fear-ridden, he is most likely to open not only his ears but his heart to the Music of the Spheres, the Divine Music that perpetually rise in this Kingdom of Heaven within. ‘Blessed are the peace makers’ proclaimed Jesus the Christ. Blessed indeed are those who help broadcast and transmit this Music. Blessed again are those who awaken humankind into listening to Its enchanting notes. Blessed, thrice blessed, are those rare souls, those Messengers of Light and Peace like Swami Vivekananda, who not only awaken but also fill the soul of humankind with the waves of Cosmic Rhythm (ritam brihat) that rise naturally and spontaneously in the ocean of Universal Consciousness.

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If my son wallows in the dust or mud, it is I who have to wipe all the dirt and take him on my lap.

**-Holy Mother**

The history of the world is the history of a few men who had faith in themselves. That faith calls out the Divinity within. You can do anything. You fail only when you do not strive sufficiently to manifest infinite power. As soon as a man or a nation loses faith in himself or itself, death comes. Believe first in yourself, and then in God.

**-Swami Vivekananda**





## Swami Vivekananda –The Monk on the Move (An Overview of Swamiji's Travel)

**Swami Sarvasthananda**

President, Ramakrishna Vedanta Centre, UK



### **Fulfilling His Mission and Education through Travels**

Few admonitions would have been as momentous as the one uttered by Sri Ramakrishna, 'Shame on you! You are asking for such an insignificant thing . . . I thought that you would be like a banyan tree and that thousands of people would rest under your shade. But now I see that you are seeking your own liberation,' exhorting Swami Vivekananda [then a young Narendranath] to fulfill his manifest and peripatetic destiny. The banyan tree in mythic imagination represents the tree of life, the still centre of all order, life and rejuvenation; 'I am the banyan among the trees,' declared Sri Krishna in the Bhagavad Gita (10.26).

Yet, we wonder at the anomalous metaphor, for Swami Vivekananda was not the rooted stationary tree at the Panchavati unto which the world beat a pilgrim trail as unto his Master, Sri Ramakrishna, but was born with wings on his sandals like the Greek God Mercury in his brief sojourn. Strikingly his first offering of song at the feet of his Master, 'Hearken O heart, let's return to our real abode, than tarry as a stranger in foreign lands,' [mano chalo nija nicketane] hinted the metaphor of an ancient archetype that of the 'wanderer'. 'There are no foreign lands. It is the traveller who is foreign,' remarked the writer R.L. Stevenson, echoing the view of Swamiji as Sister Christine does as 'unquestionably a wanderer from another sphere'; he longed for home, making his journey itself his provisional home. And journey he did, in a way few have ever done, like the Dig Vijayas [victories] of yore, not merely across India, but beyond her shores into the wide world.

The sojourner Vivekananda is a multifaceted Parivrajaka, from the most ancient order of monks, a wandering minstrel taking his song unto strange lands, a peripatetic teacher in the best traditions of the world, a curious student amongst new landscapes seen with new eyes, a missionary seeking to rejuvenate his own motherland, a messenger from his Master carrying his 'gospel' to the people of the world.

When Augustine of Hippo wrote that, 'The world is a book and those who do not travel read only one page'; he meant that to travel was to live, learn and love and render fatal the prejudice of time, place and circumstance. The word traveller comes from the old French 'travailler' which is 'to toil strenuously' which was what travel then was. We inhabit a world which now has only tourists and few, if any, travellers.

### **An Extensive Traveller—and a Learner**

Abiding by his Master's instruction to be the banyan to a fledgling monastic life, Swamiji and his brother-disciples invoked their sacrifice by performance of viraja-homa [ritual signifying the vows of a monk] at Baranagore Math in Kolkata. Amidst their ascetic observances there grew the restlessness in their bosom to embark on undefined travels to seek their mission; not unlike a river keeping up its flow unto its fulfillment, the ocean, retaining its purity.

