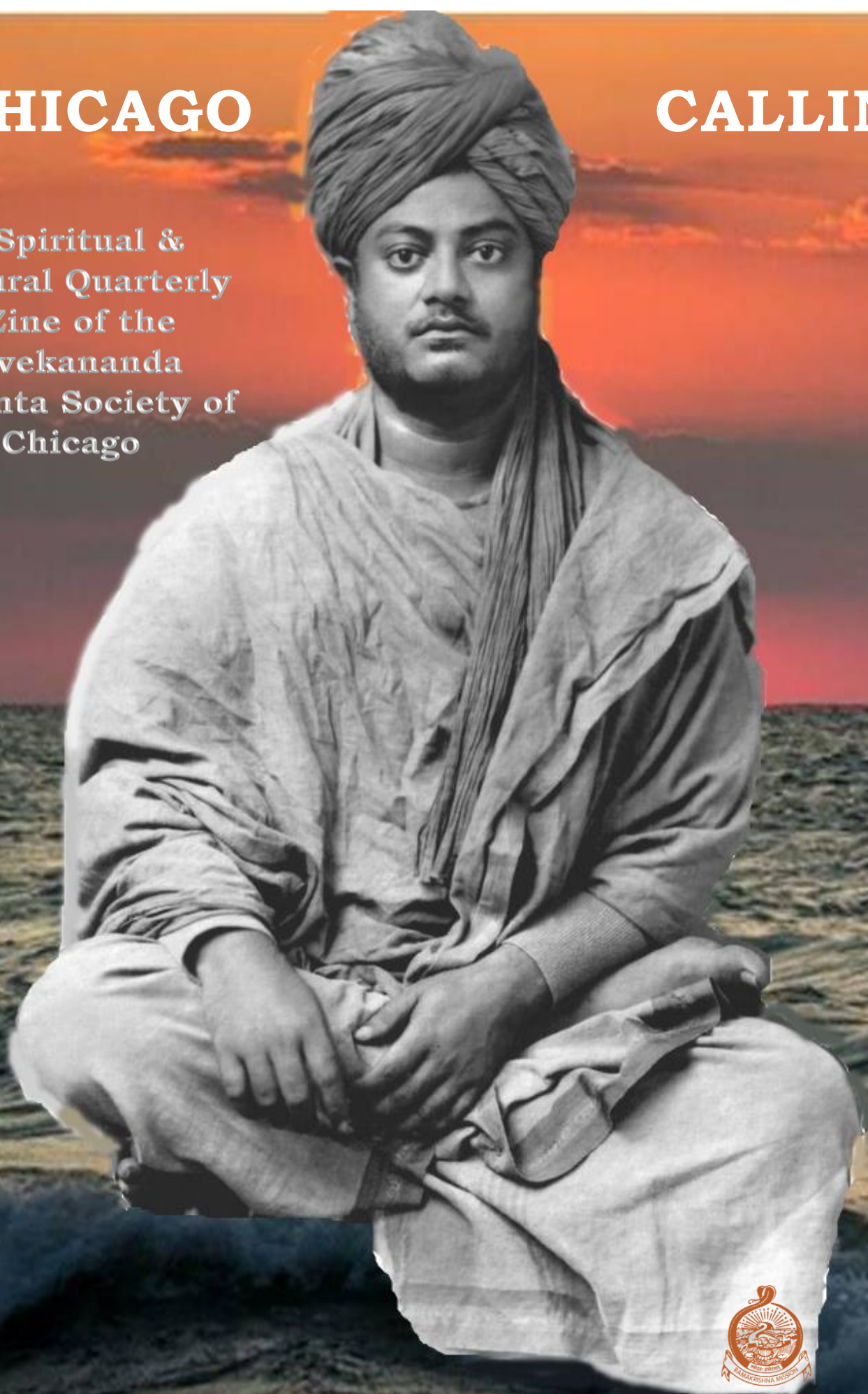


CHICAGO

CALLING

A Spiritual &
Cultural Quarterly
eZine of the
Vivekananda
Vedanta Society of
Chicago



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EDITORIAL



Swami Vivekananda had a many-faceted personality who brought a new dimension to spirituality. He left a mold to develop one's spiritual potential along with the development of the human society – “For one's own salvation and the betterment of the World” (Atmanomokshatram Jagat hiataya cha).

The year 2013 marked the 150th birth anniversary of Swami Vivekananda. The Vivekananda Vedanta Society of Chicago celebrated the occasion with extensive programs which culminated with the “Chicago Calling” program in November. To devotees and admirers of Swamiji, Chicago is an extremely holy place and it was dear to Swami Vivekananda. The city is blessed; as Buddha selected Sarnath for his message, as Jesus Christ selected the Mount [Sinai], Vivekananda selected Chicago to preach his message, the message of Freedom, Unity and Progress.

On the 11th of September in 1893 on the very first day of the World Parliament of Religions, he

urged all the spiritual leaders to come out of the narrow sectarian ideology. Again on the 27th of September, on the last day, Swami Vivekananda standing on the soil of Chicago gave a call to all of humanity, “Help and not Fight”, “Assimilation and not Destruction”, “Harmony and Peace and not Dissension”.

After over 120 years, that call is even more relevant today in a world that is more global and yet more in need of assimilation, harmony, and peace. It was to remind the present day world of that great call that our celebration was named “Chicago Calling”. And that is also the reason why we have chosen that name for this e-zine. To spread Swamiji's ideas and the eternal message of Vedanta, to inspire and uplift, to help people in whatever situation they are to realize their inner divinity and to “arise, awake, and stop not till the goal is reached”. This eZine is the small step towards that goal.

Swami Ishatmananda
Sri Ramakrishna Tithi Puja, March 3rd, 2014

UNDERSTAND WHERE WE ARE

SWAMI SUHITANANDA



When I first got the invitation from Swami Ishatmananda it was a dream because it was a call from Chicago. The name Chicago and Swami Vivekananda have become synonymous especially for Indians. And whosoever come in touch with Swami Vivekananda, each and everyone will feel a thrill the moment they will hear the name Chicago because Chicago gave the recognition to Swami Vivekananda.

