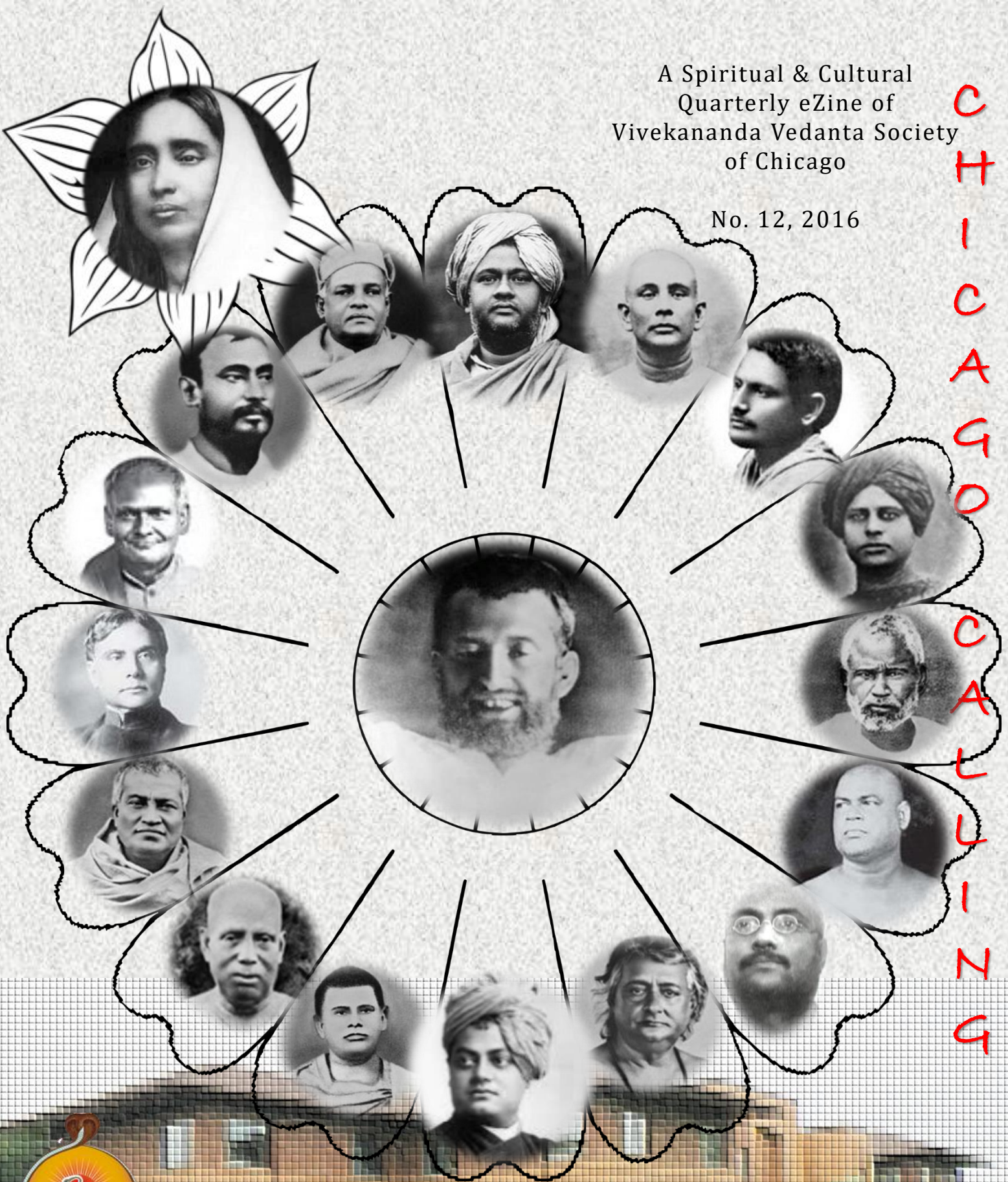


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# EDITORIAL

## THE SUN AND ITS RAYS

This editorial is not about the sun and its rays, but it only uses this phenomenon as an example—the sun and its rays are inseparable. No one can separate the sun from its rays or vice-versa.

Similarly, incarnations and their apostles are inseparable. From time to time, God, the creator of the universe, assumes human form to help humanity to develop high moral values so that they can go back to Him, the Source.

In this divine work God takes the help of some very spiritually advanced souls, chosen by Him. They are known as apostles or direct disciples. These disciples are like the rays of the sun. Just as through the sun's rays we understand the sun, similarly, through the exalted lives of the apostles we understand the *Avatara* or Incarnation.

In a very important scripture of Vedanta, the Bhagavad Gita, we find the Lord, Himself, promising,

Whenever there is a decline of *dharma* or righteousness and a rise of *adharma* or unrighteousness, I manifest Myself.

Again, a famous book of Tantra, the Sri Sri Chandi, also mentions in the same way,

Whenever troubles arise due to the advent of the Danavas, unrighteous persons, I shall incarnate and destroy the foes.