This period of incubation for Swamiji gave outline to the yet inchoate idea of the regeneration of his beloved motherland, to reweave the fraying threads of her rich tapestry. Setting off with a water pot and staff with the blessings of the Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi he embarked in 1890, on a journey of a Parivrajaka. Travel entails the inevitable burden of plans on modes, stays, tickets, currency and baggage. The Parivrajaka, on the other hand, renounces these very things to re-collect only himself, wandering without money, a mendicant reining his senses, abstaining from any indulgence including work, social company, retiring unto the uninhabited and abandoned, and flitting bee like begging for sustenance.

Swamiji's was on an extraordinary journey—Parivrajana. Travelling on foot he journeyed through Vaidyanath, Varanasi, Ayodhya, Nainital and the lofty Himalayas, wanting to 'burst upon society like a bomb-shell.' Like Adi Shankara who traversed India from the Malabar to Badrikashrama in the Himalayas, Swamiji took the reverse route. Under a banyan on the banks of the Kosi river near Almora he discovered the grand unity of all existence, like the words of the poet Blake, 'To see a world in a grain of sand, and a

heaven in a wild flower, hold infinity in the palm of your hand, and eternity in an hour' thereby equating the service to man as service to God.

He descended to the vast north Indian plains via Delhi, and journeyed through Rajputana (1891) traversing Alwar, Jaipur, Ajmer, Khetri, among others. He travelled through Gujarat (1892) to Ahmedabad, Limbdi, Kutch, Porbandar, Junagadh, Dwaraka, Somnath, Palitana and Baroda. He encountered the India that he loved in the huts of the untouchables and shared their gruel, conversed with Kings and the learned, counseled seekers, wiped the tears of the suffering resonating Kipling's lines, 'If you can talk with crowds and keep your virtue, or walk with Kings—nor lose the common touch . . . If you can fill the unforgiving minute with sixty seconds' worth of distance run, yours is the Earth and everything that's in it, and—which is more—you'll be a Man, my son!'

Swamiji studied Sanskrit scripture in the Himalayas, grammar at Jaipur, Muslim and Jain thought at Ahmedabad, Christian theology at Goa and Vedic culture at Porbandar and became familiar first hand of the arts, architecture, cultural diversity and customs of his people. He exhorted reforms social and educational to the princes, admonished the emulation of the materialistic culture of the West, promoted the study of science and industry, spoke feelingly about the benighted poor, of caste oppression and anachronistic social traditions. He liberalized his views and outlook and conjoined to his wisdom the healing waters of compassion to the toiling masses mired in ignorance. He continued his journeys through Bombay, Pune, Goa, and into the heartlands of the Deccan (1892-93). There he travelled Belgaum, Bangalore, Cochin, Malabar, Travancore, Rameshwaram, Madurai and finally Madras. The Virgin Goddess at Cape Comorin illuminated his mind with her fabled nose ring showing him with clarity his mission to restore the submerged individuality of India and raise her masses; she illumined the waters unto which his Master strode, beckoning him to follow into unknown lands across the seven seas, taking with him the perennial waters of Indian spirituality and to bring back material assistance and secular education unto the indigent. He would attend the World's Parliament of Religions at Chicago.

### **Dig Vijaya: The Conquest of the Quarters**

The hyperbole of Dig Vijaya is an ancient tradition that extols the geographic spread of faith and influence of great masters as they ascend the sarvajnapitha or role of a world teacher. 'Haribhai, I am going to America,' Swamiji blurted out when he met his bewildered though beloved brother who little imagined that he would soon follow those footsteps. The Parivrajaka metamorphosed into an international traveller with the name Swami Vivekananda. The Guru of a Raja, he would soon travel not just with his water pot but with the trappings of travel, royal robes and a handsome purse, though ill-equipped for the colder climes.