It has become a new venture on the part of Swami Ishatmananda. You know that he was sent here just a few months ago – he has not completed even one year. And coming here, when he took up such a venture we were a bit hesitant and everyone was thinking whether it will be possible for him to organize this. How he has organized and called so many monks from throughout the length and breadth of the world! And each of them has come and contributed nicely for these programs. And along with it I am surprised to find the support he has got -- the support of man, the support of hours, the support of talents, the support of purse – everything. All the support that he has got shows how the people of Chicago are also enthralled by the name of Swami Vivekananda. Sincerely I am feeling surprised how these volunteers have sacrificed their money, they have sacrificed their hours, they have sacrificed their relations, they have sacrificed their responsibilities. For these few days they are on their toes just to see that these programs are going on smoothly and everything is going

on so smoothly and on time and meticulously and all the points have been observed and noticed by the devotees and volunteers and admirers. So, my special congratulations and felicitations to them.

Now about Swami Vivekananda. Before me there have been so many deliberations and certainly I have got nothing left to say. So many erudite, learned scholars have presented their papers. Only one thing comes to my mind. Once Romain Rolland put a question to Bashishwar Sen. Bashishwar Sen was a disciple of Raja Maharaj and he was a scientist.

He started an agricultural university at Almora in the Himalayas. Bashishwar Sen, because he was a scientist, naturally had correspondence with foreigners and so once Romain Rolland asked him – “I am confused about the teachings of Swami Vivekananda. Because I find that he talks once in one method and while he talks about another topic, there he is very serious. When he changes the topic again with all seriousness he talks, so which is the actual voice of Swami Vivekananda? There I am a bit confused.” Then Bashi Sen gave him a beautiful reply – “Have you ever seen the figure of Shiva having five faces? The five faced Shiva – *Panchanana* – through whichever face he talks, he talks with full force, full sincerity. The same was Swami Vivekananda.” (*contd. on next page*)

Swami Suhitananda, General Secretary (Administrative Head) of the Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission with Headquarters at Belur Math, Howrah, West Bengal, India delivered this talk at “Chicago Calling” conference held on 9th November, 2013. This article is the transcribed talk.]

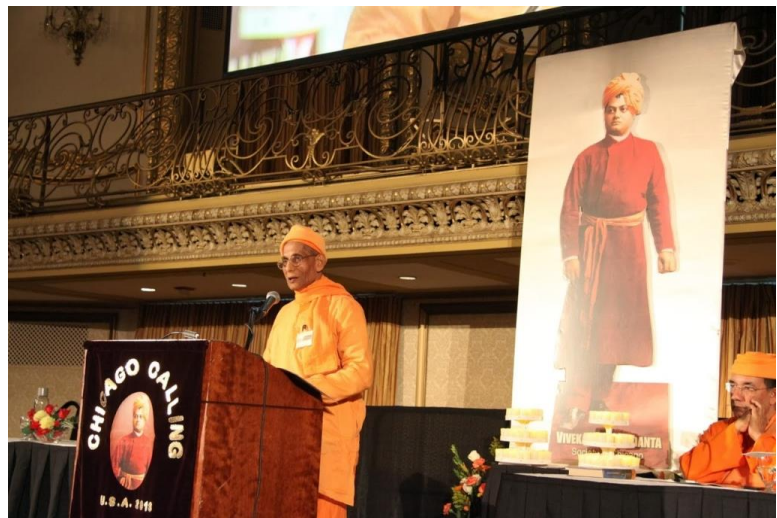
He was a many-faceted personality. So whatever he had to talk -- and he had to talk to different types of audiences, different types of questioners, different types of devotees, aspirants -- he had to respond to them with the full force because he was the fountain of all the source of power. Naturally it was nothing for him. As Sri Ramakrishna has mentioned, the same God-force is passing through different drains. So the same God-force was passing through Swami Vivekananda through different channels. Here our speakers -- all the speakers -- have nicely dealt with all the points that I do not want to add anything to it.

Romain Rolland once made a statement about Swamiji -- "He cannot be thought about as a second. He is always the first." Everywhere. Wherever he would be, he would be the first. In English we know the superlative, positive and comparative -- the three degrees are there. He [Swamiji] always used to have only one degree and that degree was superlative. So Swami Vivekananda, he was of this caliber. Here we have got an opportunity to come to him. Isherwood has mentioned about Swamiji -- He loved India. He was nationalist out and out. A nationalist but simultaneously his nationalism did not mean he confined himself only within India. He expanded himself, he broke the boundaries and he became an international personality. Not only international personality, he transcended internationality. It was not some narrow sort of internationalism, it was a sort of transcendental internationalism.

Recently I had an opportunity to go to Paris and there I visited India House. Some seminar was there, the Ambassador of France was there and he was mentioning about Irina Bokova. She is the director-general of UNESCO. She made a statement. There was a seminar and the topic was Swami Vivekananda and there she mentioned that in this sort of congregation there cannot be any other better topic than Swami Vivekananda. Why did she say so? Because Swami Vivekananda in 1897 when he started this

Ramakrishna Mission on 1st May, he put up some agenda. These rules and regulations were jotted down and according to these rules and regulations the Ramakrishna Mission is being run. And Golda Meir on one of these occasions was invited and she gave a talk and there she mentioned this thing -- "I am surprised to find the stark similarity between the agenda of Ramakrishna Mission and the agenda of UNO." Why? Because in both the things you find the central point, the central theme of the movement is *Man*.

In Ramakrishna Mission's agenda we have kept Man higher than God. I can cite one example. Durga Puja will be celebrated. In 1978 the President [of Ramakrishna Mission] was Swami Vireswaranandaji. (contd.)



Swami Suhitananda addressing the gathering at the "Chicago Calling" celebration.



Swami Suhitananda addressing the "International Monastic Heads' Conference". Ganges, MI, Nov. 7th, '13

That time a flood havoc came. He immediately announced that for the Puja minimum expenditure will be there, but the whole money should be spent for the flood victims. This is the spirit. A new dimension to spirituality, a new dimension to Godhood has been generated by Swami Vivekananda. So that is the reason Irina Bokova as Golda Meir both of them thought Swami Vivekananda's name should be considered for some international concept.

Today we find our devotees. About the devotees Toynbee has mentioned – especially about the devotees who are the followers of Sri Ramakrishna he has mentioned a small term – “creative minority.” We are minority. Certainly Ramakrishna devotees are a minority in the whole world but they are creative minority. We always create something. We always contribute something new. It is not that we are static. And we can broaden ourselves to any length, any person, any religion, any community, any culture, any race he will find that here is some cozy corner for me. *This* is Ramakrishna mission. Sri Ramakrishna, Holy Mother, Swami Vivekananda – if you go through their lives you will find all sorts of people used get some cozy corner in them. Some sort of refuge. It is not necessary for you to change your religion, you have not to change your race. Simply you come. “What is your qualification?”, we would ask. If you say that “so and so”, we would say “nothing is required, we want only one qualification and that is you declare that you are a Man.” That's enough for us. *This* is the Ramkrishna Mission.

