

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



Vivek

"I am a Voice without a form. It may be that I shall find it good to get outside my body-to cast it off like a worn-out garment. But I shall not cease to work! I shall inspire men everywhere, until the world shall know that is one with God!"

- Swami Vivekananda



Vivekananda Human Centre



**"First bread and then religion... I do not believe in a God who cannot give me bread here, giving me eternal bliss in heaven."
- Swami Vivekananda.**

Greeting & Best wishes for Vivekananda Festival 2014



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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

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. 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.
2. 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.
3. To promote Ramakrishna-Vivekananda's philosophy of Human Excellence, Unity in Diversity, Universal Tolerance, Harmony and Peace.
4. To promote consciousness in education and culture among the youth and others as ordained by Ramakrishna - Vivekananda.
5. To promote advancement of public education and peace with those from different walks of life.
6. 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.
7. To establish and maintain universal temple and institutions for the advancement of religion, education and other charitable purposes.
8. 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.
9. 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 2014
8 June 2014, London

Editorial Board

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Design by: Sova Infotech Ltd, www.sovainfotech.com

Printed by: www.creativeprinter.co.uk



Published by: Vivekananda Human Centre

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Sri Ramakrishna said one day to Swami Vivekananda: **“I know that you are Narayana; born on Earth to remove the misery of humanity.”** Swami Vivekananda is a unique spiritual teacher of mankind. His interest and work was not just religious in the narrow sense, but covered all aspects of human life, encompassing the economic, social, moral and spiritual. Therefore we can see when Swamiji sat down to meditate on the rock of Kanyakumari, he did not meditate for his own salvation but more broadly on all human problems and prospects, and how to restore them to their dignity and glory as man. As an **‘Amritasya Putrah’** (child of immortal bliss) for human excellence for all.

We are living in a Global Village. Globalisation and internet technologies are bringing people closer than ever before. We are all connected to each other in this present time, through internet and social media like Facebook, LinkedIn and other social networks. Technologies are developing very fast. We all are thinking about modern devices, mobile apps, the cloud, and so on. It is hoped that by 2017, over five billion people will be using sophisticated devices to share data, which will be accessible through the cloud, enabling us to better solve so many of our problems when we need most. Nowadays most children are familiar with modern technology almost from birth. Somehow their brains are able to adapt to different technologies from a very early age.

What significance does the message of Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda hold for the modern world? How can the message of Swami Vivekananda inspire us in our daily life?

Although the internet and social media are helping us to be well connected with others, they are all external and thus can be used (and misused) as entertainment or business tools, and in some cases can be highly addictive. We do not know how many problems they can solve, and how much contribution they can make towards a more peaceful society. We are living in a modern diverse society, inflicted by many issues: depression, stress, mental and physical weakness. We see so many new problems arising every day, in ourselves, our family, our businesses, and also more broadly in the world. We are all living more stressful lives in this modern world, especially those in western society.

Swamiji says: **“I must tell you that we are weak, very weak. Weakness is the cause of at least one-third of our miseries.”** We need Swamiji’s education on ‘life-building, man-making, character-making and nation-building’. We can solve so many of these problems through spiritual growth, especially meditation. Modern management has realised that much business conflict, and human resource problems, can be solved through spiritual growth and meditation. Spiritual courses are now part of management training, incorporated by professional bodies in UK as part of CPD (Continuing Professional Development). Modern technologies cannot solve our problems, cannot foster a more peaceful society and cannot make us happy if we do not develop and practice spirituality. Therefore Swamiji’s message is more relevant, universal and practical than ever because it is applicable to all society and groups.

This year, Vivekananda Human Centre is celebrating its twentieth anniversary. We are very grateful to all of you who have supported and contributed to our activities over the last 20 years. Although we are still considering as to the best way to progress our activities, personally I think that we should strive together to establish a permanent centre for us in London. That can then serve as a base for us to then open more branches across the UK and the abroad. As Swamiji says: **“You are the creator of your own destiny. Have faith in yourselves.”**

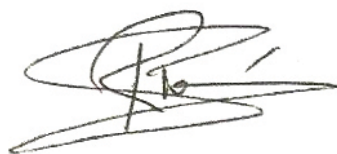
We are very grateful to all our contributors, including all sponsors who have placed advertisements in this publication. We are very grateful to all delegates, honourable guests, artists and volunteers who have devoted their time to help us to ensure the success of the 150th Birthday Celebration of Swami Vivekananda over the last year, as well as the Vivekananda Festival 2014 and other activities of the centre and the publication of the **“VIVEK”**.

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

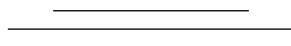
“ARISE, AWAKE, AND STOP NOT TILL THE GOAL IS REACHED”

Joy Swamiji!

Thank you



Ram Chandra Saha





BUCKINGHAM PALACE



1st May, 2014.

Dear Ram Saha,

I have been asked to thank you and the Members of Vivekananda Human Centre for your kind letter containing loyal greetings to The Queen, sent on the occasion of your Vivekananda Festival 2014 "Festival for Human Excellence" which is being held on 8th June at Rudolf Steiner House in London.

Her Majesty much appreciates your kind words and, in return, sends her best wishes to all those who will be present for a most successful and enjoyable day.

Yours sincerely,

Christopher Sandamas
The Chief Clerk to The Queen

Ram Chandra Saha.



“Swami Vivekananda influenced great numbers of people through his teachings and was an inspirational and far-sighted religious leader, introducing Hinduism and the concept of inter faith dialogue to a world audience. It gives me great pleasure to send my best wishes to all those celebrating the Swami’s Birth anniversary.”

- The Rt.Hon.David Cameron MP, The Prime Minister, UK



“Swami Vivekananda was not only an inspirational religious leader within India but a figure of international importance, who inspired great numbers of people through his powerful teachings and in effect began the interfaith movement from which we all benefit today. It is most fitting that his anniversary should be marked in Parliament and I convey my best wishes to all.”

- The Rt.Hon.Nick Clegg MP, The Deputy Prime Minister, UK



“Swami Vivekananda’s dedication to service, and the service of the poorest and most vulnerable in society in particular, reminds us that we are at our best when we are at our most selfless. And so to all of you gathered at the Vivekananda Human Centre I send my warmest greetings and gratitude.”

- Mr Boris Johnson, Mayor of London

We are Grateful for Messages of goodwill, best wishes and appreciation for Vivekananda Festival 2014

The Queen, The Rt. Hon. David Cameron MP, The Prime Minister, UK, The Rt. Hon. Nick Clegg MP, The Deputy Prime Minister, UK, The Prince of Wales, TRH The Duke and Duchess of Cambridge, Prince Harry, The Rt. Hon. Ed Miliband MP, The Leader of the Opposition, The Rt. Hon. George Osborne, Chancellor of the Exchequer, The Rt. Hon. Theresa May MP, Secretary of State for The Home Department & Minister for Women and Equalities, The Rt. Hon. William Hague MP, Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, The Rt. Hon. Sir George Young MP, The Government Chief Whip, The Rt. Hon. David Willetts MP, Minister for Universities and Science, The Rt. Hon. Philip Hammond MP, Secretary of State for Defence, The Rt. Hon. Danny Alexander MP, The Chief Secretary to the Treasury, Mr Boris Johnson, The Mayor of London, The Rt. Hon. Iain Duncan Smith MP, Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, The Rt. Hon. Vincent Cable MP, Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills, The Rt. Hon. Eric Pickles MP, Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, The Rt. Hon. Oliver Letwin MP, Minister for Government Policy, The Rt. Hon. Keith Vaz MP, The Rt. Hon. Simon Hughes MP, Minister of State for Justice and Civil Liberties, Mr Barry Gardiner MP, Shadow Minister for the Natural Environment, The Rt. Hon. ED Balls MP, The Shadow Chancellor.

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Sri Ramakrishna Sharanam



MESSAGE

April 15, 2014

I am extremely happy to know that Vivekananda Human Center, London, is going to publish a souvenir named "VIVEK" on the occasion of "Vivekananda Festival, 2014" to be organized on 8th of June 2014.

Man is the crown of creation because of *Human Excellence*. It is Human Excellence that makes possible for human civilization to progress and rise above nature and makes man a Man, as Swami Vivekananda used to say - "Each soul is potentially divine. The goal is to manifest this Divinity within by controlling nature, external and internal."

My earnest prayer to Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna, Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi and Swami Vivekananda to shower their choicest blessings on all of you and hope the souvenir will help to disseminate the universal and eternal message of Swami Vivekananda's Human Excellence.

(Swami Atmasthananda)

President

Ramakrishna Math & Ramakrishna Mission

Ram Chandra Saha

Director

Vivekananda Human Centre

Vivekananda House

South Woodford, London





**CLARENCE HOUSE
LONDON SW1A 1BA**

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

Private and Confidential



14th May, 2014

Dear Mr. Saha,

The Prince of Wales has asked me to thank you for your kind letter of 24th April.

His Royal Highness is most grateful to you for taking the trouble to write as you did about the forthcoming *Festival for Human Excellence* to be held on 8th June. The Prince of Wales has asked me to thank you for your kind letter and he would want me to send you his very best wishes for the success of the festival.

Yours sincerely,

Claudia Spens

Mr. Ram Chandra Saha

MAYOR OF LONDON

Ram Chandra Saha

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



Our ref: MGLA250414-4744

Date: 20 MAY 2014

Dear Mr Saha

Thank you for your letter of 24 April kindly inviting me to attend the Vivekananda Festival 2014 on 8 June.

I am so sorry but, much as I am very grateful for the invitation, unfortunately it is not possible for me to accept on this occasion as my diary is already full with Mayoral commitments and engagements on that day.

However, please find below a message of support for the Vivekananda celebrations:

"I am delighted to have the opportunity once again to send my best wishes to all celebrating the Vivekananda Festival for Human Excellence. As Mayor I am proud that London is a fantastically diverse city, boasting a great cultural, ethnic and religious mix.

The enduring success of your events is a testament to the unity that they stand for in bringing people together, and for promoting Indian culture and values."

Yours sincerely



Boris Johnson
Mayor of London



Department for
Communities and
Local Government

The Rt Hon Eric Pickles MP
*Secretary of State for Communities and Local
Government*

**Department for Communities and Local
Government**
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Our Ref: ER/ER/011853/14

09 MAY 2014



Dear Ram Chandra Saha

INVITATION TO VIVEKANANDA FESTIVAL 2014

Thank you for your letter of 24 April, extending your kind invitation for me to attend the Vivekananda festival on Sunday 8 June.

It is always a pleasure to receive an invitation from the British Hindu community. The friendship, warm welcome and hospitality I have received in the past from this wonderful group is always much appreciated. However, I am sorry to tell you that I will be unable to visit the celebrations on this date.

Nevertheless, I would like to send my warmest wishes to all those involved with the Vivekananda Human Centre and hope that the day will be enjoyed by all those attending.

Yours truly
Eric Pickles

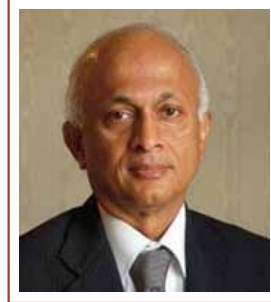
THE RT HON ERIC PICKLES MP



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Message

With India's rise to greater prominence on the global stage this is the right time to remember and to pay tribute to the immortal contribution of Swami Vivekananda. He flashed onto the consciousness of the world with his scintillating oration at the Parliament of Religions held in Chicago in 1893. His vast knowledge of Eastern and Western culture as well as his deep spiritual insight, his great eloquence, the brilliant art of conversation, and an engaging personality made an irresistible appeal to all those who came in contact with him. Even after over a century, the words of Swami Vivekananda remain relevant to the progress of India.

Swami Vivekananda is regarded as the patriot saint of modern India who inspired a national renaissance; he was also a spiritual ambassador of India in the world of scholarship and religious dialogue. Leaders of India and the rest of the world have widely acknowledged their indebtedness to Swami Vivekananda. He had a Mission both national and international; he loved mankind as a whole and promoted peaceful co-existence based on age-old spiritual foundations.

Swami Vivekananda was motivated by a profound human sympathy and in his brief but extraordinary life translated values into action. He built institutions that transcended the temporal bounds of his own life and which have ensured that his contributions will continue to enrich our lives for generations to come.

I conclude my message with the words of Swami Vivekananda : "There is no help for you outside of yourself; you are the creator of the Universe. Like the silkworm, you have built a cocoon around yourself...burst your own cocoon and come out as the beautiful butterfly, as the free soul. Then alone you will see Truth."


(Ranjan Mathai)

VIRENDRA SHARMA
Member of Parliament for Ealing Southall



HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA



I would like to thank the Vivekananda Human Centre for the opportunity to be a part of this wonderful occasion. This is a great celebration, celebrating “Unity in Diversity, Human Excellence, Universal Tolerance, Harmony and Peace” – values all prized and honoured by Swami Vivekananda.

The Vivekananda Human Centre, following Swami Ji’s teachings, aims to promote philanthropy, service to the disadvantaged and underprivileged, peace, tolerance and respect for all.

I congratulate the Vivekananda Human Centre for organising this wonderful celebration and wish all participants a great event.

Best wishes,

Virendra Sharma MP

Member of Parliament for Ealing Southall



**LEE SCOTT MP
HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA**

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



25th April 2014

Dear Ram,

Re Vivekananda 'Festival for Human Excellence' 2014

Thank you for your very kind invitation to attend the festival at the Theatre Hall, Rudolf Steiner House on Sunday 8th June 2014. Sadly, on this occasion, I must send my apologies as I am attending a wedding and so will be unable to be present at the Vivekananda Festival 2014.