Astride the deck of the steamer 'Peninsular' in May 1893, bound for Japan via Hong Kong, he looked back lost in thought. Befriending his fellow travellers and watching the many faces of the sea and the sky, and the customs of his fellow Western passengers, he spent his time at ease and reflection. En-route he visited Canton and familiarized himself with the Chinese, proceeding to Japan where he visited Nagasaki, Kobe, Yokohama, Osaka, Kyoto and Tokyo, deeply admiring the meticulousness, art and industry of the people. He took the 'Empress of India' and sailed to Vancouver, warmed by a coat given by the captain. Swamiji took the train across the snow-clad countryside of southwest Canada and travelled to Winnipeg and thence across the lake spangled hills of Minnesota and further to St. Paul and Chicago.

Tired and haggard after an arduous journey, with a minimum baggage, little money and no idea of its value and use, no advance arrangements, amidst strange surroundings, Swamiji found himself in an unexpected situation. He found the Parliament of Religions that he was to attend was postponed and that he lacked the credentials of an established institution to register as a delegate. His meagre resources fast depleting, he went to Boston, thinking he would find it cheaper and then come back to Chicago to register as a delegate. Though looked upon initially as an exotic object of curiosity, he soon won the hearts and minds of his several hosts including learned professors like Prof. Wright of Harvard who declared, 'To ask you Swami for credentials is to ask the sun for its right to shine'.

He moved to Salem and Saratoga speaking on varied subjects and platforms from pulpits to private chambers, also invoking the hostility of the pastors and ministers of the evangelical and other churches. On 8 September 1893 Swamiji was at Chicago with 'sky for roof, and earth for bed' in a boxcar, until

exhausted he was delivered unto the care of his helpful angel Mrs. Hale, who moved by his innocent narration of his trials, got him to register at the Parliament.

Resplendent in his exotic silken attire of robe and turban, he outshone his fellow delegates. Yet when the momentous occasion arrived, he kept postponing his turn with trepidation until Goddess Saraswati seized his heart, kindled his tongue, invoked the universality of all religious endeavour, and enshrined that moment in the hearts of millions of his countrymen even a century after that roar had died. A destitute, unknown monk from an unheard of monastic order, from an impoverished, slave nation, riddled with ignorance and superstition became the 'Cyclonic Monk', a star. Vedanta was ushered into the West, not as an exotic translation of a Brahmanical scripture but as a living, teaching tradition.

With this encounter by a 'native' speaking from tradition and experience, a new sense of identity was established as an awareness of the 'other'. India found a new voice not as just a benighted colony in service of a Western interest but in struggling to define its own identity, a place in the comity of nations, a people of unbroken civilizational continuity that had yet to be dragged into its own encounter with modernism; a project that is playing out unto this day.

Soon Swamiji would exhaust his energies across America, hoping to raise funds for work in India which was at the heart of all his activity, delivering talks at Chicago, Madison, Des Moines, Minneapolis, Memphis, Detroit, Boston, and New York and founding the Vedanta Society of New York in 1894. He met the luminaries of his day in America and Europe from diverse walks of life notably William James, the father of modern psychology, the great agnostic, Robert Ingersoll, scientists—Nikola Tesla, Lord Kelvin, Hermann Von Helmholtz, actress, Sarah Bernhardt, singer Emma Calve, poets—Ella Wilcox, Harriet Monroe, philanthropist, John Rockefeller and the great Indologists, Max Muller and Paul Deussen. By 1895 the wandering monk had to set his instrument aside and rest teaching in private while recuperating. He journeyed twice to England in 1895-96 and added among his many followers Margaret Noble whom he later christened as Sister Nivedita. He travelled Continental Europe, visiting Paris, Geneva, Lucerne, Kiel, Hamburg, Bremen, and Amsterdam returning to London. In London someone asked him; 'Swami, how do you like now your motherland after three years' experience of the luxurious and powerful West?' Swami Vivekananda said: "India I loved before I came away. Now the very dust of India has become holy to me, the very air is now to me holy, it is now the holy land, the place of pilgrimage, the Tirtha!"