And we are slowly advancing and spreading our views. We are already having 174 centers and out of it 133 centers in India, remaining in other countries. And it is very surprising wherever our Swamis go they are expanding it from one center to two, three, four, five sub-centers and asking us to send more Swamis to assist them. That shows how appealing Sri Ramakrishna's, Vivekananda's, Holy Mother's thoughts and teachings have been.



Swami Suhitananda with the nuns and monks of the Vedanta Socoiety.

So long as Swami Vivekananda was present certainly those about whom Swami Kripamayanda has mentioned fortunate souls were there and they felt attracted to see his charisma, his glamour, his glory, his spirituality, his purity, his devotion, his intellect. Of all these things they felt enamored. And ultimately we find the names were forgotten. About this thing Nivedita made an assessment – “So long as Swami Vivekananda is there we are moving and walking with Swami Vivekananda. We are appreciating, we are understanding his greatness. But soon when we people will vanish from this world there will be a pure void. Slowly, slowly people will forget about Vivekananda. But again after 150 years Swami Vivekananda will come back again.” Why and how? Because Swami Vivekananda himself said “No nation can have any claim on me. I belong to India as much as I belong to the world.” *That* is Swami Vivekananda. He said “I love the Yankees.” About these Americans he mentioned when Ole Bull and others were struggling to stay in Belur Math in very poor conditions of accommodation. Seeing that Swamiji passed a comment – These Yankees can do anything and everything. I have seen them, how much they were rolling in luxury they used to remain in all the first class hotels and palatial buildings. (contd.)

And *those* persons – how they were adjusting with that sort of poverty! And that is why he said “those Yankees can do anything and everything.” And not only that. My sisters and the ladies that are here will feel very much happy to know that Swamiji mentioned that “If I am to be born again as a woman, I will become an American.” *That* type of person, this Vivekananda, he was lost afterwards, and again he has come back. Now the question is why is Swami Vivekananda becoming so vibrant again?

That is because some slow changes were going on. If you go through the literature, if you go through the history, you go through the politics, if you go through science, mathematics, university, everywhere slowly Swami Vivekananda's thoughts were percolating into the society. I have a long list here of these westerners who believe in the transmigration of souls. They used to believe - Toynbee, Somerset Maugham, Rockefeller so many, a long list is there. I do not want to waste time. But they believe in transmigration of souls. Now a Vedantic dictionary has come out that means since Swami Vivekananda so many words have come into the day to day life of Americans and Westerners. The words like, Yoga, Karma phala, Guru, all these terms, where from did they come? Swami Vivekananda was the first man to come, land here, and his name has been recorded in the history of America, among the first, probably the top 25 persons among them Swami Vivekananda's name has been recorded who contributed for the welfare of America. *This* is Swami Vivekananda. About him I just want to quote one or two quotations.

Once, Shinzo Abe, Prime Minister of Japan in his talk in 2007 22nd August, said – “It gives me tremendous pleasure to be able to begin my address today with the words of Swami Vivekananda, the great spiritual leader that India gave the world.” And in concluding his talk he said, “I will like to quote, if permitted, Vivekananda again” and so saying he is mentioning that quotation, “Help, and not

fight. Assimilation, and not destruction. Harmony and peace, and not dissension”.

Barack Obama, on 8th November 2010, said about India succumbing to division because India got the shock of partition -- “You have shown that the strength of India, the very idea of India, is to embrace all colors, all castes, all creeds. It is the richness of faith celebrated by a visitor to my hometown of Chicago more than a century ago, the renowned Swami Vivekananda. He said holiness, purity, and charity are not the exclusive possessions of any church in the world and every system has produced men and women of the most exalted character”.



*Swami Suhitananda inaugurating the “Shrine Trail”.
Ganges, MI, Nov. 7th, ‘13*

The Premier of Manitoba from Canada mentioned, “Swami Vivekananda devoted his life to working towards peace, mutual understanding, and harmony. The message he brought to the World Parliament of Religions in Chicago in 1893 was one of unity in diversity meant to impress upon us all the possibility of human relationship across the world.”

One of the Russian poets has composed a poem. I simply will utter only a few words that are about Swami Vivekananda. Swami Vivekananda is as if a sword which has been brought out from the sheath. (*contd.*)

So that sort of sword, an open sword, about him he has written, “It has been rightly said of him, he was like a naked sword/ His thought was ringing like a steel blade/ glistening, sparkling, fluttering/ a stroke, another stroke”. When Gahanananda Maharaj, our President expired, at that time from the Vatican the Pope sent a message. Certainly we did not ask him to send any message, but unasked for he sent this message “As the 14th President of the Ramakrishna Mission, Swami Gahanananda actively involved himself to promote constructive dialogue between religions. The world today needs religious leaders who while being authentic examples of love, peace, and justice also forge bonds of friendship and trust across religious boundaries.”

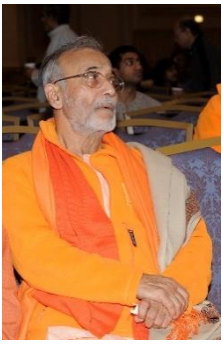
I will now finish my talk – my time is over – only with one quotation. This quotation, this is again from some person - after the quotation I will mention his name – “Maybe instead of all these different gods, maybe there is one God who manifests himself and revealed himself in different ways to different people.” It is as if this seems a quotation from the Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna. It is as if some devotee has mentioned all these things. It is not a devotee. It is Ted Turner at the UN he has quoted this in his own speech.

Only one incident I will mention. One Canadian gentleman used to write to us, occasionally through email correspondence and put so many questions on spiritual life. We were corresponding generally twice a month or sometime once. In this way this correspondence was going on and he was putting so many questions, and we were trying to satisfy him. All of a sudden we found no message was coming from him. When the messages stopped, naturally out of curiosity we sent a message – “How come from you we are not hearing for a long time?” Then he replied, that – “Swamiji, I have got the answers to all my questions.” And what is that? “Recently a Catholic Bishop presented me a book and the name of the book is The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna.” So, we can all

understand where we are.