God comes and human history has its proof. At different times, in different places, God came to earth, assuming different names and forms. In recent times, in India, God came in the form of Sri Ramakrishna.

A very humble person by nature and shy to talk about himself, Sri Ramakrishna at the end of his life in 1886 once revealed his divine identity to one of his disciples to remove his doubts. In an unflinching voice, Sri Ramakrishna declared, "O Naren, He who was Rama and He who was Krishna is now Ramakrishna in this body."

The young man whom Sri Ramakrishna addressed as Naren became the world famous Sannyasin, Swami Vivekananda. Headed by Swami Vivekananda, another 15 sannyasins, direct

disciples of Sri Ramakrishna, formed a halo around Sri Ramakrishna.

"Sri Ramakrishna, who for most of his life remained absorbed in samadhi, the acme of spiritual experience, out of compassion descended to the relative plane of human existence to alleviate human suffering.

His condensed spirituality, as it were, melted and flowed through his disciples who later carried his life-giving message to the world." (God Lived With Them, page 7)



Sangha Janani Sarada Devi is considered as the first and foremost disciple of Sri Ramakrishna. As Sister Nivedita declared, Holy Mother was Sri Ramakrishna's last word on the ideal of Indian womanhood.

In 1853 Sarada Devi was born on 22<sup>nd</sup> of December. This year we will observe her special worship on the 18<sup>th</sup> of December. About three months later, Sri Ramakrishna's Birthday will be observed. We will celebrate that too in a befitting manner on the 26<sup>th</sup> of February, 2017. In between many of Sri Ramakrishna's monastic disciples' birthdays are coming: Swamis Premananda, Shivananda, Saradananda, Turiyananada, Vivekananda, Brahmananda, Trigunatitananda, and Adbhutananda. This eZine issue is dedicated to all the direct monastic disciples of Sri Ramakrishna, referring to whom Swami Vivekananda said, "Do you think these *sannyasi* children of Sri Ramakrishna are born to simply to sit under trees lighting *dhuni-fires*? Whenever any of them will take up some work, people will be astonished to see their energy. Learn from them how to work."



## FOR ONE'S OWN LIBERATION AND THE WELFARE OF THE WORLD **SWAMI SUHITANANDA**

General Secretary, Ramakrishna Math and Mission  
This lecture was delivered on Nov. 10<sup>th</sup>, 2013 at  
“Chicago Calling”.

Revered Chetananandaji Maharaj, other respected monks, nuns, devotees and admirers! I have sincerely been overwhelmed to see the meticulous planning of this program — the items for deliberation and the occasional breaks with some music or other cultural entertainments. All things have had a special luster. Simultaneously, I am sincerely overwhelmed by how tirelessly the volunteers have been dedicating their service. And, that has made me a little bit thoughtful. Thoughtful in the sense of how can this enthusiasm which has been generated—the contribution of so many living souls for the common cause of Swami Vivekananda—can be sustained afterwards. That is my concern! So I was telling Ishatmanandaji Maharaj that this is a great challenge for you—to see that this enthusiasm should not die out. This should be kept aloft, but how can it be done? I do not know. You people should come forward and help Swami Ishatmananda to keep this inspiration alive.

We have had four days of deliberations, and it has been beautiful. The deliberations here were “*vaada pradvatam aham*”. When there is a purpose to the debate, it is called *vaada*.

Otherwise, it becomes just a battle in which I stick to my point, and you stick to your point. But here every speaker was trying to reach out to the other so that both can come and meet together. It was a beautiful thing.

Swamiji has mentioned that through religion the world has been drenched with blood so many times. But, again, without religion no higher thoughts can come. Swamiji has said that science informs but religion reforms. Science gives us so much information. It gives us a big library, but nothing more than that. Science does not reform our lifestyle; it does not change our *samskaras*, instincts, intuitions, habits or approach to life, but religion does. Religion has that capacity! How? Because through religion we create higher thoughts, and when we put our entire energy into those thoughts, we slowly evolve. This is the purpose of religion.

Generally, we find different types of people in society. The first type are called *jijiveshu* in Sanskrit. *Jijiveshu* means those who only want to survive somehow. There is no ambition in them. The second group is *bubhukshu*. They want to enjoy life. The third stage is the *Chikitshu*. They want some sort of achievement or recognition in society. They want to become a Member of Parliament, Member of Legislative Assembly, Magistrate, or Vice Chancellor—something like that. They are *chikitshu*. The fourth stage is *jijnasu*. *Jijnasu* means that he wants to know the secret of creation. Scientists, poets, and philosophers become *Jijnasu*.

They want to know the underlying principle by which the entire creation is moving. And, the last stage is the stage of *mumukshu*. That means that they want to be in touch with God. They like to be in the proximity of God, and that is the reason why these people occasionally withdraw from the social humdrum. They want to retire to some silent corner and try to meditate or think in solitude or walk in the park. That is the stage of *mumukshu*. So, people move forward from one stage to another with the help of religion. All things are possible through religion. Through religion man progresses from the lower self to the higher Self. He is emerging gradually and gradually and gradually. Through this process human civilization is moving forward and forward and forward.