### **Vijaya Dindima: The Triumphalist Drumbeat**

Swamiji set to return 'home' with friends, disciples and resources travelling from London with Captain and Mrs Sevier and JJ Goodwin visiting Milan Pisa, Florence and Naples on the way. The 'Virgin Goddess' smiled across the straits as he touched Colombo in January 1897 and as he set foot on the soil the very Yaksha, Kinnara, Gandharva [the celestial singers of Hindu mythology] beat the drums and showered his path with flowers, his chariot pulled by the very Dikpalas and kings. He sounded his conch, like the vijayaghosha of the Panchajanya [the conch blown by Sri Krishna in the Mahabharata War] across the Indian subcontinent from Colombo to Almora, igniting a nationalist fervor wherever he went. He moved relentlessly, exhorting people to awake to the burden of colonial rule, uplifting the downtrodden, eradicating social ills, educating in secular sciences and industrialization but pointing out very clearly that religion and religion alone was the backbone of our nation.

He journeyed through Rameshwaram, Ramnad, Madurai, Kumbhakonam, Madras, and thence to Calcutta. To recuperate from his exhausting travels he retired for a short while to Almora. In a few months he proceeded to Bareilly, Ambala, Amritsar and Rawalpindi, thence to Srinagar, Sialkot and Lahore, all the while lecturing, attending to requests for visits, visits to kings and princes, meeting common people, holding discussions in an interminable procession following him, even holding up trains to stall his journeys.

He then moved to Dehradun, Saharanpur and Delhi proceeding to visit Rajputana and meet up with his old friends and disciples at Alwar, Khetri, and finding time to dine in the houses of the poor who had hosted him when he was just another monk. He then proceeded to Jaipur, Ajmer, Jodhpur, and thence through the Central Provinces of Khandwa, Ratlam, and Jabalpur and was forced to abandon a trip to Gujarat due to ill health.



He now set his heart on founding the Ramakrishna Mission. This took place in May 1897. This also led to, in due course, the laying of foundation of the magnificent temple to rest his Masters ashes. Thus came into existence the splendid institution, the Ramakrishna Mission, which incorporated the twin founding ideals— 'atmano mokshartham jagaddhitaya cha' ['for one's spiritual freedom and for the good of others] of wisdom and compassion, liberation and service. He surprisingly stayed for long at Belur Math, undertaking the training of monks and novices until the plague broke in mid-1898 when he initiated relief efforts.

He took his Western disciples to Almora to attend to their training but in two months proceeded to Kashmir after a brief passage through Punjab. This was his pilgrimage to the shrine of Amarnath where clad in a loin cloth, besmeared in ashes, he almost swooned and beheld the Lord and received his blessings. His health took a turn for the worse but he shone in a deep mystical vision of the divine Mother at Kshir Bhavani, the sacred temple of Divine Mother near Srinagar. He retreated to Lahore to return to Calcutta late 1898. Until the middle of 1899, he remained at the Math.

By June 1899 Swamiji unfurled his sails to travel to the West all over again partly by compulsions of recuperating his deteriorated health and partly to visit his old friends and disciples. He reached London by August 1899 and proceeded to New York where he stayed for ten weeks permeating the place with his presence. He then traveled to the West Coast to Los Angeles, Pasadena, and San Francisco. Swamiji then returns to Europe and takes the Orient Express with some friends to travel through Vienna, Constantinople, Athens and Cairo, where he suddenly decides to return home to Belur Math in Jan 1901.

Soon he sets out on another pilgrimage to Dhaka, Guwahati and Shillong with his beloved mother, Bhuvaneshwari Devi, trying to fulfil 'at least one wish of hers'. In April during a severe attack of asthma in Shillong he exclaimed, 'What does it matter! I have given them enough for fifteen hundred years.'