Swami Suhitananda and visiting monks in front of the Art Institute of Chicago where Swami Vivekananda addressed the Parliament of Religions in 1893



SWAMI VIVEKANANDA'S CONTRIBUTION TO THE EAST

SWAMI AMARANANDA

*Swami Amarananda Minister-in-Charge, Centre Vedantique of Geneva, Switzerland.
This lecture was delivered on Nov. 9th, at "Chicago Calling".*

Swamiji's success in Chicago in 1893 and what he did subsequently in different parts of the world normally dazzle us. This is evident from the compliments given to Swamiji in the last 120 years. But Swamiji's achievements should not overwhelm one, if one remembers the glorious aspects of Vivekananda in the making.

Vivekananda in the making

Narendranath, who would be known as Vivekananda, had a highly comprehensive education not bound by the university curriculum. The testimony of his fellow-student Brojendranath Seal who came to know Naren in 1881, is important in this respect. Naren went through the works of philosophers Mill, Hume, and Spencer; his pre-adolescence theism thereby metamorphosed into scepticism. Brojen introduced Naren to Advaita, to Hegel's dialectics, and to the philosophy behind the French Revolution. Naren could philosophically get beyond both scepticism and materialism. But the intellectual trekking gave him no peace. The quest for the ultimate truth was burning in his bosom like a raging fire. If we remember this, we may understand the anguish in Naren who put the question to Ramakrishna: "Sir, have you seen God?"

The contact with Ramakrishna controlled gradually the untamed horse that was Naren who was identified by his would-be guru as a great sage reincarnated. Naren studied Law, but opted not to appear at the exam to dive deep into *sadhana* before the disappearance of his guru. The guru showered his unstinting grace on this initially rebellious disciple, and

it seems that, in 50 months, since their first meeting, Naren entered into the highest kind of meditation known to Advaitists.

His observation, meditation, study and tapas as an itinerant monk, after his guru's passing away, catapulted him from the status of a sādḥaka to that of a world teacher of the highest rank, and this took place by his 29th year. His first-hand experience of India, his robust physique, his compassion for fellow beings, and his communions with his master even after the latter's passing away, his commissioning as the leader of brother-disciples and as a teacher of humanity, and last but not the least, the grace of Sarada Devi, were the other elements which together morphed this world teacher.

Vivekananda saved Hinduism

Thus wrote Rajagopalachari, the first Governor-General of independent India : "Swami Vivekananda saved Hinduism and saved India. But for him, we would have lost our religion and would not have gained our freedom." Let us consider first how Swamiji saved Hinduism. He presented to the world the highly ramified and complex religious system known as Hinduism in a way intelligible for a modern mind. He culled salient points of this religion and categorised its *sadhanas* into four major yogas. He showcased its glorious aspects both doctrinally and historically: acceptance of all religions as true, the divinity of the soul, giving asylum to persecuted persons hailing from different religions, and a tremendous thirst for the mystic experience in many bosoms.

His prescience of the modern attack on Hinduism from within and without as something based on *Manuvada* was remarkable. He showed us a way out of it, proclaiming that the dharma-shāstras constitute the lower court while the Vedas and the Vedānta represent the higher court of Hinduism.

The restatement of Hinduism by Swamiji was done in the light of several things: his guru's life and teachings, modern science, and those elements in Eastern and Western philosophies which were tenable to him. He was not — please allow me to forge a word — a *hereditophil* — in the sense of defending the totality of old customs in modern times. He disapproved certain aspects of *ashvamedha* sacrifice, and also the going to the extreme in respect of the child betrothal supported by the ancient law-givers like Gobhila. He supported the movement, which would culminate later in Sarda Act, that attempted to prevent child betrothal across all religions in India. He decried the system of Hindu marriage which had resulted in the loss of the national vigour. He wanted to write a new dharma-*shastra*, because he was convinced that much of the social customs fortified by old dharma-*shastra* texts are outdated. He had a vision of establishing a colony in an uninhabited tract of land in India to raise up a new generation who would be free from fossilised customs.

Educating the poor and providing food to the hungry were the long term and short term remedies mooted by Swamiji for raising his sunken motherland. The educator must go to the poor when they are free at the end of the day. The curriculum must contain secular subjects and the basics of values, morality and religion.

Swamiji did not forget the question of raising our women. In fact, two of his western disciples engaged themselves in this task. Sports, secular education, and home work

should be part of the education of girls and young women, to bring into being a new type of Indian womanhood; these women would also reinstate into them the great spirituality manifested in Gargi, Maitreyi, and Vak of olden days. He reminded us again and again that many composers of Vedic hymns were women. His dream of setting up a Math for women was realised 51 years after his passing away.

Vivekananda: The Organiser & Disseminator

One of his great achievements, which historians have failed to focus upon, was his passionate persuasion of brother disciples to accept the following points of view : the necessity of organised work, the concept of service to people as a religious practice, training of would-be preachers competent to work in India and abroad, lopping off the tentacles of excessive ritualism in and around the altar, the accent on Vedānta and not on Ramakrishna -ism, shunning of politics which is other name for sophistication in the art of self-aggrandisement through lies and plots, and the primacy of man-making education over the eradication of superstitious social practices. Without this, the Ramakrishna Order would not have survived long, since Swamiji left this arena of ours so early! For the first time, the masses were touched by a Hindu religious organisation.



Historically, he is the founder of Ramakrishna Mission and the consolidator of Ramakrishna Math which was founded, through him, by his master. He foresaw that the twin organisation would be a machine for doing good to humanity which no power on earth would be able to crush for a long time to come.

Most of the compositions and talks in public of Swamiji were in English. While taking rest in Switzerland, he kept on his mind the questions of the would-be Advaita Ashrama, and the future of Brahmagadhin magazine. Through these organs, he would enthuse and guide the English-speaking Indians who were the forerunners of change in every field.

His four Bengali essays published in Udbodhan, a magazine started at his behest, testify to his invigorating style of composing Bengali prose unknown at that time and were admired by connoisseurs. He decried the nouveau style of Bengali culture, namely, conversing and composing poems that were effeminate. He said that the flute-playing Krishna should be forgotten for the moment to promote the Gita- preaching Krishna, and that the chaste and loyal Hanuman should be the ideal culled from our Ramayana for the Indian youth.

Swamiji was skilled in both vocal and instrumental music. He believed that for connoisseurs, the music is the greatest *sādhana*. Yet he uttered words of caution in respect of those strands of music, for ex., *kirtana* which feminises the masses. In Bengal, we have had excess of this *kirtana* for centuries, warned Swamiji. However, he was for the introduction of *kirtana* in the Punjab. Swamiji wanted that musical instruments like *turi* and *bheri* should be the mode in India so that people are roused to manliness. The key word in his teaching was the summoning of strength in us, because the essence of our being is Brahman, and the harmonious blending of all the faculties.