Should there be only one religion or should there be many religions? Should all be Christians or Hindus or Muslims? NO! Swamiji has given a beautiful statement, "I would like that each and every person should have their own religion." Each one should have their own religion, so broad was Swamiji's thought. Why? Because in that case toleration will automatically come. If we permit everyone to have their own religion, there cannot be any conflict or strife or anything of that sort.

Now, what sort of religion should this be? With the fall of Marxism, capitalism has become the accepted norm. But, the capitalism of 50 or 20 years ago won't work in the present world. It has to take into account not only the monetary factor, not only the profit and loss, not only the bank accounts, but it also has to take into account other more subtle factors. It has to take into account the human mind, the psychology of society; because if anyone wants to thrive in business or the international market, they will have to have some consideration for their employees. They must be employee friendly. A company, which only exploits its employees, cannot survive. They must also have friendly relations with other countries where their commodities can be sold. So, everyone is thinking that they need to maintain some sort of amity with

society, otherwise their things will not be sold. China is going to South Africa. Why? China is coming to America. Why? Because they have so much production that they need good markets. So, the international aspect has become more prominent, and they are trying to become friendly. If so much internationalism is required in the material world, then it is even more necessary in the subtle realm where the mind works, where the intellect works, where psychological factors work

So, our religion, the new religion, will have to have an international approach. If you look into any religion, you will find that they contain three basic things: truthfulness, self-control, and feeling for others. Since morning we have been hearing so many talks, and we could see that everyone was talking more or less in the same line. Nobody was saying that his religion refutes truthfulness, his religion refutes self-control or feeling for others.

There are three factors in achieving truthfulness, self-control, and fellow feeling. One factor is *Samskara*. *Samskara* means our inherent instincts. The second factor is our surroundings. The third factor is will power. Instinct, environment and will power; these three things are required. These factors can be applied in any country; maybe Asia, maybe Africa, anywhere in the world. Swamiji wanted to introduce this type of religion for the present day world.

Irina Bokova, the Director-General of UNESCO, has spoken of one world, and that world starts in the minds of men. That means that the state of the world starts in the minds of men. So, if we want to create some sort of peace in the world, what shall we have to do? We shall have to feed the mind some good thoughts, some thoughts of amity. Without that nothing is possible.

Robert Wright was an atheist, but he was a good man. He wondered why people of different religions were shedding blood, and breaking temples and mosques and churches, and all these things. Why? Was there no way out?

So, he proceeded academically, and he searched and searched and searched, and ultimately one phrase came to his mind, “*ekam sad vipraa bahudhaa vadanti.*” He said that was the solution. He said that in the present-day world people need to rethink their religion. What sort of religion was needed? He did not mean that they should go back to their old culture, old tradition and old system. People would have to think in some larger perspective. What is that larger perspective? Probably it is the Indian perspective. Then only all religions will flourish; they will survive. Now every religion is beginning to think that toleration and acceptance are necessary. We shall have to accept each other; we shall have to share the same dais; otherwise we cannot survive.

This morning we came to know that there is a common point where we can easily come together. What is that? Service. And this is the formula Swami Vivekananda introduced here, which is also my topic (Sanskrit) “for one’s own Liberation and the Welfare of the World”. This is the formula; this is the solution for the present day, and that formula is not the exclusive property of the Hindus or the *Vedantins*; it is the property of everyone. This is the thing which everyone can practice. What it means is the Nara-Narayana concept. I heard this word from Revco, the Russian Orientalist who was the director of Moscow University, during a talk he gave at our Institute of Culture. There he referred to *Nara-Narayana*. Probably the world has not matured enough to understand the depth of meaning of these two words. It may take the world 200 or 300 years to know the actual sense of these two words. It is a beautiful concept. *Nara-Narayana* means I shall have to serve people as manifestations of God. My Jesus, my Mohammed, my Sri Krishna, my Sri Ramakrishna is residing in everybody. So, if I serve them not out of compassion, not out of grace, but as a worship, I will surely be benefitted. How? Generally, we have heard, especially in our Vedic religion, that these two things (Sanskrit) *Pravritti* and *Nivritti*,

(Sanskrit) *Abhyudaya* and *Nishreyasa* — worldliness and God—cannot go together. But here is a formula, which gives a common base for these two. How? The man who is serving, what is he doing? If I am to serve you, I shall have to give up and sacrifice some of my self-interest; either I shall have to serve you through money or my labor or in some other form. So, in that case I shall have to sacrifice a little bit of my ego, a little bit of my own comforts, and I shall have to see that you grow, you develop. So, somebody is in want of food, somebody is in need of education, somebody is in need of mental strength, somebody is in need of intellectual power, somebody is in need of spiritual satisfaction. So, we can serve another person in that perspective. A policeman can serve a person in the spirit of “I am serving God”. So, this was Swamiji’s concept of practical Vedanta—this *Nara-Narayana*. This should be applied religion; it should not be just for the monks or for the shrines; it should have its practical day-to-day application. And in that way a new dimension has come, and we think that if this is practiced in the society, then slowly all the religions will take it up. To some extent they have been compelled to nowadays because of government regulations. Religions are being forced to take up some sort of service projects; if they do not, the government won’t allow them to amass wealth. Whether they like it or not, they will have to serve the society.