Early in 1902 Swamiji made his last of his sojourns to Varanasi, that city of light and learning from times immemorial, of the abode of the Lord of the worlds, of Shiva dancing to his drumbeat at the Ghats of all dissolution. 'Oh! I am sick of this unending force; these shows they please no more. This ever running, never reaching, nor even a distant glimpse of shore!' wrote Swamiji some years back in reflective poem, 'My Play Is Done!' It is difficult to imagine that such a mighty heart be stilled: death of their bodies doesn't still their perennial work like that of Bodhisattva refusing rest.

### Conclusion

The gospel of Sri Ramakrishna that Swami Vivekananda preached the world over was the presence of divinity in everything and everyone asserting an equality that is socially and politically potent as it was spiritually –an imperative to serve God in man. Swamiji's message was the missing link that united compassion to its ideal of unifying wisdom. Also Swamiji's faith in human potential and its divinity was astounding – insisting on investing all faith back from God to Man and assert their essential equality. This dual closure of the circles was the journey of the Hero; his journey true to his message. In the brief span of 39 and half years, he had done what takes an ordinary mortal many lives to even understand, assimilate! Swamiji's travels had as much astonishing influence as his life and message.



God dwells in all people but the manifestation of this inner Divinity varies from person to person. In saintly people there is greater manifestation of God. Women are special manifestations of Divine Mother of the Universe, and so are to be treated with respect.

**-Swami Vivekananda**



## The Dream of Peace

**David Russell**

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Swami Vivekananda tells us, that: “All the different religions are but applications of the one religion adapted to suit the requirements of different nations. Theories only lead to fighting; thus the Name of God that ought to bring peace has been the cause of half the bloodshed of the world. Go to the direct source. Ask God what He is. Unless He answers, He is not; but every religion teaches that He does answer.”

G-d does answer, but for every religion he answers in a different voice. However, the message to all is the same – which serves to unite them all – a shared vision for world of peace and harmony. Which is a vision that continues to resonate, more so 125 years on from the famous addresses that Swamiji presented at the Parliament of Religions in Chicago, when he called for “harmony and peace”.

Peace in Torah (the Jewish Bible), Talmud (Rabbinic teachings), and Jewish tradition is a central concept. The word “shalom” appears in so many of the most important and basic prayers and traditional classic texts. It is, in fact, the way Jews traditionally greet and farewell each other. It is implied in the name of the holiest of Jewish cities “Jerusalem” – city of peace. It is described in ancient holy texts as one of the names of G-d.

There is the ancient prophetic vision of a future time without war or injustice, a time of harmony, justice and peace for all peoples. The basis for this in Judaism is the belief in the oneness of G-d, the Divine creator of this world who created all human beings in the Divine image. The word itself – Shalom – is linked to another concept: “Shalem”, which translates as “whole”. Peace and wholeness are closely related, thus the importance of the shared belief in the oneness of G-d.

The Torah was given to make peace in the world. On the Jewish festival of Simchat Torah, we celebrate the end and the beginning of the reading of the Torah. We finish with the reading of the death of Moses in Deuteronomy and begin the creation story in Genesis. It is a joyous festival

“Peace” (Shalom) as a religious value and teaching in the Jewish tradition and practice is a commonplace and underwrites many Jewish texts and prayers.

It is the climax of the priestly blessing, which Aaron – the brother of Moses - the first high priest, and his descendants were to pronounce regularly for the people in the temple service:

May the Lord bless you and protect you.

May the Lord countenance you and be gracious to you.

May the Lord show you kindness and grant you peace.

This prayer is said today by parents to their children in the home on the Sabbath, is part of the daily prayer service in Jerusalem and on festivals in all synagogues the world over and is used by Rabbis during the wedding ceremony.