What Swamiji did in the West, especially his success in Chicago and his talks in the West, benefitted India tremendously. It is not easy to gauge today that impact upon the demoralised Hindu psyche of that time. This gauging would be easier if we remember that, in 1911, an Indian team beat a British team in football in Calcutta, and the event created euphoria in the country that the independence was not far away.

Swamiji gathered around him many ardent disciples/admirers, among whom some western people who played big roles in his mission in the East: Miss Muller, Miss Noble, Miss Mc-Leod, Miss Greenstidel, the Seviars, and Mrs. Bull. The impact of Miss Noble (Nivedita) on our national history is multi-dimensional.

Vivekananda & Islam

The harmonious rapport of Hinduism with Islam in India has been a difficult development which received a few big jolts in three and a half centuries since 1657. When two communities live side by side, they develop harmony through a kind of cultural osmosis. But there were periodic attempts to reverse this process. We believe that Swamiji foresaw this evil. He was aware of the danger of the import of Muslim fundamentalism in India from abroad. However, he gave his vision of India in an oft-quoted letter: "I see in my mind's eye the future perfect India rising out of this chaos and strife, glorious and invincible, with Vedanta brain and Islam body." The contextual evidence shows that by "Islam body" he hinted at the comparative equality of privileges in the Muslim society

Swamiji agreed to the admission of Muslim boys in the orphanage established by one of his brother disciples. Among India's leaders, the person most influenced by Swamiji was Subhas Chandra Bose who showed practically how Hindu-Muslim unity was feasible in spite of colonial power pressure to divide the communities in India.

Vivekananda saved India and indirectly crumbled centuries-old colonialism

Now let us refer to Rajagopalachari's quote again. He said that without Swamiji, we would not have gained our freedom. This is also the conclusion of the historian Mr. Panikkar. India provided the muscle power of the British Empire east of Suez. India's freedom in 1947 triggered, in just 13 years, the fall of colonial powers in Afro-Asian countries, where almost half of the human race had remained, in different degrees, subjugated and exploited for a long time.

I have given only a rough outline of Swamiji's gifts to the East, and the enumeration is not exhaustive. But Swamiji's greatest contribution to the whole world is he himself. Because the dire need of humanity is a person, powerful, spotless, and compassionate, who would be able to proclaim to fellow human beings: "Wake up" in the fashion of Jesus asking Lazarus to rise

up; and who would say:" Let my message infuse vitality and strength in you!" Such persons are a highly rare commodity. If a Garibaldi in Italy could inspire the youth in Bengal 4500 miles away, a Vivekananda would be able to do so in remotest areas of the earth.

Footnote: I am not equating Garibaldi with Vivekananda. Because, in spite of his idealism, Garibaldi used the methods of unclean politics to fulfil his mission. Here is a quote: "However, this had little actual effect on the Mafia, for Garibaldi chose men (in Sicily) who were in the upper crust of society, and these men already had ties to the Mafia. During this period of uncertainty, crime and violence surged."—

ref.: www.umich.edu/~thefafia/RevisedHistory.htm



ARISE, AWAKE, AND STOP NOT



Arunima Sinha

Arunima Sinha was national level volleyball player. She was pushed out of the moving train for resisting her bag and chain-snatching attempt by hoodlums in 2011. She was hit by a passing train, was hospitalised with serious leg and pelvic injuries and in a bid to save her life, doctors had to amputate her left leg below the knee.

On April 12, 2011, Arunima Sinha lost a leg. Arunima lost her right leg, not hope and her heart was in the right place.

"When I was undergoing treatment at All India Institute of Medical Sciences for four months, I could not do anything on my own. But then one day I decided to climb the Everest." Arunima was trained for over a year by Bachendri Pal, the first Indian woman to climb Mount Everest.

On April 12, 2013, Arunima was happy to leave behind the Summit of Island Peak (Height - 6160 meters). She was on her way up to the highest point on the planet. On May 21, 2013, Arunima Sinha was on top of the world. 8,848-metres above sea level. Mount Everest.

Arunima, became the first Indian woman with an artificial limb to achieve the feat. She proved to the world that legs may help you climb mountains, but what one really needs is a heart, a brave heart.

Source: India Today



N. Shiva Kumar

Shiva Kumar has got admission to IIM-Calcutta. He worked as a newspaper delivery boy since he was in Class 6 and became a vendor in Class 10. He managed to balance his studies and part-time job and cracked the IIM entrance test.

Mr. Shiva Kumar is from a Scheduled Tribe in a country where students from socially disadvantaged backgrounds have been known to be harassed to the point of suicide in "institutions of excellence", his discretion is understandable.

But as the 23-year-old packs his bags to go to Kolkata for an IIM education, he no longer feels the need to hide his identity. "I'm proud of who I am and where I come from... I no longer feel the need to hide it from anybody," says the young man whose father, Nagendra, a truck driver, migrated with his mother, Jayamma, to Bangalore 25 years ago from a tribal haadi in Chandagalu village of Mysore. A man, N. Shiva Kumar refers to as "uncle" and the patron who funded his education from the time he was in Class 9, has warned him about the possibility of discrimination.

"He told me that because of the media publicity many people will watch me very closely. One slip and they might start referring to me as a reservation candidate without merit," says the youth who scored 81 per cent in Class 10, 76 per cent in PU and has maintained an average 67.6 per cent in engineering.

Shiva Kumar completed his schooling from Maruthi Vidyalaya. "We're happy he has reached great heights. Hard work never fails; it was sheer hard work that took him up. We remember him as a silent, obedient and bright boy." said the Principal of the school.

Not many in Bangalore Institute of Technology (BIT), the college where Shiva Kumar is studying computer science engineering, knew he was a newspaper vendor till they read the newspaper report. The clipping was up on the college notice board and the authorities have decided to felicitate him. "In his second or third semester he told me he's the bread winner of the family. He was running short of attendance then. But I never knew he was preparing for CAT. He is a role model for everybody. He teaches you the value of every penny and the significance of higher education. His hard work and determination is something to learn from," said the proud head of the department of computer science and engineering department, BIT.

N. Shiva Kumar won the State-sponsored SC/ST scholarship of Rs. 20,000 a year and the money he made running a successful newspaper agency. In N. Shiva Kumar's word, "The scholarship made me independent... it gave me dignity."

"After all, not everybody is as lucky as me to find a benevolent stranger," says the young man who wants to work for a few years in the corporate sector before turning to the civil services. "I will be able to serve society better as an IAS officer."