The core values of your celebration; of the significance of the human spirit, tolerance in diversity, respect, with harmony and peace for everyone resonated right across our wider community but also speaks to all of us as individuals.

I record my thanks to all of those who have worked so very hard to organise and run this event. I am sure that the Vivekananda 'Festival for Human Excellence' 2014 will be a rip roaring success and will be appreciated and enjoyed by all present.

With all best wishes.

Yours sincerely,

Lee Scott.



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RAMAKRISHNA MATH

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Dear Ram,

I am glad to learn from your mail that a Vivekananda Festival will be held in London on 8 June 2014 and on the occasion a souvenir titled 'Vivek' will be published.

I convey my hearty best wishes for the success of the functions and the publication.

My good wishes to all the members associated with the Vivekananda Human Centre.

Yours in the Lord,

(Swami Smaranananda)
Vice-President

Sri Ram Chandra Saha
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Message

I am glad to learn that the Vivekananda Human Centre, London is going to organize the Vivekananda Festival 2014 on 8 June, 2014 and that a souvenir entitled 'Vivek' will be published on this occasion.

The chief aim of this festival is to instil faith in oneself and impart nobler values of life, to raise individuals to higher levels of strength and felicity with spiritual, moral, ethical and eternal values of personality development and human excellence.

I wish the speeches and the publication of the Souvenir will maintain a fairly high standard for which the Vivekananda Human Centre, London, has already earned a name. May Swamiji Maharaj bless you all is my sincere prayer.

Swami Prabhananda
(Swami Prabhananda)

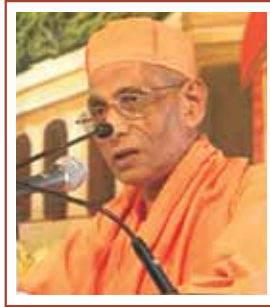
Vice President

Date : 22 April 2014

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06 May 2014

Dear Ram Chandra Saha,

I am glad to know that Vivekananda Human Centre is going to observe Vivekananda Festival on 8 June 2014 with focus on **Human Excellence** and a souvenir "Vivek" will be released on the occasion.

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

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

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

With best wishes,

Yours sincerely,

(Swami Suhitananda)
General Secretary

Sri Ram Chandra Saha
Director, Vivekananda Human Centre
London



MESSAGE

Dear Ram Chandra Saha,

We are glad to learn that Vivekananda Human Centre, London, UK, is bringing out a Souvenir "VIVEK" on the occasion of VIVEKANANDA FESTIVAL 2014 on 8 June 2014 on the very relevant theme of the present world "Human Excellence".

Vivekananda thought for the harmonious development and co-existence of the whole of humanity. So he is dear to all as sympathetic leader. His message inspires one and all in the life-struggle. He said : "Purity, patience, and perseverance are the three essentials to success, and above all, love." For the human excellence these key qualities are to be established in our lives. Love for all humanity can do all types of well-being in the world. Therefore, a function like Vivekananda Festival is very essential for the modern time.

All the great prophets came to the world to do good to all. If we follow their instructions with reverential attitude towards them, we will be able to live in harmony and peace in the society.

We hope the Vivekananda Festival 2014 organized by the Vivekananda Human Centre will be a great success.

We convey our heartfelt thank and best wishes to all engaged in the publication of the Souvenir "VIVEK".

May Lord bless us all !

Swami Ameyananda

(Swami Ameyananda)

Adhyaksha

Ramakrishna Math & Ramakrishna Mission, Dhaka, Bangladesh

Sri Ram Chandra Saha

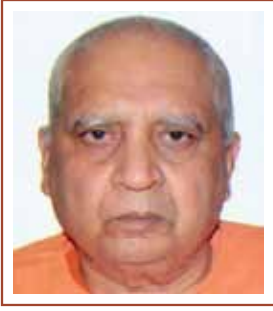
Director

Vivekananda Human Centre

Vivekananda House

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Vivekananda and Raja-Yoga Swami Girishananda

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One of the major contributions of Swami Vivekananda to the Western world was his explanation of Raja-Yoga (Kingly explanation of union with the supreme). Apart from his lucid explanation of the Eastern Philosophy in various fields of knowledge as also the inspiring and awakening call to the common suffering mass to the divine arena, he taught the penetrating and practical ways and means to cultivate and develop spiritual foundation in each individual life by the process of Raja-Yoga.

The Raja-Yoga starts from the extraction of human gross mind to the fine and superfine level. The great seer Patanjali of the ancient and prehistoric time with his background of Sankhya philosophy and modification thereof had composed the aphorisms in the form of compact formulae which can direct the mind to transcendental sphere without allowing any scope for weakness of the mind. So this is a study of the mind on the mind itself, i.e. the strong mind unfolding the universal cosmic reality and that supreme truth is inherent in the individual (Purusha). Happiness and sorrow of the mind as also all pairs of the opposites are products of the nature that can be overcome and screened off by meditative realisation.

Swamiji in his earlier days of mendicant life had felt some urge to practice spiritual development laid down in this path. He went to Gazipur (North-India) and during his itinerary because his health did not permit severe austerity. He thought that teaching of Yoga may help him to go forward and overcome the obstacles. Out of all his teachings, Sri Ramakrishna perhaps had not taught him this path of Yoga. So, he went to Pahari Baba (a monk staying in Gazipur, near Varanasi) in North-India and determined to take initiation from him. He was passing his night in the Gazipur cave and Sri Ramakrishna appeared

before him for twenty one days and Swamiji abandoned his idea of initiation from Pahari Baba because Sri Ramakrishna had given all his spiritual treasures to him but at the same time alerted him that he should not practice Hata-Yoga i.e. Sometimes it is referred as elementary teachings of Raja-Yoga. In the present age Sri Ramakrishna discarded this process of Hatha-Yoga as a primary lesson to Raja-Yoga. It was insisted by him that if one should pay much attention to that part of processing the body for Sadhana there is every chance of the mind of Sadhaka diverted to the bodily attachment because of supernatural power such acquired and thus becoming forgetful from the target of raising the mind from lower propensities.

As per the version of Sri Ramakrishna in his gospel (June 10, 1883) pointing to the singer "A little while ago, he sang a song describing the six centres. These are dealt with in yoga. There are two kinds of yoga Hata-Yoga & Raja-Yoga. The Hata-Yogi practices physical exercise. His goal is to acquire supernatural power, longevity and eight psychic powers. These are his aims. But the aim of Raja-Yoga is the attainment of devotion, ecstatic love, knowledge and renunciation, of these two, Raja-Yoga is better."

Swamiji taught the path of Karma (action), the path of Jnana (knowledge), the path of love (Bhakti) and taught the most abstruse path of yoga to a special group of Westerners who are interested and like to observe the rigidity thereof. He boldly analyses the whole theory based on logic and cleared all doubts about the path of mysticism. Swamiji said in his introduction of Raja-Yoga : "It is easy to concentrate the mind on external things, the mind naturally goes outwards; but not so in the case of religion, or psychology, or metaphysics, where the subject and the object one the object is internal, The mind itself



is the object, and it is necessary to study the mind itself-mind studying mind. We know that there is the power of the mind called reflection. I am talking to you. At the same time I am standing aside, as it were, a second person, and knowing and hearing what I am talking. You work and think at the same time, while a portion of your mind stands by and sees what you are thinking. The powers of the mind should be concentrated and turned back upon itself, and as the darkest places reveal their secrets before the penetrating rays of the Sun, so will this concentrated mind penetrate its own innermost secrets.” - 1

What is the definition of yoga? The great seer Patanjali said, “Yoga is restraining the mind-stuff (chitta) from taking various forms.- 2 where is the culmination of such restraint? Patanjali says that by the restraint of even this impression (impression which obstructs all other impression) all being restrained comes the seedless Samadhi” In explanation of this aphorism, Swamiji Said, “You remember that our goal is to perceive the soul itself. We cannot perceive the Soul because it has got mingled up with the nature, with the mind, with the body. The ignorant man thinks that his body is the Soul. The learned man thinks that his mind is the Soul. Both of them are mistaken. What makes this soul get mingled up with all these? Different waves in the Chitta rise and cover the Soul. We only see a little reflection of the Soul through these waves. So if the wave is one of anger, we see the Soul is angry. It is one of love, we see ourselves reflected in their waves and say we are loving, the real nature will never be perceived as long as there is single wave in the lake of Chitta, the real nature will never be perceived until all the wave have subsided. So Swamiji said that great seer Patanjali teaches us the meaning of these waves; secondly the best way to repress them and thirdly how to make one wave? so strong so as to suppress all other waves : fire eating the fire as it were; when only one remains, it will be easy to suppress that also and when that is gone, this Samadhi or concentration is called seedless. It sees nothing, and the soul is manifested just as it is his in own glory. Then we know that soul is not a compound. It is only the eternal simple in the universe and as such it cannot be born, it cannot

die. So it is said in the aphorism 1:14, it becomes firmly grounded by long constant efforts with great love (for the end to be attained). Restraint doesn't come in one day, but by the continued practice. - 3

So we see that practice of the concentration of the mind can be motivated by extreme non-attainment along with continuums Straggle. Patanjali Says in his aphorism (1:13) ‘Tatra Sthito Yatne hyasa.’ Continuous Straggle to keep them (the Vritis) perfectly restrained in practice. So, in the Bhagavad Gita we find the same emphasis. Sri Krishna said to Arjuna when asked by him that it is extremely difficult to control the mind, ‘it can be achieved by the spirit of detachment to the objects of the senses and repeated practice of vibrating the mind with the wave of thought currents of tachment; when these sort of Vibrations are not intense or medium, The yogi should take recourse to ‘Iswarpranidhanadba’ - Devotion to Iswara in the process praying to the Lord as Swamiji said, “In him becomes infinite that all knowingness which in others is only a germ. Thus the mind extends to the unlimited”

Swami Vivekananda said he had explained all the four yoga viz. those of work, love, psychology, and knowledge. “But you must, at the same time, remember that these divisions are not very marked and quite exclusive of each other. Each blends into the other. But according to the type which prevails, we name the divisions. It is not that you can find men who have no other faculty than that of work, nor that you can find men who are no more than devoted worshippers only, nor that there are men who have no more than mere knowledge. The divisions are made in accordance with the type or tendency that may be seen to prevail in a man. We have found that, in the end, all these four paths converge and become one. All religious and all methods of work and worship lead us to one and the some goal.” - 4

Ref. 1. C.W.S.V. ‘Raja-Yoga’, v.1, p.131, Ed.28th
2. Do v-01, p.200 3. Do v-1, p.226
4. Do v.1, p.108, Ed.28th.

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A Development of Personality Swami Gautamananda

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The Human Personality

What is personality? Personality is defined by psychologists as ‘the sum total of a person’s capacity, habits and attitudes’.

The philosopher goes one step further and asks, ‘Who is it that thinks, feels and acts (to develop these capacities, habits and attitudes)? Who is the unchanging factor, the real person, amidst the changing body, senses and mind?’

The answer given by India’s great rishis is, ‘The Consciousness in man is this unchanging and integrating factor.’ This consciousness is self-evident, svayam jyoti, as the Vedanta puts it, and is perceived by us as ‘I am’.

If we examine the way we work or react in our daily lives, we will find that first we feel, ‘I am’ and then only comes ‘I see, I think, I feel and I act’. It is not as what certain western thinkers say, ‘I think and therefore I am.’ The Vedantic view is ‘I am and therefore I think.’ This is an important distinction that we should keep in mind. All our capacities, habits and attitudes, therefore, belong to this Consciousness (chaitanya) in each individual. It is this one Consciousness that manifests as different powers or faculties of our personality such as perceiving, thinking, feeling and willing.

The Desire to Excel

It is a well-known fact that everyone wants to excel in thinking, feeling, willing and doing. We feel an inherent need to improve in the way we act or do or respond in our daily dealings. Hence comes the call for developing all capabilities. This process of development is what is called personality development.

Today’s world is one of aggressiveness and competition. In such a condition, we all know that unless we equip ourselves with knowledge and skill, we cannot make any headway. Higher our capabilities and power to act, the greater are the chances of succeeding in life. Naturally, personality development, which helps us to develop our capacities, has become imperative in all walks of life. A well developed personality excels in every field of human activity—be it academics or research or arts or games or social dealings or financial management or even following the political pursuits.

But then, what do we mean by the development of personality? Growth and strength. Man should grow from an instinctual being to an intellectual being, to an ethical being and finally to a spiritual being, the last being the highest level of development. Not only should he grow, he should become stronger too. We should be able to cultivate strength at all levels of our personality—physical, intellectual, emotional, ethical and spiritual.

Many people think that whatever they are at present is all that is possible about them. They do not ask if there are deeper possibilities present in them. But don’t we feel dissatisfied with our limited power of thinking, feeling, willing in the course of our pursuit of greater joy or knowledge? Don’t we feel we should



go deeper in thinking, finer in feeling, stronger in will with our faculties?

We should wake up from this sleep and ask, 'Is it possible for all to develop their personalities?' And the answer would be, yes, it is possible provided, there is a will and yearning to better oneself in life.

This 'will' to achieve is what is termed as shraddha in Vedanta. Bhagavad Gita [17.3] says:

Man is what his faith [shraddha] is; He becomes whatever he believes in!

This shraddha depends on one's inherent substance which is a product of his previous actions and achievements.

The Ultimate Purpose

Here let us remind ourselves that the ultimate purpose of personality development is discovering our spiritual nature. The 'person' behind the activities of our body, senses and mind is the Individual Self or Jivatman or simply, Atman. The Gita (15.7) speaks of Jivatman as part and parcel of Paramatman, the supreme soul or God. 'My part' says Sri Krishna, 'which is eternal has become identified with body-mind as it were, to become Jivatman'.