Moses, the greatest prophet and teacher in our tradition whom we refer to as “Rabbenu” (our teacher), teaches the people that before doing battle, they are to offer the enemy the possibility of a peaceful resolution of conflict. Latter prophets in the Bible, such as Isaiah abhor war and promise a time to come when there will be peace on earth amongst the nations: when the lion will lie down with the lamb and swords will be bent into ploughshares.

In the Talmudic literature the value of peace is paramount. “For the sake of Peace” is often given as a reason for moderacy and compromise by the Talmudic sages in resolving issues in Jewish law. The great American Jewish philosopher and Rabbi, Abraham Joshua Heschel, concluded that the greatest concern in the Bible is injustice to one’s fellow men; and its greatest dream is peace.

All religions, especially Judaism and Hinduism, ultimately celebrate the victory of good over evil. This is a battle that we are all fighting. But only by religions and its people uniting together, as Swamiji called for in Chicago, can we deliver a peaceful conclusion.





## With the Flag of Harmony **Swami Sthiratmananda**

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The condition of human civilization running needs special care. It was described once by Swami Vivekananda in the Chicago Parliament of religions in 1893 as: 'Sectarianism, bigotry, and its horrible descendant, fanaticism have long possessed this beautiful earth. They have filled the earth with violence, drenched it often and often with human blood, destroyed civilization and sent whole nations to despair.' This shows in our time also the dire need of peaceful co-existence in the society. The way is sincere appreciation for others ideal remaining steadfast in one's own. Because, all the ways lead to the same goal as all the radii of a circle lead to the same centre.

### **Why Religion**

Religion is very important factor in the lives of human being. It plays a vital role also to the plan of civilization. Swami Vivekananda said, 'Take Religion from human society and what will remain? Nothing but a forest of brutes.' So when a parliament of religions was held at Chicago in 1893, a hope of living peacefully in our mother earth flashed through the august gathering there. Swami Vivekananda pointed out this subtle but keen urge of humans thus : 'My thanks to this enlightened audience for their uniform kindness to me and for their appreciation of every thought that tends to smooth the friction of religions.' Through Swami Vivekananda's lecture the conflict of contradiction in the religious world took a turning point towards harmony. He declared the parliament of religions in 1893 as the great attempt making to break down the barriers of little worlds made by the followers of religions. This opened a gate of mutual understanding and thereby towards the manifestation of Oneness in various forms throughout the whole of our civilization.

### **Hinduism : what it represents**

As a representative of Hinduism Swami Vivekananda in the World Parliament of Religions gave a short sketch of the religious ideas of the Hindus. He first broke the 'frog in the well' idea regarding Hinduism. From his speech the important points came out in daylight which we can consider thus:

'Hindus have received their religion through revelation, the Vedas. To them religion is realization.'

'The whole world of religions is only a travelling, a coming up, of different men and women, through various conditions and circumstances, to the same goal.'

'The same God is inspiring all. The contradictions are apparent.'

'The contradictions come from the same truth adapting itself to the varying circumstances of different natures.'

'Religion is realization. Religion... does not mean "an intellectual assent to certain doctrines and doing good to their fellows"'

'Man is to become divine by realizing the divine.'

'Idols or temples or churches or books are only the supports, the helps, of his spiritual childhood : but on and on he must progress.'

'To the Hindu, man is not travelling from error to truth, but from truth to truth, from lower to higher truth.'

Human beings are not combination of material substances. The Vedas declare that beings are spirit living in a body. It cannot be proved that thought has been evolved out of matter. Thus essential nature of all beings is consciousness.



Unity in diversity is the plan of nature---said Vivekananda. If we consider all the contradictions as various expressions of the same truth from different standpoints, then we understand each other. Like Hinduism we can get universal ideals from all the religions when they come out of their 'well' of fanaticism.

### **The Concept of acceptance**

Swami Vivekananda described once the very life of Sri Ramakrishna's as the 'parliament of religions.' He placed the ideal before the chaotic world as a panacea for all chaotic situation in the world. Sri Ramakrishna made his life a spiritual laboratory. There he experimented with the religions and discovered the underlying harmony---As many faiths, so many paths. We can consider the common ground of religious unity : the goal is the same, but methods may be different.