Here in Chicago, the director of the Art Institute of Chicago has said, “Chicago is a sister city of New Delhi; there are so many similarities and so much scope for collaboration between the two that one would not know where to begin.” So, in this way we are finding how the two countries are coming together for one common cause; that is the cause of Swami Vivekananda. And why Swami Vivekananda; in the preamble to the American Constitution it has mentioned that the purpose is “to expand those purposes to universal guidelines for the dignity and opportunity of men everywhere in the one world we inherit today.”





So, that has been the concept, and with this concept Swamiji came, and Swamiji preached that religion. Swami Chetananandaji or somebody mentioned Swamiji's famous utterance, "As Buddha has a message to the East, I have a message to the West", so certainly he came with a message. If we go through his life and the few years he spent in America, we are surprised that that man sacrificed his everything, almost his last drop of blood, only for the cause of this American society.

He did it because America loved him. He said, "They loved me; I also loved them: to see their love, to get their love, to get their affection, I must reciprocate it as much as I can." Once he said, "I am careening all over the country. Wherever the seed of this power will fall, there it will fructify, be it today or in a hundred years." So, Swamiji knew that in a hundred years, because he was moving from home to home, he was moving from place to place, and he had the mission of spreading the message of godliness amongst this people that those gems would not die. The spiritual power he released is bound to fructify. So, here after one hundred fifty years, we are seeing how many people have been inspired in the name of Swami Vivekananda. Yesterday I mentioned that not only in America, not only in India, but in many

countries Swami Vivekananda is being celebrated. The government of India has declared that Swamiji's 150th Birth Anniversary is a time of rejuvenation. Manmohan Singh, the Former Prime Minister of India, has mentioned that Swamiji was the tallest figure of the age and that he was the turning point in the history of India. The Honorable President of India, Sri Pranab Mukherjee has mentioned that there was not a single man who was not inspired by Swami Vivekananda during his age. So, that sort of personality Swami Vivekananda was. Sometimes Swamiji used to become prophetic. At times he used to forget that he was a man, that he had taken a human body, and he used to go into the transcendental region. In one of his letters he has mentioned, "you know that I have a project and mother is bound to help me. If mother does not, in that case, I shall set her aside and move forward." So, that is Swami Vivekananda. In one place Swami Vivekananda is writing about himself, when he was in this prophetic mood, and with that word I will finish my talk. He said, "Well, what I am is written on my brow. If you can read it, you are blessed. If you cannot, the loss is yours, not mine."

Thank you!

## TO SEE POTENTIAL DIVINITY IN EACH SOUL

Once there was a severe flood in a place called Kamarpukur, West Bengal. Sri Ramakrishna and Hriday were wading through knee-deep water. Many people were busy fishing. ... A Maagoor variety of fish surrendered at the feet of Sri Ramakrishna. The fish kept moving around the feet of Sri Ramakrishna as if it was praying, "Oh Lord, I had come out of home and you are my only asylum."

Was it just a fish or a devotee in the garb of the fish that made Sri Ramakrishna take notice of it?

Sri Ramakrishna immediately took the fish in his hand and left it in the pool of water. Henceforth there was no danger to it.

When Sri Ramakrishna narrated the incident to Hriday, he was highly disappointed and asked him, "Uncle, why did you leave the fish?"

"Hriday, how can I give that fish to you, when it has surrendered to me? Don't you think it was my duty to safeguard the fish?" Sri Ramakrishna replied.



Story and painting adapted from:  
*Speaking Flute* by Swami Vimurtananda

### A Story from the Matsya Purana : The fish that saved the creation

The central characters of this story are the fish (Matsya) and Vaivasvata Manu or Satyavrata.

Water was brought to Manu for his ablutions and while he was washing and taking bath, he caught a small fish in his hands. The tiny fish appealed to Manu to protect him and in return promised to rescue Manu from an impending flood. Manu kept the fish in a jar and thereafter dug a pit and transferred him there when it was grown big. Later he transferred the large fish into the ocean. The fish informed Manu about the time when the great deluge will occur and asked Manu to build a ship for the flood to save himself and call him when the ship was ready. Manu followed the instruction of the fish. On the predicted day, the devastating floods came and Manu entered the ship he built, as the waters rose. The fish then swam to the ship and Manu tied the rope of the ship to his horn. The fish took it to safety to the high grounds of the Himalayas. The ship was then tied to a tree and the fish instructs Manu to get off the ship and slowly descend the mountain as the water retreats. After the water subsided, he took upon the task of creating the new human race.

