

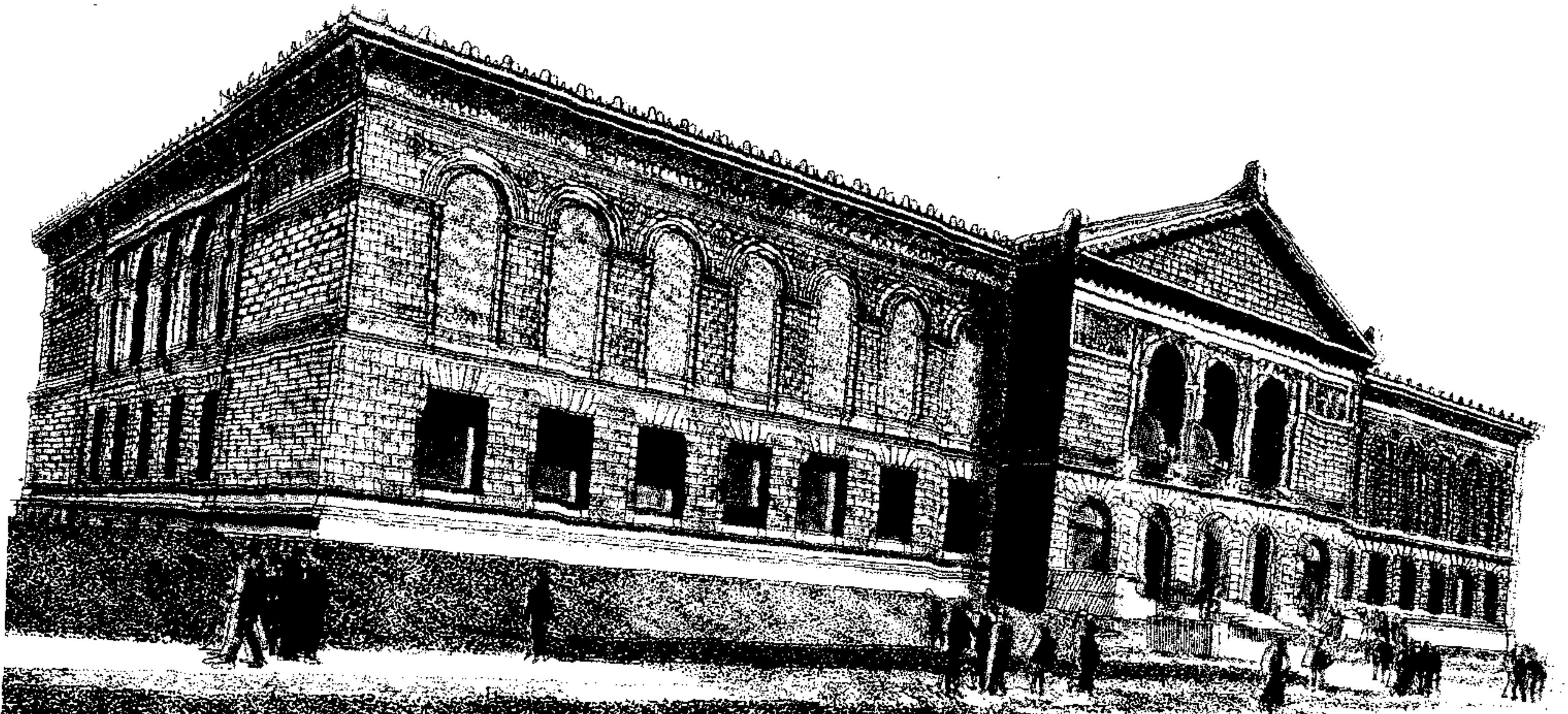
VOL 98 NOVEMBER 1993



ISSN 0032-6178

# Prabuddha Bharata

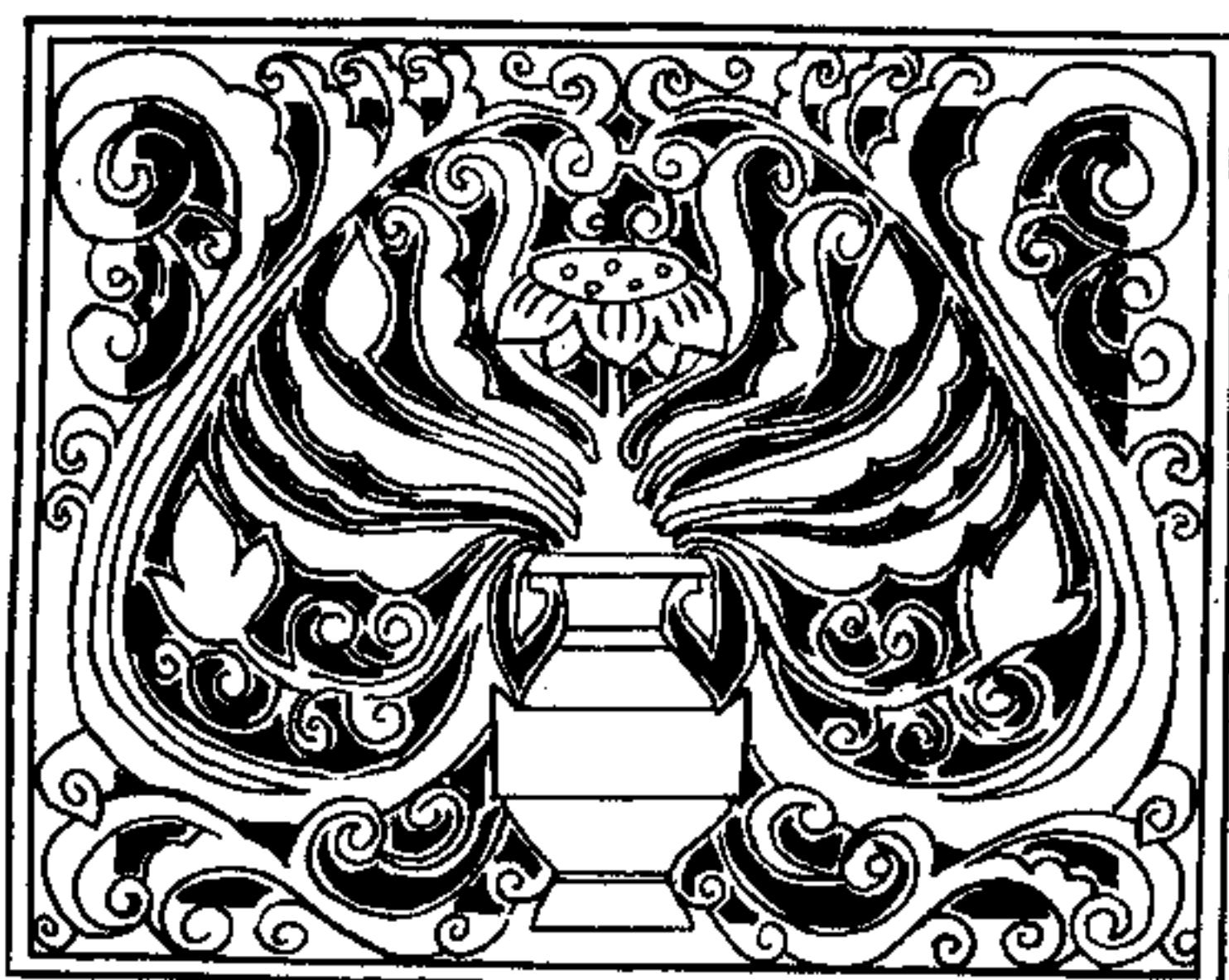
or Awakened India



*"Upon the banner of every religion will soon be written, in spite of resistance:  
'Help and not Fight,' 'Assimilation and not Destruction,'  
'Harmony and Peace and not Dissension.'"*

*Closing Address by Swami Vivekananda,  
Chicago Parliament of Religions, September 1893*





# PRABUDDHA BHARATA

A Monthly Journal of the  
Ramakrishna Order  
Started by Swami Vivekananda in 1896

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P.O. Mayavati, Via Lohaghat  
Dt. Pithoragarh 262 524, U.P.

Publication Office  
5 Dehi Entally Road  
Calcutta 700 014

Phone (91)(33)244 0898  
Fax (91)(33)245 0050



## Rates of Subscription (inclusive of postage)

	Annual	Life
	(30 Years)	
India	Rs. 30	Rs. 500