Now, N. Shiva Kumar is already a national celebrity. The newspaper boy who cracked the Indian Institute of Management (IIM) entrance is now hopping TV studios, his Facebook account has over 500 friend requests pending his approval and his inbox is brimming with congratulatory mails even as he appears for his final semester engineering exams.



Strength is Life. Weakness is Death

Once when I was in Varanasi, I was passing through a place where there was a large tank of water on one side and a high wall on the other. It was in the grounds where there were many monkeys. The monkeys of Varanasi are huge brutes and are sometimes surly. They now took it into their heads not to allow me to pass through their street, so they howled and shrieked and clutched at my feet as I passed. As they pressed closer, I began to run, but the faster I ran, the faster came the monkeys and they began to bite at me. It seemed impossible to escape, but just then I met a stranger who called out to me, "Face the brutes." I turned and faced the monkeys, and they fell back and finally fled.

That is a lesson for all life — face the terrible, face it boldly. Like the monkeys, the hardships of life fall back when we cease to flee before them. If we are ever to gain freedom, it must be by conquering nature, never by running away. Cowards never win victories. We have to fight fear and troubles and ignorance if we expect them to flee before us.

SOURCE: *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda, Volume-1 (Lectures & Discourses: What is Religion?)*

BETTER HEALTH THROUGH YOGA

Swagata Saha

The body, mind, and soul are the holy trinity of our earthly existence. If any one of these is not functioning properly, it would lead to sickness. Yoga helps to unite the body, mind, and soul by bringing about a perfect alignment between these three components. Practicing Yoga under the guidance of a knowledgeable, well-trained yoga instructor can provide an individual with not only a physically rejuvenating 'workout', but also a spiritually uplifting experience.

The practice of Yoga can yield a number of physical benefits, many of which are well-known. In fact, many people first come to a yoga class seeking relief from various physical ailments. One common complaint for which Yoga has been shown to be beneficial is for relief of pain from arthritis. Yoga helps to build muscle strength, improve flexibility, and thus protect and provide relief against back pain. Joint cartilage is a part of our body which is usually neglected, but it can be well addressed through Yoga. The cartilage in our joints is like a sponge – it needs to squeeze out its fluids and soak up fresh fluid in order to receive vital nutrients to maintain its integrity. The various asanas facilitate this process through gentle, full-range movements of various joints, and thus prevents the wearing out of joint cartilage. When starting to get into a posture and then slowly coming out of it, our muscles first stretch and then contract, which allows for effective drainage through the lymphatic channels and help to fight infections more effectively. Back-bend postures such as the wheel pose (urdhva dhanurasana) and the king pigeon pose (kapotasana), and the forward bend postures such as the wide-legged forward bend (padottanasana) and the standing forward bend (ardhva uttanasana), help to keep our intervertebral disks (spinal disks) supple, which is very important since the spinal disks

act as shock absorbers between the vertebrae. The sitting twist (marichiyasana) and the supine spinal twist (supta matsyendrasana) help to flush out the venous blood from the internal organs during the twist, and fresh oxygenated blood flows into the organs during the untwisting motion. This allows the cells within the body to receive more oxygen and nutrients and thereby function better. Yoga also boosts the hemoglobin content and total red cell count in the bloodstream, which is essential for delivery of oxygen to the various tissues and organs of the body.

Yoga is not only a set of exercises to make one's body look slim and slender from the outside - it goes way beyond that. Weight-bearing postures such as arm balances (crane pose or bakasana, eight-angle pose or ashtabakrasana) stimulate bone remodeling, increase calcium absorption from the intestine, and stimulate calcium deposition in the bones, thereby increasing bone mass. These effects are particularly important in the aging population, who are at a high risk of developing weak bones due to osteoporosis. In addition, Hatha yoga kriyas (bandhas, mudras, and pranayama) have been shown to improve various measures of lung function. Yogic breathing techniques teach us to take fewer breaths with larger volumes of air with each breath, which is recommended for patients with congestive heart failure (CHF) as well as those with chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD). Some of these techniques can also be useful for patients with chronic pain, as they help to reduce the level of stress that is invariably present in individuals who suffer from these conditions. In this issue, I will introduce two asanas which are very useful for individuals with back pain.

Garudasana (Eagle pose):

Difficulty level: 1

How to get into this posture:

1. Stand in *tadasana* or mountain pose
2. Keep your hands on the hips
3. Bend your legs slightly
4. Raise the right leg and balance on the left leg
5. With an exhalation, cross the right thigh and knee over the left and place the right Shin behind the left calf
6. Hook the toes of the right foot around the inside of the left shin
7. Bend the elbows, cross them in front of the chest with the thumbs facing the head
8. Cross the left elbow over the right, cross the hands, and place the fingers of the right hand on the palm of the left hand
9. Raise the elbows to the level of the shoulders
10. Stretch the hands and fingers up
11. Stay in this pose for about 20 seconds and maintain an even breath (*ujjayi* breath)
12. Release the arms and legs and stand straight
13. Repeat the pose with the other side (following the same sequence as above)

Benefits:

- This pose is particularly useful for individuals with sciatica.
- This pose helps to strengthen the legs, calves, and ankles
- It relieves the tightness in the leg muscles
- It helps to improve concentration and restore self-confidence.

In the next issue I will introduce *Utthita hasta padangustasana* (extended hand-to-big toe pose).

I hope that you will find these asanas beneficial. It is important to remember that Yoga is a lifelong pursuit, and with regular and conscientious practice, one can reap rewards far beyond alleviation of physical discomfort.



Questions or feedback?

*The author Swagata Saha can be contacted at
ezine@chicagovedanta.org*

Strength is the sign of vigor, the sign of life, the sign of hope, the sign of health, and the sign of everything that is good. As long as the body lives, there must be strength in the body, strength in the mind, strength in the hand.

*Swami Vivekananda
Complete Works, Vol. 6*

HOW TO BE A BETTER STUDENT

Welcome to the Youth Corner. This column will feature inspirational messages for the youth, addressing issues such as success in studies, development of will-power and memory, concentration, competition, and other challenges that are faced inside and outside the classroom. You are invited to write in to ezine@chicagovedanta.org with questions that we will attempt to address.

Q: What comprises success in studies?