Some authors consider the tale not a flood myth, but symbolic in nature. Matsya is believed to symbolize the first stage of evolution, as aquatic life was the first beings on earth. Manu's boat is representative of moksha (salvation), which helps one to cross over. Himalayas is treated as a boundary between the earthly existence and land of salvation beyond. God as the fish guides one to salvation. The horn of the fish is symbolic of "sacrificial values".



The Master said that one day... he was resting in his room after his midday meal. Some ladies, came to see him, sat near him and became engaged in spiritual conversation with him. The Master suddenly happened to be in ecstasy and felt that he was a fish joyfully swimming and sporting, sometimes coming to the surface, and sometimes sinking deep – all in the ocean of Existence-Knowledge-Bliss. The Master happened to be in ecstasy very often while talking with others. Therefore, not at all mindful of it, the ladies expressed their own opinions, which created a sort of noise. One of the company forbade the others ... She said, "he has now become a fish and is swimming in the sea of Existence-Knowledge-Bliss. If you make noise the Bliss of his will be interrupted". ... When he came down from that state and was asked about his experience, the Master said, "Yes, what she said is true. How strange! How could she know it?"

*The Great Master* by Swami Saradananda (Translation by Swami Jagadananda)



# HAD THERE BEEN ANOTHER VIVEKANANDA (PART II)

**SWAMI ISHATMANANDA**, Swami-in-Charge, Vivekananda Vedanta Society of Chicago

## *Swami Vivekananda's contribution at national level: awakening and freedom*

With the help of his immense power, Lord Sri Krishna lifted the Govardhan hill and proved that God resided in a Human Body. Like that, Vivekananda presented India to the entire world single handedly. India had been shattered by various foreign rulers, and the people had lost their confidence and power of judgment by being in slavery for thousands of years. India was fragmented into different parts by different barriers like language, religion and culture and the self-centered missionaries presented a dark picture of India to the world. But with the Midas touch of Swami Vivekananda, India got a new life! A 30 year old Monk gifted a new India to the world! With his strong determination and inner power, he overcame all the obstacles of poverty. He proved the existence of the omnipresent God. The Indians woke up from their thousand years of deep sleep and with strong conviction chanted with Swamiji "The ignorant Indian, the poor and destitute Indian, the Brahmin Indian, the Pariah Indian, is my brother...". It was not possible for an ordinary person to unite millions and millions of diversified people in such an adverse situation!

Vivekananda appealed to the country that Indians should worship the motherland for at least the next 50 years before worshipping any other Gods and Goddesses. He could feel the heartbeat of his motherland everywhere! he said "Your lives are dedicated to your motherland. You are not here for material happiness." This brought a sudden but long lasting change in the mind of Indians. Indian people did not feel scared any more to face the torturous policemen. They feared nothing! Without any weapon they fought the British rulers

head-on and accepted death with smiling faces.

Many Indian national leaders, freedom fighters and scholars have mentioned Swamiji's contribution.

- "Vivekananda gave us fortitude in suffering, he gave us hope in distress, he gave us courage in despair" Dr. Sarvapalli Radhakrishnan
- "How shall I express in words my indebtedness to Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda? It is under their sacred influence that my life got first awakened" - Subhas Chandra Bose
- "I have come here (Belur Math) to pay my homage and respect to the revered memory of Swami Vivekananda, whose birthday is being celebrated here today. I have gone through his works very thoroughly, and after having gone through them, the love that I had for my country became a thousand-fold" Mahatma Gandhi
- "Swami Vivekananda saved Hinduism and saved India. But for him we would have lost our religion and would not have gained our freedom. We, therefore, owe everything to Swami Vivekananda. May his faith, his courage and his wisdom ever inspire us so that we may keep safe the treasure we have received from him" Chakravarti Rajagopalachari
- "Addressing one and all in the nation, he said: In every one of you there is Brahman; the God in the poor desires you to serve Him. This message has roused the heart of the youths in a most pervasive way." Rabindranath Tagore.

Swamiji's contribution at the national level is deep and vast. He taught us to love the holy dust of India. He urged us not to think as just *Bengalis*, *Marathis*, *Panjabis* or *Gujaratis*, but to feel proud as Indians. Being Indian was the first and foremost identity.

Swami Vivekananda's success in America and Europe made all the Indians proud. People from all the corners of India - from east, west south and north – could associate with Him! He broke all barriers of language, caste and region. He was the first person who taught us to love our motherland!

Our religious beliefs were killed by the British rulers. In the name of education and modernization, they spread the propaganda that our very ancient Veda and Vedanta were meaningless. Our ancient saints were mad and our forefathers were illiterate, fool and superstitious. Our values and tradition were inferior. All this propaganda worked well because we Indians were very simple minded. We started believing in British ideologies and converted our religions and languages very fast. Some people, like Reverend Krishna Mohan Banerjee, not only changed their own religion, but were very active to convert others. Some people tried to change our ancient religion by refusing to worship the idol form of God. On the other hand, a few so called Hindu religious preachers dragged us into the dark by imposing *casteism*, child marriage, the practice of Sati, polygamy etc. on the society to achieve their own selfish motives.