One of the participants at the Parliament of Religions also urged by saying, 'let us cease from abusing each other.' He was very sorry to think that there should be always so much violence. 'The friction of religions' was, is and will be a problem in peace and harmony in the civilization if we fail to understand the unity in diversity as the plan of nature. Where there is no harmony, there remains the cause misunderstanding. When we cannot understand 'unity in diversity', then 'sectarianism' 'bigotry' 'fanaticism' are the results. Swami Vivekananda pointed out this in his welcome address in the Parliament of Religions and said that the beautiful earth of ours is under their clutches. Horrible demons of human society is fanaticism with sectarian ideas. But Vivekananda hoped---'their time is come.' He described the bell of the convention as 'the death-knell of all fanaticism, of all persecutions with the sword or with the pen, and of all uncharitable feelings between persons wending their way to the same goal.' The way of peace and harmony he described as: 'Each must assimilate the spirit of the others and yet preserve his individuality and grow according to his own law of growth.' This is how, not only tolerance but, the ideal of acceptance may be practised.

### **The Real Nature of universal religion**

The direction of the parliament of religions was made by Swami Vivekananda to find out the light which can lead this chaotic civilization to an enlightened one. There came the idea of universal religion to him. Regarding universal religion He said, 'It will be a religion which will have no place for persecution or intolerance in its polity, which will recognize divinity in every man and woman, and whose whole scope, whose whole force, will be created in aiding humanity to realize its own true, divine nature.'

A universal religion can only be followed to avoid 'friction of religions.' For the universal religion we need good thoughts on Swamiji's ideas. He said,'...if there is ever to be a universal religion, it must be one which will have no location in place or time; which will be infinite like the God it will preach, and whose sun will shine upon the followers of Krishna and of Christ, on saints and sinners alike; which will not be Brahminic or Buddhistic, Christian or Mohammedan, but the sum total of all these, and still have infinite space for development; which in its catholicity will embrace in its infinite arms, and find a place for, every human being, ...'

Harmony in all respects is the way to the ideal human civilization. The crying need of the present civilization is the common basis of religious unity upon which all these seemingly hopeless contradictions rest. But it is an impossible matter that this unity would come by the triumph by any one of the religions and the destruction of the others. The method should be : 'Each must assimilate the spirit of the others and yet preserve his individuality and grow according to his own law of growth.'

Vivekananda pointed out the fact : The Parliament of Religions proved to the world that holiness, purity and charity are not the exclusive possessions of any church in the world and that every system has produced men and women of the most exalted character. He predicted the ideal that upon the banner of every religion will soon be written, in spite of resistance : "Help and not Fight," "Assimilation and not Destruction," "Harmony and Peace and not Dissension."

All of us want harmony of religions within our heart like the audience of Swami Vivekananda's lecture in Chicago. Is harmony a fact or a fiction? Actually harmony is a natural matter as Sri Ramakrishna realized and practised in his life. In all the diversities in the world there is unity. Unity in the goal, there may be diversities in the ways to reach the goal. All the pluralities can remain harmoniously in this perspective.

Swami Vivekananda 'hoisted' the 'Flag of Harmony' to the 'sky' above all chaotic civilization as its only way to escape from the danger of violence and resulting extinction. We are to carry it for our peaceful living in our world.



## 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.

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



### **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**

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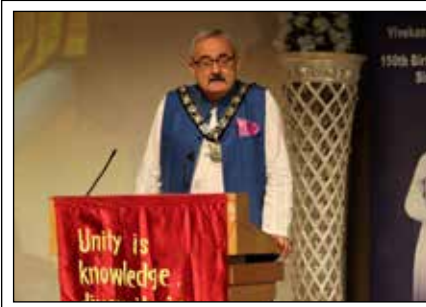


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