This person (i.e. the individual consciousness) identifies itself with body, senses, intellect, emotions, will or spirit and thus goes on changing its identity until it rediscovers its true nature—the Atman. It is then that one becomes calm and stable, free from all limitations and misery of any kind. This is because there is no change in Atman and that changelessness is also full of joy and peace!

When we say that one should try to 'develop the personality', what we actually mean is that we should outgrow our physical and mental limitations and manifest our spiritual Self, the Atman. Or we can also state it by saying that we should become part of the Infinite God Himself, overcoming our finiteness or limitedness.

Sri Ramakrishna speaks of this development in his own unique way. He divides persons as those having an unripe ego and those having a ripe ego. The unripe ego identifies itself with the body and feels 'I am young/old, strong/weak, etc.' People with a ripe ego say, 'I am a servant of God, I am His child. I am His part'. They have attained perfect development of personality, because they have reached the Infinite beyond which there is no scope for development.

Describing the goal of all our endeavours in the context of personality development the Gita (6.29) states:

The perfect person sees himself in all beings and all beings in himself. Thus, he sees the 'sameness' (of Atman) everywhere.

Integrating the Personality

Now let us turn to some more details of what constitutes a 'personality' and how to develop or, rather, integrate it.

As stated earlier, the centre of our personality is our divine self, the atman. When one realizes the atman, then all our thinking, feeling and willing would get integrated easily. Only when we are integrated around the atman, or our Divine Centre, then only we get a harmonious personality.

In olden days people used a semispherical ink-pot. It had a weight fixed at the bottom. With its centre of gravity thus firmly ensured within, the ink-pot would never topple over. In the same way, when we are

firm in the knowledge that we are the Atman, Infinite Life, Infinite Consciousness and Infinite Bliss, we can always maintain an inner centre of gravity. Established in that, we can integrate all our faculties and grow into a powerful and stable personality.

The ordinary man, however, is full of conflicts and contradictions in his personality. These conflicts make one stressful and weak. They create, what is called in psychological terms, 'complexes'. According to psycho-logists, most of these personality-conflicts, or complexes, can be grouped as:

Ego-complex,
Sex-complex, and
Herd-complex.

A complex develops in us when we instinctively think or will in one way but are unable or are obstructed to give vent to them because of social inhibitions and disapproval. This desire to express and the fear of being ridiculed or prevented from so doing creates a conflict in the mind. This is in fact a struggle between our baser instincts and our higher sense of being. In such intricate situations, our mind either becomes aggressive through excessive expression of instinctual drives or it becomes terribly passive due to constant suppression. We can perhaps channelise the power of the aggressive mind into spiritual pursuits, but in the case of suppression, nothing much can be done and the person degenerates into a drunkard, or a drug addict and becomes depressed.

What is the way out to bring harmony within our own mind? Just as in order to have a healthy body, one should have proper development and coordination among the various parts and limbs of the body, in the same way, in order to have healthy mind life, one should bring harmony among various capacities of mind—thought, emotion and will; this alone brings strength, peace and harmony to the individual.

The three complexes referred to above, are actually born of our ignorance of the true nature of Self. The real Self is beyond all sex-consciousness and limitations of the ego. And as this Self is omnipotent and all-pervasive, we can overcome all complexes born of our interactions with others. Instead of being a victim of the herd complex, then, we learn to live in harmony with others.

The Purusha Sukta, a hymn in the Rig Veda, indicates that our individual consciousness is a part of the Cosmic Consciousness, individual mind part of the cosmic mind and individual body part of the cosmic body. When the ego or the 'individual consciousness' is in tune with the Universal Consciousness, then the former can guide all our faculties in a harmonious way resulting in true integration of personality.

We learn to dissociate the ego or the 'Individual self' from all the faculties, and try to discover the real core of our being, the atman. Then meditating on the atman as the true master of each of them, we learn to establish an inner harmony. We then become our own master and live a life of harmony and peace.

Conclusion

Personality development is essential for gaining true inner peace and fulfilment. Ideal personalities like Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda had attained such high level of inner integration and that is why they saw only good everywhere. Established in God Consciousness, they perceived the same God or Self in everything and worked for the uplift of everyone everywhere. This is the greatest benefit of developing our personality to the fullest extent.





Sri Ramakrishna's Life and Message: Their Relevance to Present-day Education **Swami Bhajanananda**

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In the case of great men the message they give to the world is inseparable from the life they live. In the case of Sri Ramakrishna, his life and message were both unique.

From his early boyhood Sri Ramakrishna had an intense longing to realize God. Formal schooling he had only for two or three years. At the age nineteen poverty at home forced him to become a priest at the newly built Kali Temple at Dakshineswar in Kolkata. But, owing to his absorption in spiritual practices, he couldn't continue his priestly duties for long. He spent nearly twelve years in following various spiritual disciplines not only of Hinduism but of other religions as well. He attained success in every path at an incredibly short time.

From all his spiritual experiences, he came to the following major conclusions which form the core of his message.

1. The ultimate goal of human life is the realization of the ultimate Reality, for that alone can bring everlasting peace and fulfilment to the human soul.
2. Religions of the world are different pathways to the same ultimate Reality which is known by different names in different religions.
3. God dwells in all people and therefore service to man is really service to God.

Soon disciples began to gather around Sri Ramakrishna. The foremost among them was Narendra Nath Datta who later on became Swami Vivekananda. After the Master's passing away, his young disciples formed a monastic Order known as Ramakrishna Math which now has its headquarters at Belur Math in Howrah. Swami Vivekananda carried the message of his Master far and wide, and founded a unique organization known as the Ramakrishna Mission to render financial, educational, medical, social and spiritual service to suffering humanity, especially the poor and the downtrodden, in different parts of India and the world.

In the twin institutions, Ramakrishna Math and Mission, and their branch centres, Sri Ramakrishna's life is a living tradition, and through them, and also through various other channels, his unique message is spreading in different parts of India and the world, bringing about transformation of human lives and society in many ways, silently and unobtrusively.

In our present context a question arises: What is the relevance of the life and message of Sri Ramakrishna to education in the present-day world? What significance does the life and message of Sri Ramakrishna hold for modern students?

Learning from Life

It is true that Sri Ramakrishna's formal schooling did not go beyond the third grade. But he educated himself at the greatest school - Life! All knowledge comes from life, and life is the greatest teacher. One of the defects of the present system of education is that it alienates students from life; it prevents them from participating in life and gain wisdom. In this connection, I would like to cite a passage from the book *Report of Greco* by Nikos Kazantzakis, the famous Greek writer who won the Nobel Prize in literature.

The passage describes a school in a town. The teacher in the third grade was teaching grammar. "We



watched the teacher sweating away at his desk as he repeated the points of grammar over and over again in an effort to make them stick in our minds. But our thoughts were outside in the sun, on pebble warfare...

“One divine spring day, the windows were open. A tangerine tree was in bloom across the street, and its perfume entered the classroom. Each of our minds had turned into a blossoming tangerine tree; we could not bear to hear anything more about acute and circumflex accents. A bird came just then, perched on the plain tree in the schoolyard and began to sing. At that point a pale redheaded student who had arrived that year from his village, Nikolios by name, was unable to control himself. He raised his finger, “Be quiet, Sir”, he cried, “Be quiet and let us hear the bird.”

The truth is, children like to live close to nature. As the 18th-century philosopher and educationist Jean Jacques Rousseau showed in his famous book Emile, when left to themselves with minimum guidance, children learn many things from nature, and grow into moral beings spontaneously. The truth of this theory may be seen in the life of Ramakrishna. He spent his early boyhood in communion with nature. As he grew older, he began to observe and study the intricacies as well as the impermanence of human life. Through this natural process he acquired a vast amount of knowledge and wisdom, recorded in the Kathamrita, which has been providing spiritual guidance and inspiration to millions of people for nearly a hundred years.

According to Rousseau, the present system of education prevents the child from gaining experience directly from life and attaining wisdom. The modern system of education is designed entirely to help a student acquire wealth through competition. In the light of this, we can understand Sri Ramakrishna’s refusal to attend school for the sake of “bread-winning education” (chaal-kola-baandhano vidya).

In this connection it should be mentioned that for Sri Ramakrishna education is a life-long process. He used to say, “As long as I live, so long do I learn” (Yaavad baachi, taavat shikhi). Surprisingly, this view of Sri Ramakrishna is in accord with the current thinking on education. In the reports submitted to the UNESCO by the Faure Commission in 1972 and the Delors Commission in 1996, the main thrust is on life-long education, “how to build up a continually evolving body of knowledge all through life - learning to be”. This takes us to the next point in Sri Ramakrishna’s message.

Learning to be

In Order to learn from life a person must first of all have a proper attitude towards life. There are three main attitudes towards life: to have, to give and to be.

The first attitude is to acquire things from life as much as one can. This is a self-centred attitude which makes even love a commodity to be acquired. Unfortunately, the present system of education fosters mostly this kind of attitude.

The second attitude is to give, help, serve others. This is indeed a noble attitude, especially if it is based on self-sacrifice. It is this attitude that sustains all family and social relationships. One of the aims of education should be to cultivate this attitude.

But an attitude of mere giving is not enough to make life meaningful. Mere getting and giving may alienate man from his own true being, true self, true nature. When a person loses his self-identity, his life becomes unauthentic, unreal. Such a person is unable to establish meaningful relationships with others, and to find meaning in life.

One of the central aims of education should be to enable youths to realize their own true being, true Self, true nature, to be what they really are. This was the reason why the Faure Commission Report submitted to the UNESCO in 1972 was titled “Learning to Be”. “Learning to Be” has been included as one of the aims



of education in the Delors Commission Report also

Learning to be is the main thrust of Sri Ramakrishna's teachings. He did not teach how to earn money, how to compete with people, how to win a law suit and so on. He only taught how to realize one's true Self which is inseparable from the Supreme Self or God. God realization, which means realization of one's own inherent divine nature, is the central teaching of Sri Ramakrishna.

Spirituality

Self-realization is a basic principle of spirituality or spiritual life. Interest in spirituality is now becoming a major trend in world thought and social life in many parts of the world. Disillusioned with materialism and unrestricted pleasure seeking many people are turning to spiritual life. Moreover, owing to the increasing tempo of urban life, competition for success, stringent job requirements, financial crises, breakdown of family life and other factors, human life has become highly stressful in the present-day world. There is now a growing awareness that a spiritual perspective and the practice of spiritual techniques like meditation are vitally necessary to solve the problems of stress, depression, etc.

Interest in spiritual life is now supported by research studies on consciousness conducted by psychologists, neuroscientists, philosophers and even by quantum physicists. As a result, spirituality has now become a new attitude towards life, a new way of life, a new means of getting meaning and fulfilment. Spirituality now forms a part of the MBA course and is now being followed by businessmen, salesmen, lawyers, doctors and people belonging to different walks of life. The time may not be far off when it becomes an essential subject of study, like environment studies, in schools and colleges.

Most people, however, are not aware that the present global spiritual movement owes its origin to the influence of Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda. Sri Ramakrishna reestablished the spiritual ideal and started a spiritual renaissance. Swami Vivekananda separated the universal spiritual truths and principles common to all religions and laid the foundation for a universal spiritual movement.

This is what is now called "Secular Spirituality". With the support provided by a large number of spiritual teachers and by the information-and-communication- technology revolution, this secular spirituality is assuming the nature of "global spirituality" which is available to all people all over the world.

Principle of Verification

The main source of the power and appeal of science lies in the fact that scientific truths can be verified through experiments. By contrast, religion is popularly held to be based on faith in dogmatic, and very often mythological, assumptions. Sri Ramakrishna, however, showed that religious truths also can be verified through direct experience. By practicing the spiritual disciplines of different religions and by realizing the ultimate Truth of all of them, Sri Ramakrishna established the validity of some of the major religions of the world.

Education in the modern world is dominated by science. Youths have faith in science because its principles can be verified. Many of the youths do not have, or have lost, faith in the traditional religions. Sri Ramakrishna's verification principle can help to restore their faith in religion. It is the verifiable, experiential aspect of religion that is known as "spirituality" which was discussed in the previous section above.

Harmony of Religions

Children do not have the freedom to choose any religion; faith in a particular religion is thrust upon them by their parents and other elders. And if the elders hold wrong, or negative views about other religions, children also accept them. It is in this way that religious conflicts and communal disharmony spread among the youths.



In these days when the internet and globalization are bringing peoples of the world closer to one another, inter-religious conflicts constitute one of the main obstacles to the establishment of harmony and peace among people.

This shows the important role good religious education can play in counteracting the influence of religious fundamentalism and fanaticism on young minds and in fostering religious harmony and peace among the youths.

In this context Sri Ramakrishna's unique message of harmony of religions assumes great significance. As already mentioned, Sri Ramakrishna showed that all religions are true in so far as they lead to the same ultimate goal. He demonstrated through his own life that it is possible to remain loyal to one's own religious path and at the same time be open to other religions and accept some of the best elements from them. This liberal perspective should become a leading, enlightening feature of present-day education. In a pluralistic society as prevails in India, Sri Ramakrishna's message of harmony of religions should become an essential part of the school curriculum.

Service as a Way of Life

One of the major social trends in the world today is a new kind of humanism which focusses on the plight of underprivileged people and physically or mentally challenged people. This new humanism holds not only the Government but also the whole society responsible for the welfare of such people. Big companies and corporate bodies are also being compelled to take up service activities. There is now a growing awareness among cultured people that social service should be regarded not as a duty or obligation but a natural way of life.

If service is to become a natural way of life it should be based on a lofty attitude towards human beings. The usual attitude towards poor, underprivileged or suffering people is one of pity or compassion. Such an attitude breeds egoism in the server and a sense of humiliation in the served.