The answer lies beyond getting high grades in the coursework and exams. True success lies in learning principles and retaining them so that they can be applied later to other contexts in the academic field and in life. The most limited form of learning lies in being able to reproduce what is taught. A more subtle form of learning lies in being able to apply what has been learnt to new situations. An even more subtle form of learning lies in being able to design and synthesize solutions to new problems, based on the learning. Getting high grades in school and college does not necessarily imply success later in life and vice-versa. For example, the former CEO and current chairman of Microsoft, Bill Gates, was a dropout from Harvard. Steve Jobs, the co-founder, CEO and chairman of Apple, was an adopted child and had dropped out of Reed College. Yet, both of them demonstrated the innovative and entrepreneurial spirits from childhood, which later led them to unprecedented success in life. Renowned space scientist and former Indian President Abdul Kalam came from a poor background, distributing newspapers and working other odd jobs to supplement his family's income in his childhood. He had average grades in school but a burning desire to study which fructified later in his life. On the other hand, there are numerous toppers in college exams who go on to lead mediocre lives, living a humdrum job with no impact on society and with no contributions to its welfare.

There is thus a weak correlation between getting high grades in school and success in life. Success in life depends on many factors,

including mastery over a specific vocation or discipline of studies, inter-personal skills and management skills, holistic vision of life, integrity of one's character, sincerity and hard work, and zeal. Some of these factors such as the integrity of one's character and an overarching vision of life depend on the attainment of knowledge of one's own true self and of one's relationship with others. This is called *para* knowledge or knowledge of the beyond, in contrast to *apara* knowledge which comprises of knowledge of worldly subjects such as those taught in modern-day curricula to prepare oneself for a vocation. The modern-day formal educational system does not do much to impart this *para* knowledge and mold the students' personality according to its ideals and precepts. In the ancient *gurukul* system of education where the disciple went to live with the teacher during his student days, great emphasis was laid on the all-rounded character development of the student – including not just knowledge of subjects taught in modern-day schools to prepare to pursue a profession.

Q: Why is one student more successful than another student in school?

To understand the varying degrees of success in the academic system, we must understand that no two students are created exactly equal in terms of the skill sets and opportunities. Everyone has different gifts from God when they are born, and these are determined by their past lives. Some students may be good at mathematics and science, while others may have an aptitude for the liberal arts. (contd.)

Yet others may seem to have no particular field in which they are interested or excel in. Some students may be born with a silver spoon, while others may be born in a life of hardship, having to work and earn while going to college or bear familial responsibilities during their student days. Such disparities form the very fabric of God's creation. Given the position that every student is placed in, his objective is to perform his best in the academic system under the circumstances. This is called following one's *swa-dharma*, or own natural path based on one's own inclination, station and circumstances in life, subject to all the principles of moral conduct.

Given such apparent disparities in the playing field, success amounts to devoting the maximum amount of time available in one's circumstances in sincere pursuit of studies. Whatever time one can make for studying, one must devote it a hundred percent to studies, with no thoughts of whatsoever else. When doing other activities, again one should be a hundred percent devoted to the other activities. This is called living in the present moment. Life is nothing but the succession of present moments. Every thought of the future or the past represents wasted moments of life and should be avoided to the extent possible.

Following this principle, each student who puts in his cent percent effort can be deemed to be successful, despite the disparities in the in-born talents and aptitudes, and in the station and circumstances in life. Thus, the notion of success is relative to one's position at the beginning of the endeavor, which in our context is the undertaking of studies during the student years.

Take up one idea. Make that one idea your life. Think of it, dream of it, live on that one idea. Let the brain, muscles, nerves, every part of your body be full of that one idea, and just leave every other idea alone.

That is the way to success.

Swami Vivekananda

"THEY ALONE LIVE WHO LIVE FOR OTHERS"



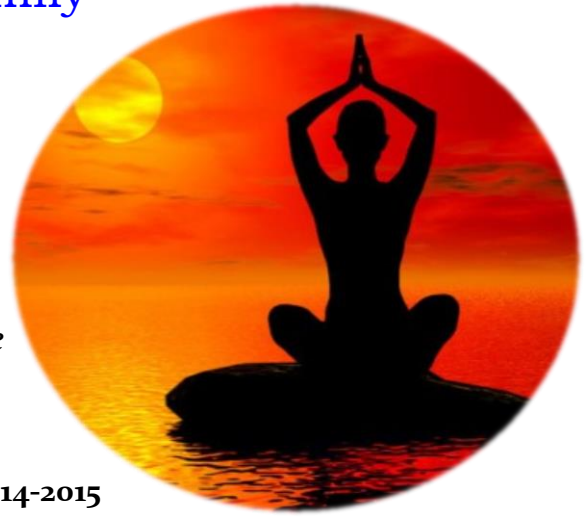
Once a group of 50 people was attending a seminar. Suddenly the speaker stopped and started giving each one a balloon. Each one was asked to write his/her name on it using a marker pen. Then all the balloons were collected and put in another room. Now these delegates were let in that room and asked to find the balloon which had their name written, within 5 minutes. Everyone was frantically searching for their name, colliding with each other, pushing around others and there was utter chaos. At the end of 5 minutes no one could find their own balloon. Now each one was asked to randomly collect a balloon and give it to the person whose name was written on it. Within minutes everyone had their own balloon. The speaker began – Exactly, this is happening in our lives. Everyone is frantically looking for happiness all around, not knowing where it is. Our happiness lies in the happiness of other people. Give them their happiness, you will get your own happiness. And this is the purpose of human life. Is this not what you are looking for?

Courtesy: <http://academictips.org/blogs>

Health for Whole Family Register

Vivekananda Vedanta Society of Chicago will start
Weekend Classes on Yoga and Meditation:

These classes are suitable for most people regardless of fitness level, health conditions or age. Teachers will provide modifications for your unique needs in this non-competitive environment.



Foundation in Yoga Program 2014-2015

***** Prerequisite to the 2015-2016 Intermediate Yoga Program**

Relieve and prevent degenerative diseases and conditions like arthritis, high blood pressure, and back problems!

Increase lung capacity and relieve stress with foundational breathing practices and meditations!

This year long yoga program lays a solid foundation in Asana, Pranayama and Meditation practices. It starts from the beginning level with sukshma vyayama “subtle exercise” that removes blockages that prevent the free flow of energy in the body and mind. These exercises open the joints, relax muscles, improve hip flexibility, increase core strength and vitality, and develop awareness so that one can move into more advanced practices with better alignment and attention to finer details. Once the body and mind are properly prepared, carefully and systematically we begin to introduce classical asana, culminating in learning how to safely practice Surya Namaskar in a way that is conducive to your unique body and mental constitution.

Children’s Yoga Program : “Radiant Child”

The body is made to do yoga. Yoga postures and angles create certain pressures to stimulate the body and brain, making the necessary changes to become a healthy, happy and whole person!