Swami Vivekananda took charge and reestablished our own values and religion, removing all the barriers of superstition, darkness and misleading thoughts. This was like changing the course of the river Ganga and dropping her at her very source, Himalaya. There is an interesting story which would reflect our social environment very well. Even Gurudas Banerjee, highly respected judge of the Calcutta High Court, refused to chair a function to pay homage to the great soul Vivekananda just because Swamiji crossed the sea to travel to the West. After returning from the West, when Swamiji visited Dakshineswar, the place most close to his heart, the place was cleaned with special care. He was not even allowed to enter the temple for the second time. These incidents sound incredible to us now!

But all these stories prove what an immense contribution Vivekananda made to wake us up from our deep and long sleep in dark superstition. He wanted us to be free from all barriers and envisioned an independent nation – socially, politically and financially. He motivated the freedom fighters. Jamshedji Tata, one of the pillars of Indian economy, was deeply inspired by Swamiji. The social reformers learnt that change could come only through positive thinking and constructive work, not through destruction of our own values.

Just think about the scene! The British soldiers were heading towards Murshidabad to fight an Indian king. The king had absolutely no support from his fellows! Why? India was fragmented by language, caste, religion and culture. There was no unity in diversity and the feeling of nationalism was absent in India. And this inharmony was aggravated by 200 hundred years of British rule. It was not possible for any ordinary person to wake the entire nation up from its deep and long sleep. Only a gifted person like Vivekananda could understand this great soul Vivekananda!

### *Swami Vivekananda's contribution at the social level: new horizon and idea*

Swamiji said "It is a culture that withstood shock." Our history proves how the British rulers killed our rich culture and heritage. They spread all the rumors and distorted facts. They claimed that all the great values and notions of our culture to India, like the Arya civilization or the Veda, had originated from the West. They claimed that the Aryas landed in India by crossing the Alps from Europe. Swamiji opposed strongly and said "Our [European] archaeologist dreams of India being full of dark-eyed aborigines, and the bright Aryans came from, the Lord knows where. According to some, they came from Central Tibet, others will have it that they came from Central Asia. There are patriotic Englishmen who think that the Aryans were all red-haired..."

If the writer happens to be a black-haired man, the Aryans were all black-haired. Of late, there was an attempt to prove that the Aryans lived on the Swiss lakes.... Some say now that they lived at the North Pole. Lord bless the Aryans and their habitations! As for the truth of these theories, there is not one word in our scriptures, not one, to prove that the Aryan came from anywhere outside India, and in ancient India was included Afghanistan. There it ends. And the theory that the Shudra caste were all non-Aryans ..... is equally illogical and equally irrational..... The whole of India is Aryan, nothing else..... And the more you go on fighting and quarrelling about all trivialities such as 'Dravidian' and 'Aryan,' and the question of Brahmins and non-Brahmins and all that, the further you are from that accumulation of energy and power which is going to make the future India." [CW3:Lectures from Colombo to Almora]. He proclaimed like a historian that "Arya" indicates a civilization, not just a mere race. He inspired us not to get influenced by others and to understand the society with our own judgment and conviction. He motivated us to capture our own history. Why? Because the British ruler knew that they could not have survived and ruled Indians for long if they had a great culture and values. So they tried by all means to kill our rich heritage and make us forget our own rich culture. They were successful through constant efforts for so many years. Realizing the remedy Vivekananda gave a call to the Indian to wake up.

Future (of a nation) remain enshrined in the past. Therefore, look at the past and learn from it. Then Move forward and make India more glories than in the past.

First and foremost we must understand that our ancestors were great rishis, their blood is flowing in our veins, then we have to put our heart and soul to develop India more glorious than in the past.

Vivekananda's holy and powerful words acted as a wake-up call for the Indians from all the dark

ignorance, frustration and despair. He brought life to our literature, language, drama, music, art, science, philosophy and religion. He brought harmony to the segregated Indian society, taught us to view the world with a new vision and helped us achieve our goals. Is that possible for any ordinary person? We need another Vivekananda to evaluate Vivekananda's contribution!

### *Swami Vivekananda's contribution at personal level:*

#### *self-confidence and fearlessness*

Vivekananda motivated us to work hard giving up all laziness. He said "The cow never tells a lie, the stone never steals but the cow remains a cow, the stone remains a stone. Man steals and man tells a lie, and again it is man that becomes God" [CW5: The East and the West]. Vivekananda said "You are the maker of your own destiny".