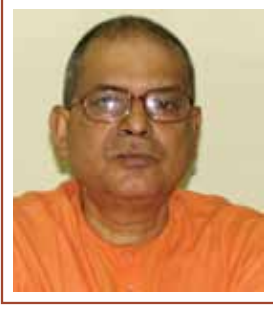
Sri Ramakrishna has given a high and noble attitude of service: Shiva Jnane Jiva Seva, "to serve man as God" or "to serve God in man". We pointed out earlier the ancient Indian view that man's true nature is neither the body nor the mind but the Atman, the true Self, which is an inseparable part of the Supreme Self or Paramatman. This means each person is potentially Divine, and service to man is service to God. Such an attitude elevates both the server and the served. All the service activities of Ramakrishna Mission are based on this principle.

It is indeed a universal attitude meant for all people. Such an attitude of service should be cultivated from early youth. Hence it should find an important place in school and college curricula. If at least a few thousand people of our country can be motivated by such a noble attitude of service, many of the socio-economic problems facing our country can be solved in a short time.

From the above discussion we can see that Sri Ramakrishna's life and message have immense significance in the field of education in India. We hope this understanding will spread more and more among the teachers in our schools and colleges.

[Keynote address give at the UGC-sponsored national-level seminar on "Sri Ramakrishna— his unique Message to the Modern World" held at Shikshan Mandir (B. Ed. College) of Ramakrishna Mission Saradapitha, Belur]





Sufism and Vedanta – A Comparative Study Swami Suvirananda

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Swami Vivekananda, throughout his preaching career, propagated the fact that the revival of Indian society can be achieved only on the lines of spiritual regeneration. Throughout his riumphal journey through the heart of his beloved motherland, after returning from his first visit to the West, he again and again said, that Spirituality is the central cord, the predominant theme of Indian life. Whatever sect, denomination, region or even religion one may belong to, it is our natural and latent spirituality which marks us as Indian. He proved, giving examples after examples from History, and through beautiful parables that if India is to rise again, if it is to reclaim its just position among the conglomeration of nations, it is through the propagation of its religion, its spirituality.

The most significant characteristic of the Indian Civilization is its inherent love and attraction to spirituality and religion. Here the religious life of a baby starts from its mother's lap and continues till he enters the afterlife. If we go through the history of our country we would see that time and again this love and attraction for religion has got directed, due to foreseen as well as unforeseen circumstances, towards both good and bad. It is this inherent love for religion and spirituality that is behind the amazing tolerance amongst different religions existing in this country. Practical examples of religious harmony may still be noticed on every street corner of India. Yet unfortunately, it is this very love and attraction towards religion that out of ignorance takes the shape of inter-religious hatred and fanaticism. It is heart wrenching to notice, the religious harmony of India marred again and again, especially in recent history, by religious riots and arson.

The great doctrine of the harmony of religions had been an essential part of Sri Ramakrishna's message and had been vividly demonstrated in his life. Hence it is not surprising to find his dear 'Naren' proclaim triumphantly at his first address to the Parliament of Religions – "I am proud to belong to a religion which has taught the world both tolerance and universal acceptance. We elieve 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." The important point to notice here is that right from the beginning; Swamiji was not content with merely preaching tolerance among religions but was aiming at establishing a 'Universal Religion', which will rise above all dogmas, doctrines and sects and will help humankind establish itself in its pristine glory of potential divinity. Sister Gargi explains this point beautifully in the second volume of her monumental work 'The New Discoveries'. She writes, "This doctrine (of religious harmony) has been generally understood to mean that since every religion leads to the same goal – God - every man, while faithfully following the particular religion in which he was born or in which he feels most at home, should at the same time maintain a respectful attitude toward other religions, neither criticizing their beliefs nor obstructing their practices. Swamiji explained this teaching in his first address at the Parliament, when he spoke of his country's acceptance of all religions as true and quoted from the Gita: 'All men are struggling through paths which in the end lead to Me.' But while such a teaching might at first glance seem to make it possible for various religions to live in peace with one another, it left



them more or less separate. It was in practice a teaching of live and let live - a teaching that could not give rise to a stable harmony among religions unless an underlying unity was recognized by them. It was this unity, therefore, which Swamiji later stressed in his "Paper on Hinduism" when he spoke of truth as being the 'same light coming through glasses of different colours,' and described the future universal religion as one 'which will have no location in place or time, which will be infinite, like the God it will preach, . . . which in its catholicity will embrace in its infinite arms, and find a place for every human being from the lowest grovelling savage not far removed from the brute to the highest man . . . and whose whole scope, whose whole force, will be centered in aiding humanity to realize its own true, divine nature.'"

Therefore, Swamiji was clearly advocating something more than mere religious tolerance or respect towards other religions. His prophetic vision of a Universal Religion was aimed at breaking down once and for all the barriers of fanaticism and self-centredness that isolates the true faith of man, towards 'urging a receptive attitude toward all the great spiritual thoughts of the world'. "Why take a single instrument from the great orchestra of the earth?" he asked in Detroit. "Let the grand symphony go on. . . ."

It is but imperative to mention that the first initiative towards establishing this Universal Religion must take place in India. India, with its hoary tradition of religious harmony, India with its grand social fabric consisting of all major religions of the world, India with its age-old culture soaked in the sweet nectar of Spirituality, must be the melting-point from where would rise this wondrous 'Universal Religion' which Swamiji dreamt of.

In our country, the first step in this direction would be to search for common points of contact, to determine the confluence between Hinduism and Islam, the two pre-dominant religions of India. This can be achieved only through a comparative study between Vedanta and Sufism - the highest flights of religious thoughts among the Hindus and the Muslims. The existence of these two systems of thought in India is of immense importance, as both Vedanta and Sufism appeal to the best minds in both these religions, that while theologians differ in their dogmas and commentaries of holy books, the mystics of both the religions are at one in the fundamentals relating to their experience of the Supreme Reality.

The word Sufi is derived from the Persian word "Tasawwuf" which in English would mean Theosophy or Mysticism. "Tasawwuf" again is taken from 'Sawwuf' which seems to be connected to the Greek word 'Sophos' which means wise. Another popular meaning of the word 'Sawwuf', from which the term Sufism is derived, can be cleanliness or purification, 'Sawwuf' originally meaning white fur or wool. So what actually is Sufism? Murshid Inayat Khan, the founder of Sufi movement in the West, beautifully defines Sufism as, "the love of wisdom and the wisdom of love". Sufism arose as a reaction against the dogmatism that developed in Islam hundreds of years after the death of Mohammed. It is distinguished by the role it gives to its great mystics - those who become aware of the divine Consciousness that pervades everyone and everything. A Sufi is defined as one who does not separate himself from others by opinion or dogma and who realises the heart as the shrine of God. His object is to remove the false self and discover God within, while he is in his relationship with his fellow beings. He is expected to love all created things without any distinction of caste and creed.

These mystics, often poets, used a secret, metamorphic way of expressing their realizations. Their basic message was the perfection of man through divine love. In his famous lecture 'The Work before Us', delivered at the Triplicane Literary Society in Madras, Swamiji says, "There was an ancient Persian Sufi poet, and

one of this poems said, 'I came to the Beloved and beheld the door was closed; I knocked at the door and from inside a voice came, 'Who is there?' I replied, 'I am'. The door did not open. A second time I came and knocked at the door and the same voice asked, 'Who is there?' 'I am so - and - so.' The door did not open. A third time I came and the same voice asked, 'Who is there?' 'I am Thyself, my Love', and the door opened."

In the first volume of the 'Life of Swami Vivekananda – by his Eastern and Western Disciples' (Ch. 18) the author writes, "The Swami was tirelessly in search of unity in the world of Indian ideals. He finally came to see that underlying all the diversity of customs and traditions was the oneness of the spiritual vision. The differences between the Muslim and Hindu worlds he found to be more apparent than real; for the Muslims as a race were as generous and human, and at heart as Indian, as the Hindus. The enlightened among them appreciated Hindu culture, and were aware that there was an affinity between Sufism and Advaita Vedanta. To him Muslims and Hindus were Indians first; hence the distinction between them by reason of their different beliefs was subordinate to their identity as compatriots." Swamiji was of the belief that of all the schools of Islam, the liberal teachings of the Sufis make the nearest approach to the doctrines of Vedanta.

Allow me to tell you three basic qualities of Sufism which makes it so close to Vedanta and may act as the building blocks to the making of the 'Universal Religion'.

1) Tolerance – Speaking on one of the basic tenets of Sufism, Murshid Inayat Khan writes in the Sufi Quarterly, "...The principal thing that the Sufi message has brought to the world is tolerance for all faiths existing in the different parts of the world, followed by different people. This can be obtained by giving the idea of that One Truth which stands as the stem of religion, with all the different faiths as its branches. The true religion of a Sufi is the Sea of Truth, and all different faiths are its waves. The message of God from time to time comes as tides in the sea, but what remains always is the Sea, the Truth... A convert to the Sufi order means a convert to all the faiths in the world and bound by no particular faith..." Thus, both Vedanta and Sufism are one in their protest against religious bigotry and sectarianism.

(2) Realization of the Inner Truth: According to the Sufis this life is a search for the knowledge of Truth (Haq); Sufism is concerned, primarily, in the words of Al-Hujwiri, a great Sufi teacher, with "the unveiling of the Veiled". And the 'Veiled' is known in the Vedantic philosophy as Brahman. Brahman which is everywhere, but is separated from the Jivatman, i.e. the Ruh of the Sufis, as it were, by a veil or screen of ignorance, called Maya. Jivatman, essentially, says the Vedantist, is not different from Brahman, for Brahman is all-in-all; He is allpervading; you are in Him and He dwells in you. So says the Sufis, to use the words of Rumi, another great Sufi teacher, 'Thou art He himself'. 'Tat Tvam Asi' or 'Aham Brahmasmi', declares the Vedantist, 'An-aal Haq', says the Sufi; and both mean the same thing. Murshid Inayat Khan writes, "...The explanation of the whole religion is investigation of the Self. The more one explores oneself, the more one will understand all religions in the fullest light and all will become clear. Sufism is only a light thrown upon your own religion, like a light brought in a room where all things you want are; the one thing you needed was light."

3) Love of God: Sufism preaches leading a God-intoxicated life, to ascend to higher spheres of spirituality through divine knowledge leading to personal experience of God and to be lost in the love of God. Abul Hasan Kirkhani, a Sufi, says, "I do not say that heaven and hell do not exist, but I say that they are nothing to me, because God created them both, and there is no room for any created object in the place where I am." Rabia, a renowned Sufi mystic of the Middle Ages, has perhaps the final word on Sufism. She was once



Swami Vivekananda an Exemplar of His own Teachings **Swami Dayatmananda**

President, Ramakrishna Vedanta Centre, UK



The Lives of great spiritual leaders are the best commentaries, the greatest illustrations of their own teachings. In them we find thought, speech and action working in consonance.

Swami Vivekananda was one of the greatest makers of modern India. He represented the finest flowering of the Indian renaissance movement which started with Ram Mohan Roy in early nineteenth century. Centuries of political subjection had degraded Indian society. Religion had degenerated into dogmas and the practice of rituals. Swami Vivekananda was the prophet who descended from the Saptarshiloka to uplift the whole of humanity. This he did through the preaching of Vedanta.

The aim of Vedanta is to reveal the underlying harmony of all religions and philosophies, all arts and sciences, as different approaches to the same Reality. Its message is impersonal, scientific, and non-sectarian. It proclaims that man is divine in his essential nature, and is the master of himself and his destiny. Swami Vivekananda laid emphasis on the basic harmony of Indian culture and the underlying unity of the apparently diverse currents and forms of Indian social life spring from the fundamental teachings of Vedanta.

This spiritual tradition of Indian culture was once again emphasized by Vivekananda. To him there was no Hindu or Muslim, Brahmana or untouchable, rich or poor. In every human being he saw the same divine and the service of God was identical in his eyes with service of man. This was the message he preached wherever all over the world.

Sri Ramakrishna used to say that one must first practice what one believed in and then only preach it to others by the command of God; otherwise preaching would not be fruitful. Swami Vivekananda first realised the truths he wanted to propagate and then only preached with the command of Sri Ramakrishna. He was an exemplar of his own teachings.

As a popular Sanskrit verse elegantly puts it: 'the holy ones are one in mind, speech and Action.' This saying includes all the highest virtues man can conceive of. It means the manifestation of truthfulness, purity, sincerity, unselfishness, unbiased love. Sri Ramakrishna emphasized the need for 'making thought and word perfectly at one' as a discipline for those who sought God in earnest.

Swamiji writes to a disciple in Madras, 'Be holy and pure and the fire will come'. This was the keynote of all his teachings. Coming from Vivekananda these words had tremendous effect. These were not mere words of encouragement but the products of the faith and conviction born of his own life-experience.

Sri Ramakrishna used to call Naren, Rakhai, Baburam, Yogen, Niranjana and Purna, Ishwara-Kotis, persons who assume bodies to help God in His mission on earth. The Master thought so highly of Naren that if anybody spoke disparagingly of him, he would remonstrate with the reviler saying, "What are you doing! You are committing Shiva-ninda!", meaning that to speak slightingly of Naren amounted to blasphemy against

Shiva. Sri Ramakrishna would also say, "Let no one judge Naren. No one will ever be able to understand him fully." Once when a devotee brought the news to him that Naren was falling into evil ways by mixing with persons of questionable character, Shri Ramakrishna took him sharply to task saying, "That is not true. Mother has told me that Naren can never fall into evil ways. If you talk to me in that strain any more, I shall never see your face again."