Yoga can be very helpful for children, increasing their self awareness, building their self esteem, and strengthening their bodies. This yoga is dynamic, bursting with imaginary animals and stories that capture the children’s delight as they become healthy and relaxed. Yoga for children is creative movement with the ingredients of yoga – breath awareness, mind-body fitness, and the opportunity to experience the “self within.”

Special Meditation Program

One hour class will start with twenty minutes of Raja Yoga Meditation and Vedic Chanting using the Himalayan Singing Bowl. The purpose of meditation is to hold the body perfectly still and relaxed. The intensity of concentration in meditation is much more important than the length of time one sits. After mastering the art of abdominal breathing in the early sessions, we will slowly move on to Pranayama in the advanced sessions.

For registration write to us : ezine@chicagivedanta.org

Health for Whole Family

Teachers for Upcoming Weekend Classes @ the Vivekananda Vedanta Society of Chicago

Kalyani (Amy Eley) has been practicing yoga and meditation since 1996 and has been teaching yoga classes, workshops and private lessons since 2002. Over the years, she has trained in many different styles of yoga and has taught hundreds of students of all ages, backgrounds and fitness levels, ranging from very beginners to yoga instructors.

1996-2002 studied Meditation and Yoga Philosophy with Ma Vandana

2002 Kundalini Yoga Teacher Training Certification at Spirit Rising Yoga Center in Chicago IL (200 hr level)

2006 Kali Natha Yoga Teacher Training Certification at the Kashi School of Yoga in Sebastian FL (200 hr level)

2014 began her formal training in the system of Satyananda Yoga (Bihar School of Yoga) at the Yoga Academy of North America where she is currently working towards her 500 hr Yoga Teacher Training Certification.



Swagata Saha is a life-long yoga enthusiast who loves to share her knowledge and passion for yoga with everyone is a certified Yoga Teacher (RYT-200). She received her training in yoga in Kolkata, India and in San Francisco, California. She is proficient in Hatha Yoga, Viniyasa Yoga, Ageless Yoga, Anusara Yoga, Prenatal Yoga, and Therapeutic Yoga. Her yoga classes also incorporate instruction in pranayama, Raja Yoga meditation, and Vedic chanting. She is also an independent practitioner of Vedic astrology.

Gauri Jaya has enjoyed teaching yoga classes to children and adults alike since 2006. She has a very compassionate, patient and light hearted nature that is adored by all her students.

1978 Introduced to yoga and took various yoga classes while working as an RN and raising her family

2006 Kundalini Yoga Teacher Training Certification at Spirit Rising Yoga Center in Chicago IL (200hr level)

2006 “Radiant Child” Children’s Yoga Teacher Training Certification **2009** Level 2 Kundalini Yoga Conscious Communication at Spirit Rising Yoga Center in Chicago

2013 Kali Natha Yoga Teacher Training and Certification at the Kashi School of Yoga in Sebastian FL (200 hour).

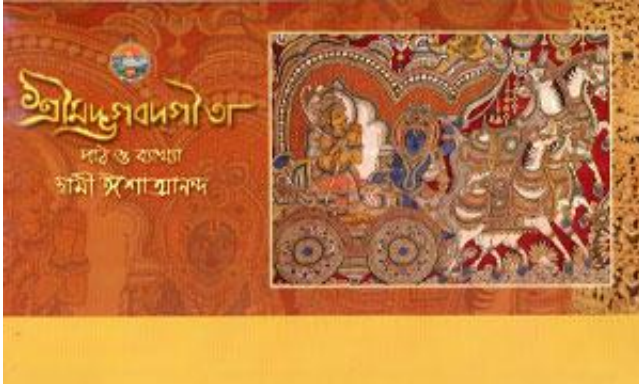


Vivekananda Vedanta Society: Book Store

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(Order can be placed online : <http://www.vedantabooks.com/>)

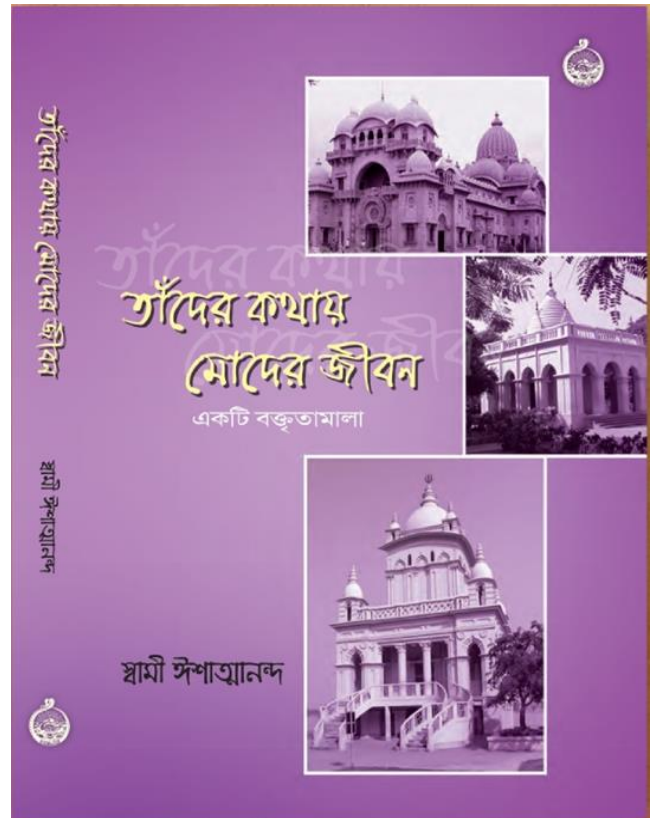
Eternal Literature : The Vedas, Bhagvat Gita, Bhagavatam, Brahma Sutra, Upanishads in original Sanskrit with English translations. The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna, Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda, Vedanta scriptures, Sanskrit texts.

New Arrival!! Bengali DVDs!!



A Very helpful book to learn Gita

Complete Bhagvat Gita, 700 verses, recited and explained in lucid Bengali with profusely quoting from Sri Ramakrishna, Ma Sarada and Swami Vivekananda to explain the intricate philosophy by Swami Ishatmananda. Collection of 14 DVDs. \$50.



A lecture Series by Swami Ishatmananda

“Tader Kathay Moder Jiban” – Collection of 45 important spiritual discourses in one DVD published by Advaita Ashrama, Kolkata, India. \$10.

Books for Children: Moral values taught through stories from *puranas* and lives of great souls in comics.

Documentaries, various DVDs, and spiritual mementos are also available.