"Why will you not try to achieve your goal? Do not be afraid of failures, reach the peak of knowledge through numerous failures." He asked us to follow the life path of Nachiketa and become as confident as him. He urged us to say "yes, I can, I can, I surely can do it". He showed us a new path saying "He is an atheist who does not believe in himself. The old religions said that he was an atheist who did not believe in God. The new religion says that he is an atheist who does not believe in himself." The Brahmana, Kshatriya, Vaishya and Shudra are not defined by birth, but by their work. He lifted us to a higher self from all negative emotions like envy, depression, insecurity and hesitance. A society is developed with the individuals. So, he put all his efforts to build true human beings. He urged us to pray to God to make us a good human being. He ordered his sanyasis and disciples to build schools and spread true education across the country. He drove the young blood out of the dark – from all jealousy, fear and frustration – and said "Oh, my dear... the courageous youth of the country... wake up and start working."



He reminded us that we need 3 things to be successful in life.

- 1) Deep faith in the power of sainthood and honesty
- 2) Absence of jealousy and doubts
- 3) Intention to help good people and support good work.

*Swami Vivekananda's contribution to humanity :  
A wonderful monastic organization*

It is very common that great souls come to this earth and shake up humanity with reformed thoughts and values. But in the absence of any competent successors, those values fade away or get distorted over time. But it did not happen for Swamiji. He was a visionary. To have an everlasting effect on the society and to save human beings from distress and dark, he formed an extraordinary institution: Ramakrishna Math and Mission. The principle of this congregation was "fast and perfect" work and their inspiration was "purity and love".

This association was formed by the sanyasis who left their home and personal belongings for service towards humanity. Their main goal in life was to realize God. They are independent and pure souls. We had a long tradition of sanyasis leaving home and personal belongings to live with the Gurus to learn devotional practice. After completing their lesson, they used to concentrate on meditation in the Guru's house or in a quiet cave near the jungle.

Vivekananda brought a change to this tradition. He realized that it was very important to be part of society in order to bring change in the society. He motivated his disciples to serve the people in the name of God. Swamiji faced so many hurdles to achieve his goals! He faced hindrances from conservative sanyasis, householders devotees of Sri Sri Thakur and even from his Brothers disciples! The task of 'Service to neediest' by the monks and recluses was as difficult as bringing 'Ganga' from

the Himalayas to the plain of Bengal by Bhagiratha, the legendary personality of the Purana.

Another uniqueness of his religious path was a blend of Sanyasis and householders – two opposite groups coming together to realize the same Truth of life through unselfish service. Vivekananda eradicated the veil system for women. He motivated women to get education and become sannyasins for serving the people. Ramakrishna Sarada Mission and Sarada Sangha were formed as independent bodies for sannyasins. With the touch of this holy spirit, there was a transformation within individuals and hence the society.

Ramakrishna Mission is not just a body of good people, but the combination of the highest spiritual thoughts. Knowledge, Devotion, Yoga, self-less service – these are the four pillars of this institution. Vedanta taught us how "one" becomes "many" and Vivekananda taught us how to achieve that very "oneness" through worshipping many Gods and Goddesses. Vivekananda's "one", embraced all the divergences and diversities. Romain Rolland said "Balance and coordination – these two words define Vivekananda's organizational power...He was the epitome of inner strength". Without any financial support from any king, government or businessmen, this reputed organization extended branches throughout the world within a span of 100 years. Swami Vivekananda's active life was only for 10 years – from age 29 to age 39. Only another Vivekananda can evaluate the work of Vivekananda – the kind of revolution he brought into the human society and soul without any financial power or man power in such a short span of life. That might be the reason why Swamiji said of his own self on the very last day of his life "Had there been another Vivekananda...."!

[End]

## ARISE, AWAKE, AND STOP NOT



**Shivani Gupta** was a young, independent girl – a graduate from the Institute of Hotel Management Delhi and working as a guest relations officer at a five star hotel. One night as she was dropping off a female friend, they met with a massive accident which inflicted a spinal cord injury rendering her quadriplegic.

“I had no idea what this disability meant, and was absolutely clueless how to deal with it..at 22, I had so many dreams...this situation had a disheartening sense of finality.” She lost her ideal job back at the hotel. “Corporates weren’t open to employing people with disability..I didn’t even know that I had the right to fight for it, that it was even possible. I accepted thinking there really was no alternative.”

But soon, Shivani started to channelize her need into a hobby. “I started painting. My hands were paralyzed, so by moving them in this light maneuvers, it proved to be therapeutic. Soon, I started selling my hand painted art. Wherever I would hear of exhibitions, *melas* and events, I would show up with my table and collection,” she said.

“I knew for a fact that I wasn’t the best painter – so I always had this dilemma. Were people purchasing my stuff because it was good, or merely because I was disabled? I couldn’t have lived with the answer if it was the latter, so even before I could find out, I decided to try my hand at something else.”

In 1996 she attended a rehabilitation centre in UK for two months – to explore the idea of accessibility. From that program she learnt that she was also entitled to some rights in spite of her physical condition. When she returned from the program, she was determined to spread the word of hope. The Indian spinal injury centre back then, was still skeletal and Shivani joined there as a counselor raising awareness and interacting with patients in similar situations.