Swami Vivekananda was an embodiment of truth, purity and unselfishness. He was never tired of repeating: 'Be pure, staunch and sincere to the very backbone, and everything will be all right. If you have marked anything in the disciples of Sri Ramakrishna it is this - they are sincere to the backbone.'

Truth

Swamiji placed truth the high pedestal. It was to him, as with Sri Ramakrishna, the very foundation of spiritual life. He writes: 'Be not discouraged, one word of truth can never be lost; for ages it may be hidden under rubbish but it will show itself sooner or later. Truth is indestructible, virtue is indestructible, purity is indestructible.' He could write because he was himself full of truth and nothing but that. Truth was with him a natural possession from his very childhood, and all through his life we see him struggling and fighting for it.

Here is an illustration which tells us how passionately attached to truth he was, sometimes at the risk of even estrangement from his best friends. We refer a letter written to Miss Mary Hale on 1st February, 1895, wherein he mentions about an excited argument he had with a Presbyterian gentleman, 'Who,' he writes, as usual got very hot, angry and abusive'. He continues: I know full well how good it is for one's worldly prospects to be sweet. I do everything to be sweet, but when it comes to a horrible compromise with the truth within, I then stop. ... This is an eternal law.... The worshippers of "Vox populi" go to annihilation in a moment? the children of truth live for ever.

It is true that the path of truth is not strewn with flowers, but a spiritual leader comes not to cater to the whims and fancies of a society and allow it to run to its ruin. He has a mission to fulfil, that of drawing society up towards him. The spiritual leaders know the hollowness of wealth, beauty, name and fame.

Swamiji compares truth to a corrosive substance of infinite power. It burns its way in wherever it falls on soft substance at once, hard granite slowly, but it must... The Lord is great... God of Truth; be Thou alone my guide! ... What reason is there for me to conform to the vagaries of the world around me and not obey the voice of Truth within? That is what Swami Vivekananda symbolizes, Truth.

Unselfishness

Swamiji declared on another occasion : But mind you, this is life's experience : if you really want the good of others, the whole universe may stand against you and cannot hurt you. It must crumble before your power of the Lord Himself in you, if you are sincere and really unselfish. He urged his followers to be totally unselfish. He used to quote often a Sanskrit verse which runs in the following strain : The wise one should give up wealth and even life for the sake of others. When death is certain, it is better to die for a good cause.

Once when Ingersol said to Swamiji, 'I believe in making the most of the world, in squeezing the orange dry, because this world is all we re sure of.' Swamiji replied : I know a better way to squeeze the orange of this world than you do and I get more out of it. . . . I know there is no fear, so I enjoy the squeezing. I have no duty, no bondage of wife and children and property. I can love all men and women. Every one is God to me. Think of the joy of loving man as God! Squeeze your orange this way, and get ten thousand fold more out of it. Get every single drop.'



Another time Swamiji declared : To be unselfish, perfectly selfless, is salvation itself for the man within dies, and God alone remains.' Here are the words of a sage, a seer, very clear and unambiguous and at the same time apparently showing an easy path to salvation.

Love of humanity

But to be unselfish we should have the heart, the feeling, the love of humanity. Swamiji had it in ample measure and that was what made him go to America, to seek means to ameliorate the condition of the suffering masses of India. For him religiousness was not making long faces, nor was it looking down on others. 'Love and charity for the whole human race, that is the test of true religiousness,' he stated.

An incident in the life of the Swami that occurred at the Belur Math in the year 1901 shows his love for the poor, in a touching way. Some Santa' labourers were working at the Math premises then. Swamiji used to visit them and hear their tales of woe. Sometimes tears would come to the Swami's eyes when he heard them and then the narrator would stop his tale, entreat Swamiji to go away. One day while Swamiji was talking with them some people of wealth and position came to see him. When he was told about the visitors, he said, 'I shall not be able to go now. I am quite happy with these people.'

Another day he arranged to feed them with sweets and delicacies and when they had eaten to their satisfaction, Swamiji turned to a disciple and said, 'I actually saw the Lord Himself in them. How simple-hearted and guileless they are!' And a little later addressing the Sannyasins and Brahmacharis of the Math he observed : See how simple-hearted these poor illiterate people are! Can you mitigate their misery a little ? If not of what use is your wearing the gerua ? . . . Alas! Nobody in our country thinks of the low, the poor and the miserable!

Purity of motive and sincerity of conviction

The motive power to work for humanity comes with renunciation, not merely outer, but inner also. There must not be any ulterior end in view at any time, prior, during or at the end of the work. That is purity of motive. He says: 'Truth, purity and unselfishness –wherever these are present, there is no power below or above the sun to crush the possessor thereof.' Is it not a reflection of his own life?'

Chastity

'Chastity in thought, word, and deed, always, and in all conditions,' said Swamiji, is what is called Brahmacharya.' There can be no better authority than Swamiji to speak on the value of chastity. He was pure as purity can be. Sri Ramakrishna said of him that he was like a blazing fire. The Master said, Maya stood ten steps away from Naren. She could not catch him in her net.' Says Swami Vivekananda : It is only the chaste man or woman who can make the Ojas rise and store it in the brain, that is why chastity has always been considered the highest virtue.' Without chastity there can be no spiritual strength. Everybody should be trained to practice absolute Brahmacharya and then only faith and shraddha will come. . . . Simply by the observance of strict Brahmacharya (continence) all learning can be mastered in a very short time.

There are hundreds of incidents in the life of Swami Vivekananda illustrating the grand truths practiced and preached by him. His main mission in life is to inspire all of us to practice these truths, become transformed thereby and become Blessed. If we remain mere admirers of Swamiji and do not realise Truth we do not deserve to be called the devotees of Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda.

May Swami Vivekananda bless and inspire us all.





Unity In Diversity and Inter Religious Engagement Dr Julia Ipgrave

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It is an honour to be asked to contribute some thoughts for this souvenir marking the 2014 Vivekananda Festival, and to have been invited in March to the celebration of Sri Ramakrishna's birthday. 'Unity in Diversity' was very close to Sri Ramakrishna's heart and central to his teaching. It is also an important theme in the work in which I am currently engaged as part of an international team of researchers exploring different models of inter religious engagement in five metropolitan areas of northern Europe – Hamburg, Rhine-Ruhr, Stockholm, Oslo and (my own area of study) the east of London. The project, Religion and Dialogue in Modern Societies (ReDi), is funded by the German federal government and has its centre at Hamburg University, although my work-base is much nearer to my area of focus being at The Contextual Theology Centre in Limehouse. The ReDi project was established in a context of growing diversity of Europe, in recognition of the potential for an exciting, vibrant European society in which we can enjoy each other's company and cultures, but in acknowledgement that this diversity is too often an occasion for prejudice and fear. By visiting activities and events that bring people together across religious divides, by finding out what motivates people to come together and what they gain from those encounters, members of the ReDi team hope to identify examples, models and principles of interreligious engagement that can guide others towards a united and harmonious society.

I have been privileged in my role to visit many different inter religious events and to talk to many of the interesting and inspiring people taking part. Examples of positive engagement between people of diverse religions have caused me to reflect on what it is that unites people in spite of their differences. I want to share here three ways of looking at 'the other' that bring people together – 'the other' as fellow seeker, as neighbour, as friend.

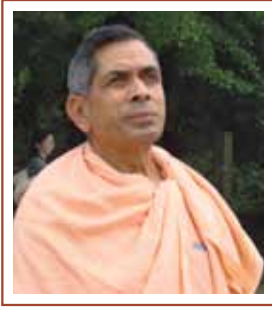
United As Fellow Seekers: Some of the inter religious activities in which I have participated involve dialogue between people of religion about their faith. Examples include a lunch time group where people of different religions come together to discuss aspects of their faith such as belonging to a faith community, feasting and fasting, relationship with God, the environment, Some of the inter religious activities in which I have participated involve dialogue between people of religion about their faith. Examples include a lunch time group where people of different religions come together to discuss aspects of their faith such as belonging to a faith community, feasting and fasting, relationship with God, the environment, death and immortality. In another group people of different religions share passages from their own scriptures with each other, explain their significance within their tradition and to them personally, and ask and answer questions. Where these activities work well participants are confident that their dialogue partners are not going to pass judgement on their religious practice or belief or try to persuade them to think in the same way as themselves – diversity is respected. In the inter faith dialogue events I have mentioned efforts are made to create a respectful environment sometimes by following an agreed code of practice; in other less structured settings the sharing of faith journeys may come out of conversations with trusted friends whose

relationship has developed over time through other forms of co-operation. Dialogue partners may not share the same theologies, the same religious questions or even the same religious goals but what unites them is the sense that they are fellow seekers exploring faith and hoping to find ways of regulating their lives according to that faith. In this context it is worth noting the vital interest that Sri Ramakrishna took in different faiths and their search for meaning.

United As Neighbours: Most of the events I have taken part in for my research are not of the inter faith dialogue model described above but have the character of community action projects. Here the relationship that brings unity is one that sees 'the other' as neighbour. In the culturally diverse neighbourhoods of east London people of different religions share many of the same spaces and so there are both possibilities and imperatives for people to get along together. Some of the projects I have been visiting start with the aim of bringing people together socially across difference, for example a fathers' group at a local religiously mixed school, a club where people of different faiths get to know each other and their shared neighbourhood at the same time by exploring and recording their surroundings through photography. Some projects bring people of different religions together around a common concern such as the desire to improve the local environment through a shared gardening project, a mentoring project to counsel young people at risk from gang culture, a luncheon club to feed the homeless. Sri Ramakrishna taught his followers to care for the vulnerable, and for those of different faith traditions. These community action projects often spill out from their religious teachings and practices, Christian imperatives to love your neighbour, Muslim traditions of charitable giving, Jewish concerns to 'repair the world'.

United As Friends: As a Christian I do not include Sri Ramakrishna among the leaders of my faith tradition and yet I was very pleased to be invited by to join in the birthday celebrations for him in March and to share the pleasure of his devotees gathered there for the occasion. This pattern of being invited to and sharing in the religious places and celebrations of other faith communities is another form of inter religious engagement that I have observed, whether it is Muslims inviting people of other faith traditions to share their iftar meal, or people from a variety of faiths being invited to share a 90 years anniversary party at a local synagogue. This way of relating to 'the other' is the way of friendship. It is very basic to friendship that when you are celebrating you want to share that spirit of good cheer with your friends or that when your friend is celebrating you also join in their happiness. The other side of this relationship is that friends also feel for each other when they are sad and stand by each other when they are under threat, and so the witness of solidarity between religions at a synagogue commemoration event on Holocaust Memorial Day is a powerful sign of friendship year after year, as is the readiness of people of different religious communities (and non-religious people) to rally round their Muslim neighbours, gather at their mosque, and support them when the English Defence League are planning a march to divide communities.

Sri Ramakrishna saw both diversity and unity in all humankind. My involvement with inter religious groups and events in east London has shown me that, despite all the talk of separation, division and conflict, there are many people who in their ordinary lives value each other as fellow seekers, neighbours and friends and who in their activities give evidence of the unity in diversity we seek.



Swami Vivekananda - The Universal Ideal

Swami Veetamohananda

President, Centre Vedantique Ramakrishna, France



Human Excellence

Man is conditioned in his psycho-physical organism by the different elements of matter, energy, consciousness, intelligence, love etc. He is free and attains excellence only when he functions from the Infinite sources of love, intelligence and knowledge. But, man generally functions on the level of objective nature. This is how he becomes a slave to the mechanism of nature. Let us be sure that we are all the expression of Infinite Reality. Matter is the manifestation of that Infinite Reality. There is a kind of spontaneity and creativity - an inexplicable force - even in the lowest forms of nature. Swami Vivekananda puts it beautifully:

“If conformity is the law of the universe, every part of the universe must have been built on the same plan as the whole. So we naturally think that behind the gross material form which we call this universe of ours, there must be a universe of finer matter, which we call thought and behind that there must be one Soul, which makes all this thought possible, which commands, which is the enthroned king of the universe. That Soul which is behind each mind and each body is called ‘Pratyagatman,’ the individual Atman, and that Soul which is behind the universe as its guide, ruler and governor, is God.”

How is it then that the majority of human beings remain completely unaware of this fact? There are two reasons. The ego goes on persisting in limiting consciousness according to its pleasures. Secondly, the knowledge is developed only according to the need and demands of world forces. Selfawakening alone can open the possibilities for individuals to go forward. Control of our impulses shakes off our wanderings and confusions. Our life is a mixture of necessity and freedom. We need to exercise our choice properly in order to free ourselves from the determinism of nature. We need to develop an integrated personality to live a life of dignity and divinity.

How shall we build up our personality?

1. We are to train our physical and mental systems in an integrated manner.
2. We are to imbibe certain ethical values to develop the personality.
3. The goal of life should be to attain certain higher values.
4. The development of the powers of discrimination, concentration and willpower are essential.
5. Earnestness is required to be progressive.

There is an urgent need to stop all the types of thoughtless abuse of the different organs of the body. Late night T.V. programmes, different kinds of entertainments which force the use of drugs, exciting drinks, food etc, cause a lot of harm rather than real joy of the Self. Illness of the body and mind are caused by these types of activities of life.

1. Our body is a precious instrument.

Our body reacts to every word, situation, to world changes, climatic changes etc. Careful attention to bodily



reactions can be handled and directed by higher consciousness. A natural way of living allows the body to grow naturally. A well regulated life is the best method for this. Being in a higher state of consciousness brings about auto-correction to the psychophysic. This is how the psychophysic is made fit for the higher values of life.

2. How can we better ourselves?

There is a beautiful teaching from Apastamba Dharma Sutra: “ Absence of anger, elation, indignation, avarice, delusion, vanity and enmity; speaking truth; moderation in eating; refraining from exposing others’ weak points; freedom from jealousy; sharing one’s good things with others; sacrifice; straightforwardness; gentleness; quietude; self-control; friendliness with all beings; absence of cruelty; contentment, - these form the approved conduct for men of all stations of life. By observing them duly, one becomes universally benevolent.” It is through these practices that self-fulfillment is achieved. This scheme of living brings the pleasures of life, prosperity, righteousness, wisdom and illumination. The cultivation of higher values helps us to develop will-power. These developed values cannot be destroyed by any power, either from within or without; they are Eternal.

3. Higher scheme of value awareness.

Action is not merely movement of the body. It is part of universal motion through which the self expresses itself. Self-expression through acts is known as creativity. A true act is always creative. Uncreative, alienated work causes stress and dissatisfaction and is a major world problem. It is no use blaming one’s boss or society for this. The main cause of stress in work is the conflict of desires and the responsibility of decision making. Making decisions calls for continual exercise of the will. Being enslaved by emotions and instincts, the will is not free in most people, and the exercise of such a will is bound to cause conflict and strain. Apart from this, modern social life involves a good deal of repression and suppression of the basic urges of the individual. The net result of all these is the blocking of creativity and self-expression. The waking hours of an average member of modern society are mostly spent in a state of inhibition. The constant practice of awareness removes inhibitions and frees the will. When the obstacles to creativity are removed, every part of work becomes a creative act. This means more channels for self-expression. The more the self expresses itself, the more it expands and the larger become its fields of awareness.

4. Powers of concentration.

The reconciliation of activities and higher awareness is only a part of the larger scheme of excellence in our whole life. Only when we can give up differentiating the secular form from the sacred do we open ourselves fully to universal life and attain the fullness of the Self.

Here are some techniques to intensify the concentration:

Morning meditation

After ablution is the best time to meditate. Sit in a quiet corner when everyone is asleep. Try to visualize the rising sun of crimson red or golden hue. Feel that you are yourself the rising sun full of Infinite luminosity and beauty. Feel that every cell and molecule of your body is expressing this Infinite beauty and luminosity. Feel this Infinite harmony is pure love. Feel that every cell and molecule of your body is Pure Love itself. Feel that this love expresses itself as Pure Intelligence itself. Feel that this Infinite Intelligence guides and brings success in all your undertakings.

Midday meditation

Sit comfortably on your chair or in natural surroundings. Reflect on the positive, constructive, and nourishing qualities of your personality. Try to love these aspects and have them become more intense in



you. Try to spread the thought of love to all with whom you work. Say to yourself that you are sincere and your love is true and pure to all who judge you, ridicule you, who are stiff with you, and who are jealous of you, etc. Infinity is strength itself and you are that Infinite strength and virility itself.

Evening meditation

Sit comfortably in a chair or on a cushion. Let the spine be erect. Relax for two or three minutes. Breathe in profoundly Infinite Pure Love and breathe out good thoughts and Pure Love only. Feel the centre of the love is in the middle of your heart. This centre is your Self, which is pure, luminous and full of pure energy. Try to expand it and direct it to your near ones and dear ones.

Bed-time meditation

Visualize dark space everywhere. Visualize stars shining as if calling you to have a good night's sleep. Feel that the entire nature is asleep. Trees, plants, the whole of the vegetation, is asleep. Birds are asleep, animals are all in a deep sleep. Feel that Mother Nature is taking you into her bosom and asking you to go into a deep sleep with her. You repeat the mantra of Immortality until you fall asleep. The power of the mantra will regenerate your whole being when you are sleeping.

5. Self Mastery.

“The Self is revealed in every state of consciousness,” declares the Kena Upanishad. Every thought and every physical act produces a flash of Selfrevelation in us. But are we engrossed in incessant activity and daydreaming? The constant inner revelation can be grasped only when we acquire a higher state of consciousness. The inner Self is the Universal Self. It is this Supreme Self that is the Inner Controller. Awareness of the inner Self matures, in the fullness of time, into awareness of the Supreme Self. Human excellence is achieved only when we unite with the Supreme Self.

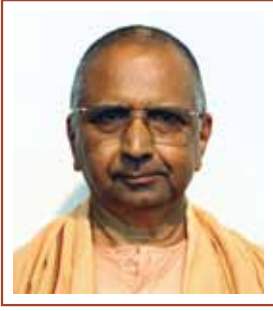
Let us try to live up to the expectation of Swami Vivekananda:

“What we want is to see the man who is harmoniously developed...Great in heart, great in mind (great in deed)...We want the man whose heart feels intensely the miseries and sorrows of the world...And (we want) the man who not only can feel but can find the meaning of things, who delves deeply into the heart of nature and understanding. (We want) the man who will not even stop there; but who wants to work out (the feeling and the meaning by actual deeds). Such a combination of head, heart and hand is what we want. There are many teachers in this world, but you will find that most of them are onesided. (One) sees the glorious mid-day sun of the intellect, (and) sees nothing else. Another hears the beautiful music of love and can hear nothing else. Another is (immersed) in activity and has neither time to feel, nor to think. Why not (have) the giant who is equally active, equally knowing and equally loving? Is it impossible? Certainly not. This is the man of the future, of whom there are (only a) few at present. (The number of such will increase) until the whole world is humanized.”

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 and His work of Synthesis

Swami Muktirupananda

President Ramakrishna Mission, Singapore



All our centres, private and official around the world, are celebrating the 150th birth anniversary of Swami Vivekananda. It is to remember and pay homage to an extraordinary person who lived and worked incessantly for the welfare of the world, बहुजन हिताय बहुजन सुखाय bahunana hitaya, bahunana sukhaya. Therefore his message is timeless, global and it embraces the entire human race. Such many-sided genius, spiritual luminary rarely walks on the earth. The power that emanated from him was not ordinary human power but divine. He once said, "The power behind me is not Vivekananda's, but God's". Therefore in such a short time he could accomplish so much and leave precious legacy to the posterity. Noted scholars from the East and West, in many books have tried to highlight his multi-dimensional personality and his great contributions to enrich the human life.

Swamiji stands as a magnificent bridge between seemingly opposing forces of human pursuits. In his wonderful synthesis he shows these activities are not opposed to one another, on the contrary, are complementary and strengthen one another. For example: science and religion, work and worship, ancient and modern, and East and West, these subjects appear irreconcilable and the wide gap between them cannot be linked. But his wonderful genius demonstrates that it is not so. Human evolution and growth include all these diverse pursuits, aspects and many more. Man cannot be bound in an intellectual straitjacket; he loves freedom and wants to explore unknown territories.

It is worthwhile to consider briefly how Swamiji reconciled these antagonistic viewpoints.

1) Science and Religion

Nearly for three centuries science and religion have maintained cat and mouse relationship, one could not tolerate the other. Science treated religion, creator and divinity as blind faith and superstition. In turn religion belittled science as materialistic, superficial and dealing only with insentient matter. The famous reply of the French astronomer, Pirre-Simon Laplace, when Napoleon asked him about the place of God in his Celestial Mechanics was: "Sire, I have no need of that hypothesis". Mystical experiences, the existence of soul and God were groundless hypothesis to scientists. Even to this day this tug of war continues. A number of Christians do not accept Darwin's theory of gradual evolution or natural selection as it goes against the teachings of the Bible, viz creation of Adam and Eve in the beginning.

In the middle of the 19th century, during Swamiji's time, the new discoveries and inventions of science dazzled the world and its rational approach shook the foundations of religion and its beliefs. Science has always been established on the ground of reason, verification and experimentation and it has no place for beliefs and dogmas. It is not esoteric, on the other hand, open to one and all. It dealt a heavy blow to religion by finding solutions to many problems and presenting a new picture of the universe and its structure that were hitherto in the domain of religion. Swamiji, as a keen student, was quite abreast of all scientific developments of his time and kept on studying the latest books.

The following incident shows how well-informed he was about physical sciences. At one dinner in Detroit, a gentleman asked Swamiji what books he would advise him to read on chemistry, whereupon Swamiji



responded with a long list of English books on this subject. Another gentleman followed by a request as to books on astronomy, he obliged him with another good list of astronomical works. (M.L.Burke, New Discoveries, page -245)

Science and religion - are they moving in opposite directions, contradicting each other at every step or are they proceeding towards the same goal? Truth or Reality is the goal of these two disciplines but their approaches and methods to unravel it are different. According to Swamiji, "The end and aim of all science is to find the unity, the One out of which the manifold is being manufactured, that One existing as many" (Vol 1 page 133). Science starts with the visible external nature, probes into the matter in order to find out the ultimate source of sub-atomic particles and energy. Now scientists know that matter is an effect and its cause is non-matter. Max Planck and John Wheeler said "matter is derived from consciousness". Religion is internal science and through the process of negating the external nature it reaches the ultimate ground of Oneness. Science begins from many and slowly moves to One and religion starts from One and returns to many.

Their methods of investigation and ways are different. Every statement or new findings of science, undergo verification and tests by other scientists. It is neither accepted nor rejected but taken as a working hypothesis. Till it is proved true or false, it remains a theory. Whereas in the field of religion things are different, most of the statements are unverified, unexperienced beliefs. These beliefs are handed down generation after generation and none has any certainty nor takes any trouble to examine them. Everything is based on hearsay, verbal assertions and not on personal experience. That is why Vivekananda said, "In the world, religion is the only science where there is no surety, because it is not as a science of experience. This should not be."(IV p81) This is the reason why religions fight among themselves in order to uphold the supremacy of their beliefs and dogmas and not facts. Sri Ramakrishna aptly illustrated, "The almanac makes forecast of the rainfall for the year, but you won't get a drop of water by squeezing its pages." (Gospel of Ramakrishna p 524).

Without spiritual practice and intense investigation uncertainty and doubts will not go. Therefore Swamiji always upheld the spirit of relentless enquiry, rigorous tests employed by the physical sciences. In strong words he warned, "Are the same methods of investigation, which we apply to sciences and knowledge outside, to be applied to the science of Religion? In my opinion this must be so....If a religion is destroyed by such investigation, it was then all the time useless, unworthy superstition, and sooner it goes the better." (Vol 1 p 367)

Swamiji, a great sage, standing on the summit of advaitic-non-dual experience of Oneness viewed everything. For him, there was no distinction between external and internal, secular and spiritual, science and religion and music and arts. To him every human effort to break the shackles of multiplicity in any field was praiseworthy. Therefore, he did not find any conflict or rivalry between science and spirituality. He strongly advised, "What we want are Western science coupled with Vedanta" (Vol 5 -366).

It is interesting to note that in 1896 in his Jnana Yoga (Real nature of man) lectures at New York Swamiji said, "It can be proved matter does not exist at all, it is only a certain state of energy, matter is motion." ((Vol II p 76).

Matter and energy were interchangeable was a revolutionary idea and at that time no mathematical formula was in existence. So Swamiji requested his friend Nikola Tesla, the famous mathematician and physicist to formulate a mathematical proof of this principle that matter was condensed energy. Unfortunately Tesla

failed in his attempt to provide a mathematical proof. Ten years later, in 1905, Albert Einstein in his famous Relativity Theory proved it. Alas! Swamiji was not there to see it! Acknowledging the contribution of Swamiji, Einstein did mention, "There is one (Vive) Kananda who predicted that energy and matter are interchangeable."

In Europe and America Swamiji met many famous scientists of the time. In New York he met Nikola Tesla, Lord Kelvin, Professor Helmholtz, William James and others. In many ways physical sciences are extending the frontiers of man's knowledge of fundamental unity behind the manifoldness of the universe, about which Swamiji spoke often.

2) Work and Worship

It is a common belief that spiritual life and mundane work do not go together and one has to be given up. Therefore those who are busy in the world shun spiritual practice as impossible and those who lead spiritual life shrink from work as distraction. Thus we find two extreme types of people in the world. Both consider work and worship or spiritual practice are incompatible, where one is, the other cannot be. Busy people usually say that they would take up spiritual practice after retirement. So life is divided into two compartments, one secular and another spiritual, one holy and another worldly. Mind is the same that works in the world and also meditates. We cannot have two minds one for work and another for meditation. Work is the staple of life. Without work life cannot go on, total abstinence from work is unthinkable. We see activity in nature and in all beings. The purpose of work is not only for survival but also to bring out our mental and intellectual potentialities and push us on the ladder of evolution. Therefore it is the means and not the end, the end is our growth and expansion. Sometimes due to our misunderstanding both the means and the end are mixed up and we get into troubles and suffer.

People are busy, active doing something or the other. Why they keep themselves busy? Because they are working to get happiness and more happiness. Ironically, their work produces more anxiety, stress, worry and fear. Instead of giving joy, it creates tension, instead of expanding their hearts, it contracts. Why work produces opposite results and causes misery? Work is neither great nor small, holy or unholy it is the materialistic narrow attitude of a doer that colours it. Without spiritual touch work becomes sheer drudgery, a compulsive habit.

People wrongly think that worship in temples and religious activities are special, holy acts and all other mundane activities ordinary. In fact, there is no division between mundane and divine. If God is omnipresent, He is everywhere and there is no place where He is not. The idea of mundane and divine becomes obsolete, and produces conflict. To Vivekananda, a knower of Brahman, who saw God everywhere and in everything, all works were sacred. He did not make any distinction between work, prayer, worship and meditation. The idea is to do all our works big or little, pleasant or unpleasant, worldly or religious with reverential attitude, with mindfulness and not with grumbling and carelessness. Every little work demands our attention. With this change in our attitude we do not find any difference between meditation in a quiet place or work in a busy factory, or tilling the land or washing dishes or cleaning a toilet. Those who do work well, meditate well because the principle of concentration is the same. The trained and disciplined mind can alone do any work efficiently and dexterously and also meditate with ease. Therefore the Gita says योगः कर्मसु कौशलम् "- yoga is skill in work". In the words of Sister Nivedita, "To him, the workshop, the study, the farmyard and the field are as true and fit scenes for the meeting of God with man as the cell of the monk or the door of the people." (Vol 1 page xv)

How to avoid drudgery, stress, unhappiness and anger resulting from work and use it for one's own spiritual



growth? Swamiji suggests two ways to it: 1) Learn to love all works without any criticism or judgement as high or low. When one performs any work big or small one has to concentrate his whole mind on it. In other words, mind should not think of anything else. When the work is over, withdraw from it, no more brooding over it, no more attachment to it. 2) Another way of non-attachment is to perform all works as an offering to God, His worship. Work instead of making us slaves leads to freedom and joy.