She went for UNESCAP training program in Bangkok and returned to India and immediately laid the framework to spearhead a series of 5 workshops for NGOs and governmental representatives from all states of the country. She co-authored one of the first pieces of literature on the subject, but felt a dearth in her own knowledge as well. So she pursued a Masters in

Architecture Design and a post-graduate degree in MSc in Inclusive Environments from the UK. Under the name AccessAbility, she kicked off in 2006. “Our concentrated work on accessibility engaged in all kinds of things. Be it the private sector, hospitality, retail, people wanting to employ disable people, educational institutes – we gave them the entire plan of how they could make their infrastructure and practices disabled-friendly.”

But in 2009 Shivani met with another accident, and this one claimed the life of her husband her father-in-law. She wouldn’t have survived two such colossal calamities if she didn’t have a purpose to fulfill in the world. How she decided to heal, was by writing an autobiography: *No Looking Back*. “Writing about myself had me thinking deeply about so many things, and made me realize that all the answers I was looking for could be found in my own story. I learned to make my peace with things I couldn’t control when I wrote about them.”

She earned awards for never letting go of her spirit; such as the Shell Helen Keller Award awarded for her work in increasing employment opportunities for persons with disabilities, the Cavin Kare Ability Mastery Award for being a role model, the Snowdon Award for Disabled Students, and the Neerja Bhanot Award given yearly to a woman subjected to social injustice, who faces the situation with grit and determination. She is also the recipient of the National Award instituted by the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment. “The most special one to me, amongst these, is the Neerja Bhanot award. The entire organizing team, upon learning of my condition, arranged for ramps to be put up on their staircases so I could go up to the arena myself. Although the ramps turned out to be very steep, I was deeply moved. It was the thought that mattered.”

Not always Shivani meets people with such empathy and maturity. “In the Indian society, disability almost always invites sympathy and charity. Heck, once a woman gave me 25 paise – just because I was sitting outside a temple and was disabled, she thought I was a beggar! This stigmatization is unshakeable from our mindsets. No one understands that the disability is just one of our many characteristics...we have many abilities too.”

Far from being inept, this woman is iconic – in her optimism, her courage, her unshackled spirit, she is a stalwart for everyone who has had trouble seeing the light. “Be patient, take life as it comes, and always be thankful,” she concludes.

Adapted from :

<https://yourstory.com/2015/10/shivani-gupta/>

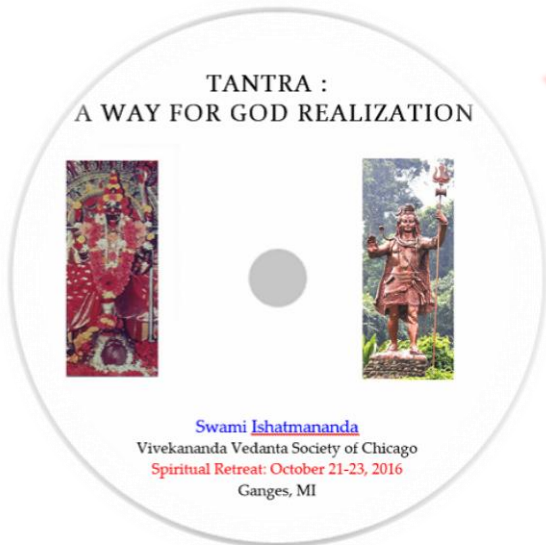
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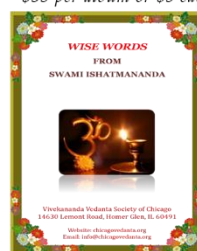
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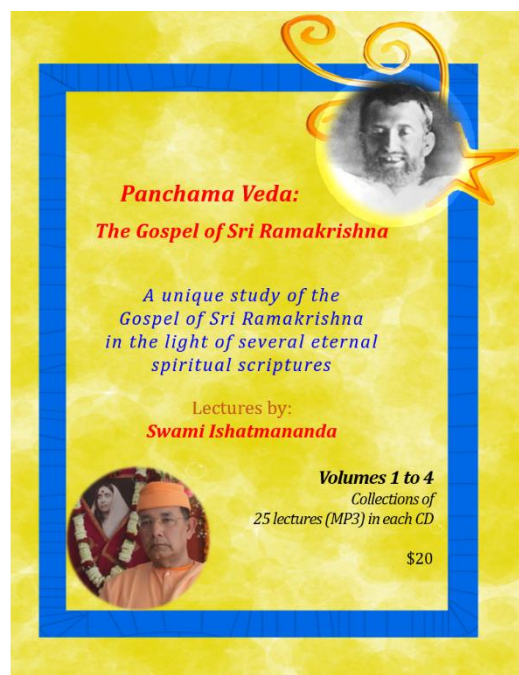
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