He wanted the young monks of the Ramakrishna Order to be all-round men. "You must try to combine in your life immense idealism with immense practicality. You must go into deep meditation now, and the next moment you must be ready to go and cultivate the fields. You must be prepared to explain the intricacies of the scriptures now, and the next moment to go and sell the product of the fields in the market.....We need a heart to feel, a brain to conceive and a strong arm to do the work".

3) Ancient and Modern

Those who are devoted to the old tradition and way of life criticize everything that is modern as shallow. Those who love modern way of life and thinking laugh at the past tradition as a bundle of worthless beliefs. So they are at loggerheads. Vivekananda was modern in outlook and action and at the same time deeply anchored in ancient wisdom. Though being a monk he had the holistic view of human life with all its varied aspects, social, cultural, religious, economic, political and so on. On all these aspects he shed new light and with a foresight made invaluable contributions to lift the human race higher. His spiritual power manifested in love, compassion and concern for the good of the world. It is amazing to see the versatility of his mighty intellect how with ease it dived into the depths of diverse subjects.

It is a common belief that the religious leaders are otherworldly and their eyes are turned towards heaven and not on the hardships and sufferings of common people. They speak of and treat the ordinary life as of no significance, and socio-economic conditions seldom attract their attention. One cannot brush aside this conviction as false because it contains some truth. As long as man is tortured by everyday realities like poverty, sickness, insecurity and so on he cannot think of higher things. Religion mired in old warped ideas and practices ignoring collective welfare, harped on personal salvation and the unreality of the world. Vivekananda was an exception who moved away from this past tradition. He was once invited to a Manufacturers' Association banquet in Brooklyn, New York, in 1895, where he spoke on, "The industrial condition of India and its relation to the United States". He had sound knowledge about business, import, export, service and manufacturing. Therefore he could advice J.Tata to start indigenously manufacture of everything in India. In his letters he advised his disciples and others to adopt modern business methods in their works. He was well-grounded in the Upanishadic lore, the majesty of the Atman, but did not neglect the physical well-being.

Swamiji cleansed the religion of all its past distorted ideas and freed it from non-essentials and made it practical and down-to-earth. Teachings of religion are not for mere intellectual argumentation, they are to be applied in everyday life. Swamiji showed that to be religious did not mean show of piety, nor show of devotion, on the contrary, it meant making use of one's intelligence, efforts and willingness to face hardships and take responsibility for good or bad. In a strong voice he said, "Take the whole responsibility on your shoulders, and know that you are the creator of your own destiny. All strength and succor you want is within yourselves.

Therefore make your own future." (Vol III p 225) In the words of Romain Rolland, "He was energy personified and action was his message to men."

He entirely changed the concept of monasticism in India. In the past monks exclusively pursued their



The Wonder that is Ramakrishna Mission Swami Purnatmananda

Secretary, Ramakrishna Mission Swami Vivekananda's Ancestral House
& Cultural Center, Kolkata, India



It all began with a profound utterance. Sometime in 1884, Sri Ramakrishna, perfectly hale and hearty, was seated in his room at Dakshineswar and talking to the devotees assembled there, among whom was also young Narendranath—Swami Vivekananda of later years. Sri Ramakrishna discussing various spiritual topics, spoke thus about the tenets of Vaishnava religion : “That [Vaishnava] doctrine teaches one that one should always be careful to observe three things, viz., a taste for God’s name [nam-e ruchi], kindness to all beings [jive daya], and the worship of Vaishnavas [vaishnava puja].”¹ Then he went on to elaborate the three principles one by one. As soon as he uttered the words ‘compassion for all beings’, he suddenly went into ecstasy. After some time he came back to semi-normal consciousness and began to mutter : “Compassion for all beings—Compassion for all beings ? Never! Insignificant creature that you are, how dare you bestow compassion on others? Who are you to bestow compassion? No, no; not compassion for jivas, but service to jivas as Shiva.”²

Everyone listened to those words of Sri Ramakrishna, but none could comprehend their deep import. It was Narendranath alone who caught the significance and, on coming out of the room after Sri Ramakrishna’s ecstasy was over, said : “Ah! What a wonderful light have I got today from the Master’s words! What a simple, attractive and charming light he threw by effecting a synthesis of devotion and Vedantic knowledge which is generally regarded as dry, hard and callous! What the Master uttered today in ecstasy, makes it clear that the Vedanta of the forest can be brought to the very household, it can be used in every work of the world. If God ever grants me an opportunity, I’ll proclaim everywhere this wonderful truth I have heard today. I will preach this truth to the learned and the ignorant, to the rich and the poor, to the Brahmin and the pariah.”³

Therefore, the birth of the Ramakrishna Mission, in the spiritual and ideological sense, dates back to some day in 1884. Its genesis was involved in that profound utterance of Sri Ramakrishna and it was left to the wonderful genius of Swami Vivekananda, then Narendranath, to discover immediately the tremendous significance embedded in it and to give it concrete form later, in the shape of a unique monastic organisation known as the ‘Ramakrishna Mission’.

It is unique because it has no parallel in the entire gamut of Hindu monasticism. It is unique in the history of monastic organisations in the world because, although a monastic organisation today in the sense of leadership, it included, when it was formally inaugurated, householder devotees also as its key administrative office bearers. The secretary and the undersecretaries of the Mission were householders while the General President and the President and Vice-President of its Calcutta centre were monks.⁴ The system, however, could not continue for long because of the lack of the desired participation by the householders. But the idea is still alive in a symbolic form in the General Body of the Ramakrishna Mission, which is composed of both monastics and householders.

It is unique because it looks upon women with supreme veneration and works for the uplift of women



from the tragic predicament they have been placed in by the man-dominated society over the centuries. Its uniqueness lies in its sustained and systematic efforts to build schools for girls and hospitals for pregnant mothers, and last but not the least an exclusive organisation for nuns without a sprinkling of interference by monks. This is an instance which provides a singular exception compared to any monastic organisation in the world—Hindu, Buddhist, or Christian.

It is unique because of its magnificent equation of work and worship, because of its elimination of every distinction between the 'sacred and the secular', to quote the beautiful expression of Sister Nivedita. The idea of service, however, was long in practice in the Christian monastic organisations, but there, it cannot be denied that it had been directly or indirectly associated with the work of proselytization. Ramakrishna Mission abhors the idea of conversion. It advocates the principle of unity of religions and harmony of faiths; it not only believes in tolerance, but in acceptance also. It believes in the freedom of an individual to choose religion and, therefore, it considers the act of conversion a crime and exploitation when it is forced upon somebody by taking advantage of his/her poverty and illiteracy. It is unique because of its bold and consistent stand against all sorts of communalism, fundamentalism and sectarianism.

The Ramakrishna Mission is unique because it decries mystery-mongering and the so-called supernaturalism. It exhorts people to act according to reason and never to get swayed over by sheer sentimentalism or any dose of morbidity in the guise of devotion. Thus the Mission is a clear antithesis of the so-called religiosity in the name of religion.

In this way, the Mission attempts to project a concept and practice of a scientific and universal religion devoid of all religious superstitions and parochialism, and aspires to bridge the so-called gap between religion and science. In fact, the central notes of the ideal of Ramakrishna Mission are harmony and universality.

It is unique because of its tremendous message of the divinity of man and its wonderful gospel of social commitment of monasticism, its deep concern for the masses, especially women, for the afflicted, for the poor, for the downtrodden—for humanity in general.

Historically speaking, the Ramakrishna Mission was founded on 1 May 1897. However, formal foundation was only the inevitable sequel to the great legacy of the illustrious life and vibrant message of Sri Ramakrishna bequeathed to the chief among his disciples at Dakshineswar, Shyampukur Bati and Cossipore Garden-House during his penultimate years in this world. But when Swami Vivekananda, the prophet of the new age, founded the Ramakrishna Mission just a century ago on 1 May 1897 uniting the social commitment to the spiritual culture of mankind, many eyebrows were raised. This 'many' included not only outsiders and the conservative elite of the city, but also some of his own brother-disciples. They mistakenly thought that Swami Vivekananda was deviating from established norms, patterns and concepts of traditional monasticism. The dissident brother-disciples found in his actions a marked straying away from the life and teachings of Sri Ramakrishna and an evident influence of Western culture. However, Swami Vivekananda was indomitable, being fully convinced that he was only attempting to translate the new and bold gospel of his Master into a concrete form, which was in absolute conformity with Indian tradition and the message of Vedanta. He was not, however, alone in this conviction. There were several of his brother-disciples who shared his conviction and supported him without the slightest of doubts and misgivings. Above all, there was Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi—the Divine Consort of Sri Ramakrishna—who time and again expressed in the most categorical terms that Swami Vivekananda was truly an instrument in the hands of the Master and that whatever he spoke or did were never his words or acts, but were all Sri Ramakrishna's and Sri Ramakrishna's only. Unfortunately, those who did not agree with him could not decipher the writing

of Providence on the wall of time. People had frowned at Buddha and Christ also, but time proved that Buddha and Christ were infallible. The last one hundred years, though a tiny period of time compared to many hundreds of years associated with Buddha and Christ, speak volumes in testimony of the fact that Vivekananda is also infallible. The dissidents, alas, could not know that before them stood a new Buddha, a new Christ! Today, historians, philosophers and social scientists admit that by founding the Ramakrishna Mission Swami Vivekananda not only extended the limits of monasticism and religion, but opened up new dimensions also. He gave a new consciousness to monasticism and religion—infused new life into both as it were. He established monasticism on its true ideal and added to it new dimensions, new significance, new ideas, new expansion, new depth and new mobility. Dry, hard monasticism turned poetic at his touch.

Throughout its long tradition, Hindu monasticism had proved itself to be utterly callous to society and the people at large. The tradition of Hindu monasticism never admitted any commitment either to society or to the people. God-realisation or self-liberation was its only ideal and God was the centre of its spiritual endeavours and aspirations. The sannyasi used to shut himself up in a secluded cave of a mountain or a cottage in a forest and spend his days and nights in the contemplation of God or Self. Society and people provided him with food, clothing and sustenance. But he never cared to feel any concern for them, rather he remained content with his majestic aloofness from society and people. At various times Swami Vivekananda said to this effect : Ochre robe is not meant for self-liberation only. It is meant for self-expansion, for self-sacrifice also. Ochre robe is a flag for great work. The sannyasi must get ready for giving his everything for the good of the world. He has to dedicate himself wholly for the good of humanity. The sannyasi is born for the good of the many, for the benefit of the many. Fie on him who after taking the vows of sannyasa forgets this great ideal. His life is useless, his sannyasa is futile.

Vivekananda placed before the monks of the Ramakrishna Mission a twin motto : Atmano mokshartham jagaddhitaya cha—for one's own liberation and for the welfare of the world. This motto, a novel motto indeed, became the war-song of his new movement. What he did thereby was unique in the history of monasticism—building a bridge between the ancient and the modern ideals. He kept intact the age-old ideal of monasticism, viz., the ideal of self-liberation, but added to it at the same time the ideal of humanism, the ideal of doing public good. He never shifted the position of God from the centre of the monk's spiritual endeavours and aspirations, he only gave a new name for Him—'Man'. He equated Man with God and thus God exchanged his position with Man as the object of worship. The 'mission' of the Ramakrishna Mission as set by Swami Vivekananda was to 'evolve a god out of the material man'.⁵ The 'mission' was nothing but the 'mission' of Vedanta. Hence Swami Vivekananda termed his new mission as 'Practical Vedanta'. Swami Brahmananda described the advent of Sri Ramakrishna as signifying the building of 'a bridge between the plane of the jivas and that of Shiva'⁶ which he declared was a new contribution by Sri Ramakrishna to the world. The Mission as well as the Math are instruments through which these lofty goals are being realised in the lives of many fortunate souls.

Swami Vivekananda, in doing so, harmonised the ideals of Bhagaban Buddha and Acharya Shankara, which were definitely great in their own places and served the need of their ages. Buddha came with the great message of love. He called upon his follower-monks to dedicate themselves to the task of the amelioration of human suffering. He said : "Charattha bhikshave bahunahitaya, bahunasukhaya, lokanukampaya"—Monks, you speed forth for the good of the many, for the comfort of the many and with your heart filled with the milk of compassion for the people. He thus gave utmost emphasis on public good and welfare of humanity as the motto of monasticism. Buddha never talked of God-realisation or Self-realisation, for, he never admitted the existence of God or Self. Therefore, in Buddha's motto of monasticism there was no

place for God-realisation or Self-realisation. In fact, it was absolutely ignored by Buddha, but he gave the idea of selfless work for emancipation.

Sri Shankara on the other hand came with his great gospel of Self-realisation or the realisation of the Supreme Spirit and ignored the ideal of public good and welfare of humanity or society. To him this world or society or man had only vyavaharika satta (empirical reality) but no paramarthika satta (ultimate reality) since it was mere appearance. He admitted the ideal of realisation of the Self or God as the only object to be achieved by a monk through the path of discrimination, knowledge and contemplation. In Shankara's motto, therefore, the ideal of welfare of man, of the amelioration of the physical suffering of man did not find any place at all.

Swami Vivekananda harmonised both these great ideals and gave his new motto for monasticism to the monks of the Ramakrishna Mission. : Atmano mokshartham jagaddhitaya cha. He took jagaddhita (welfare of the world) from Buddha and atmamoksha (liberation of the self) from Shankara. To these great ideals he added the ideal of the worshipful devotion of Sri Chaitanya and thus mingled karma with jnana, yoga and bhakti. But this wonderful harmonisation was the discovery of his great Master who said : "The goal of life is the attainment of God"⁷ ; "The path of devotion prescribed by Narada is best for this age"⁸ ; "If God can manifest Himself through an image, then why not through man also?"⁹ ; "You meditate on God by closing your eyes, can't you meditate with eyes open?"¹⁰ In fact, the concept was given in its genesis in all these utterances. But others, including 'M', the illustrious recorder of the Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna could not make out what a tremendous message Sri Ramakrishna was actually delivering through these very simple utterances. It was reserved for Narendranath to discover their real import. One incident has already been referred to. But there were at least two other incidents which we narrate below :"¹¹

It was 3 January, 1886. Sri Ramakrishna was at the Cossipore Garden-House. Narendra said to him in a somewhat complaining tone : "All the others had their realisation [on 1 January 1886]; please give me something. All have succeeded; shall I alone remain unsatisfied?" Sri Ramakrishna asked : "What do you want?" Narendra replied : "It is my desire to remain absorbed in samadhi continually for three or four days, only once in a while coming down to the sense plane to eat a little food." As soon as Narendra completed his sentence, Sri Ramakrishna said : "So small minded you are! There is a state higher than that even. 'All that exists art Thou'—it is you who sing that song." On a second occasion close to the one referred to, Narendra again beseeched the Master for Nirvikalpa samadhi. The Master asked him calmly : "Well, what do you want?" Narendra said : "I want to get absolutely merged in samadhi like Shukadeva for five-six days at a stretch after which I will however come down a little for the maintenance of the body to get merged again in samadhi." Sri Ramakrishna gave him at once a sharp rebuff : "Fie upon you! Such a great soul you are and yet you utter such small words! I thought you would become a huge banyan tree under whose shade thousands of people would find their shelter, and you are craving for your own liberation only! This is an utterly trivial and mean expression! No, no, my boy, don't make your outlook so small and low!" To his great surprise Narendra heard these words. So long he knew that the state of Nirvikalpa samadhi was the highest state of realisation according to the scriptures and saints of Hinduism and there was nothing beyond that to achieve or to aspire for by a spiritual aspirant. Now he learned from his Master that there was another state even higher than Nirvikalpa samadhi, and to crave for one's own liberation only was as hateful as absolute selfishness!

Narendra's intellect got stirred and his emotion was kindled by the flames of those profound words. He realised that with those words and with that great ideal, Sri Ramakrishna was actually harmonizing monasticism and society, the ancient ideal and the modern ideal. He was humanizing the established

ideal of monasticism infusing into it concern for society—the essence of humanism. He thus opened the thoroughfare of 'Sevayoga' in the history of religion and spirituality. Therefore when Swami Vivekananda established the Ramakrishna Mission he only gave a concrete shape to the new gospel of his Master till then unknown to many of Sri Ramakrishna's lay as well as monastic disciples.

Ramakrishna Mission is even today looked upon by many as a social service institution. But this is absolutely wrong. It is no doubt dedicated to the service of man in society, but it is never a so-called social service institution. It is fundamentally, principally and thoroughly a spiritual organisation which admits social commitment as part and parcel of the spiritual discipline of its members. Social service is its vital commitment, but here it has been sublimated into a spiritual commitment. Service to man has been uplifted here to the status of the worship of God. Work has been turned into as good and effective means to realise God as worship and meditation. The secular has thus been equated with the sacred, work with worship. This is the basic principle which the Ramakrishna Mission has applied in all its endeavours and activities and this has worked wonders. The Mission in this way has presented a new ideal and philosophy of work and a new model of religion to mankind.

Service to man was definitely an integral part of Buddha's ideal of monasticism. We are familiar with the anecdote of Vasavadatta, the courtesan, and Upagupta, the Buddhist monk, and Upagupta's remarkable nursing of Vasavadatta while she was abandoned in the outskirts of the city because of her infectious disease. Service here was wonderful; it was an act of spiritual discipline also. But it was never equated in the spirit in which Buddha was venerated by a Buddhist monk. The ideal is quite different in the case of a monk of the Ramakrishna Mission. We may mention here the example of Swami Sadananda, a disciple of Swami Vivekananda, who used to suck the sores of the lepers to bring them comfort and relieve their pain. Mention must be made of Swami Akhandananda, a brother-disciple of Swami Vivekananda, who used to bathe the orphan boys of his Home with his own hands chanting the purushasukta, the snanamanttra of Narayana, the supreme God. There was no difference in the quality of service offered by the children of Buddha and the children of Ramakrishna, but the difference was in the attitude and spirit with which it was offered. Bhikshu Upagupta was serving a prostitute who was left abandoned and destitute with all care and affection and also with deep spiritual fervour. But he was not serving his Buddha in her. But Swami Sadananda and Swami Akhandananda were filled with the impulse that they were serving Ramakrishna, their God, in the lepers and in the orphan boys. Here worship, worshipper and worshipped melted into one, losing their individual identities.

Sri Ramakrishna used to say : "An empty stomach is no good for religion."¹² What Sri Ramakrishna meant by this was the provision for anna, i.e., food, clothing, shelter and health were essential and urgent not only for the physical well-being of man, but for his mental and spiritual development also. By this he admitted the four needs of man—food, clothing and shelter (anna), health and hygiene (prana), education (vidya), and religion (dharma)—to be more specific, spirituality. In other words Sri Ramakrishna aimed to strike a balance between the material development, vital energy, mental and intellectual development and spiritual development of man. He thus harmoniously dealt with the hunger of the body, of the bio-mechanism, of the mind and of the spirit. Swami Vivekananda got this concept of the unfoldment of a total man from his Master and attempted to give it a practical application through the Ramakrishna Mission which advocates the advancement of science and technology, spread of secular and professional education and conducting of medical, relief and charitable projects on the one hand, and the spread and inculcation of the moral and spiritual values on the other.

Hence, Ramakrishna Mission is not just a religious organisation, but far beyond it. It is a movement—an all-



comprehensive movement. It is a movement for forming a new social order, for making a new and healthy type of man, for building a new world to live in. Over the last one hundred years, Ramakrishna Mission has been playing directly or indirectly the role of a pioneer in the fields of general education, women's education, mass education, mass organisation, rural development, slum development, independent employment projects for poor men and women in the rural and urban areas, and last but not the least in the field of relief operation in times of natural calamities and disasters like fire, flood, drought, famine, earthquake, etc.

Ramakrishna Mission has completed more than hundred years of its existence and service to humanity. It is now a fundamental part of modern history, whether it is accepted at the moment or not. Time alone will prove how it became history itself on its own merit, and what connection with and impact on the great upheavals in Russia and China and India's struggle for and achievement of independence, it had.

The principal and central source of inspiration behind the Ramakrishna Mission is obviously Sri Ramakrishna himself whose name it bears. But its chief sustainer and nourisher is the Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi and its premier architect is Swami Vivekananda. Sri Ramakrishna wished his beloved 'Naren' would emerge as a huge banyan tree to shelter humanity at large and spread his infinitely wide shade of comfort and solace over all who were torn and tossed under the sun and storm of life's battle. Ramakrishna Mission is that infinitely all-compassing and soothing shade of the banyan tree that is Swami Vivekananda. Nay, Ramakrishna Mission is the dream-come-true epic of Sri Ramakrishna as well as of Swami Vivekananda.

Ramakrishna Mission is moving ahead on its march into the future making its own way and uniting at the same time the ancient on the one hand and the modern on the other, the past on the one hand and the future on the other. It may be said borrowing the beautiful words of Sister Nivedita that the Ramakrishna Mission is 'the last of an old order' and simultaneously 'the beginning of a new'. In that new epoch of civilisation Ramakrishna Mission is dedicated and destined to lead the whole human race to the confluence of eternal freedom and universal unity breaking the barriers of caste, colour, country and creed.

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2. Yuganayak Vivekananda—Swami Gambhirananda, Udbodhan Karyalaya, Calcutta, 1991, Vol. I, p.118
3. The Great Master, pp. 817-818
4. The first office-bearers of the Ramakrishna Mission formed at Balaram Mandir on 1 May 1897 were : Swami Vivekananda (General President), Swami Brahmananda (President, Calcutta Centre), Swami Yogananda (Vice-President, Calcutta Centre), Narendra Nath Mitra (Secretary), Dr. Sashi Bhusan Ghosh and Sarat Chandra Sarkar (Under-Secretaries), Sarat Chandra Chakraborty was the Reader of Scriptures.
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Swami Vivekananda & Faith David Russell

Trustee, Congregation of Jacob Synagogue in Stepney, London



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

Underlying all religion is faith. It is on the matter of faith that I use this opportunity to relate the thoughts of the former Chief Rabbi, Lord Jonathan Sacks. There are few commentators on religion and society today that speak so powerfully about the importance of faith, particularly in light of these secular times.

“I believe faith is part of what makes us human. It is a basic attitude of trust that always goes beyond the available evidence, but without which we would do nothing great. Without faith in one another we could not risk the vulnerability of love. Without faith in the future we would not choose to have a child. Without faith in the intelligibility of the universe we would not do science. Without faith in our fellow citizens we would not have a free society.

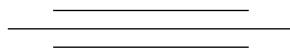
Undergirding them all, in the West, is faith in God who created the Universe in love, who made every human being regardless of colour, creed or class, in his image, who lifts us when we fall, forgives us when we fail and asks us to place love at the centre of our moral world: love of neighbour, love of stranger, love of God.

If faith in God means anything, it means humility toward oneself and love of neighbour and the stranger. Sadly faith has not always led to these things. It can sometimes lead to self-righteousness and hatred of the stranger. The history of religion has often enough been written in the bloodshed in the name of God, and this is not a consecration but a desecration.

Today in many parts of the world I see religion confused with the pursuit of power, as if that whole tragic history has been forgotten. The Hebrew Bible tells us that power belongs to God who uses it to liberate the powerless. Religion has nothing to do with power and everything to do with the holy and the good and the pursuit of justice and compassion. When religion and politics become confused the result is disastrous for both.

Faith is understood in the living and proved in the doing. We encounter the divine presence in prayer and ritual, story and song. These lift us beyond ourselves toward the infinite Thou at the heart of being, who teaches us to see His trace in the face of the human other, leading us to acts of loving kindness that make gentle the life of this world. Faith is the bond of loyalty and listening that binds us to God and through Him to humanity. Faith is life lived in the light of love.”

It is to that end - a life lived in the light of love - that Swami Vivekananda, like the former Chief Rabbi, calls on us to pursue through following our faith. It is to this end that I strive, and I am sure that this path of belief, of faith, of religion realised, is one along with I walk alongside you as well.



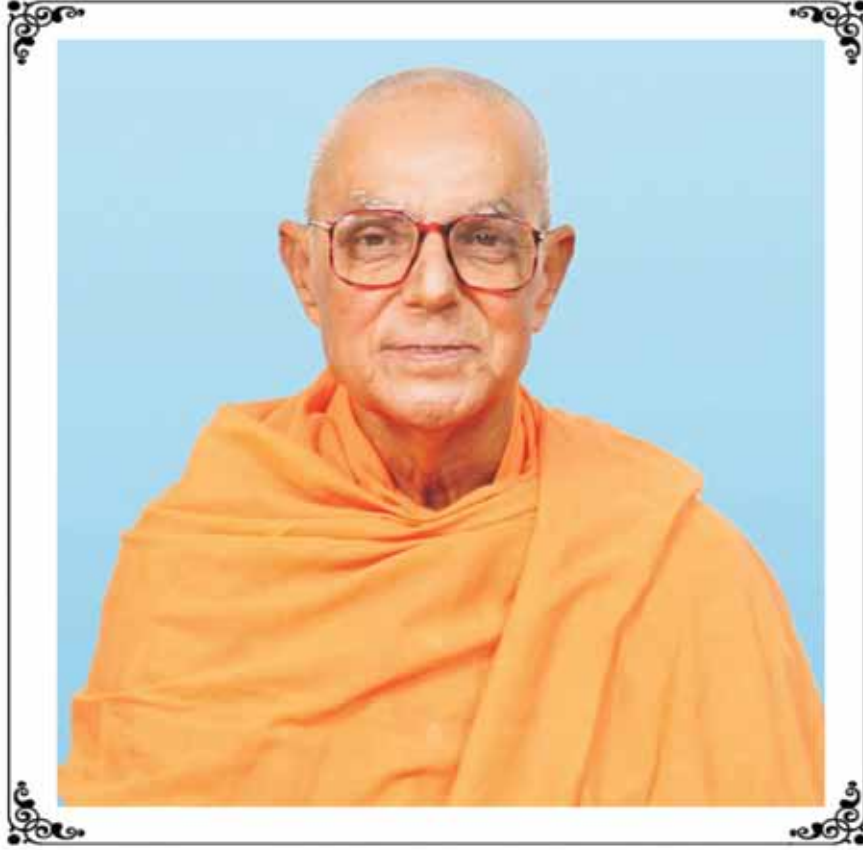
HOMAGE
to
Revered Swami Aksharanandaji Maharaj



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 2014. 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.

HOMAGE
to
Revered Swami Prameyanandaji Maharaj



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

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

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