Sri Lanka & Bangladesh	Rs. 120	Rs. 2000
U.S.A. & Canada		
Surface Mail	\$ 20	\$ 300
Air Mail	\$ 35	\$ 600
Other Countries		
Surface Mail	£ 15	£ 225
Air Mail	£ 25	£ 375

Cover: The Art Institute of Chicago.

NOVEMBER 1993

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उत्तिष्ठत  
जाग्रत  
प्राप्य  
वरान्निबोधत



# PRABUDDHA BHARATA

**ARISE! AWAKE! AND STOP NOT TILL THE GOAL IS REACHED.**

Vol 98

NOVEMBER 1993

No. 11

## DIVINE WISDOM *Control of Thought is Liberation*

यथा निरिन्धनो वह्निः स्वयोनावुपशाम्यति।  
तथा वृत्तिक्षयच्चित्तं स्वयोनावुपशाम्यति॥

Even as fire without fuel becomes extinct in its own place, even so thought, by the cessation of activity becomes extinct in its own source.

चित्तमेव हि संसारम् तत् प्रयत्नेन शोधयेत्।  
यत् चित्तस्तन्मयो भवति गुह्यमेतत् सनातनम्॥

One's own thought, indeed, is samsāra; let a man cleanse it by effort. What a man thinks, that he becomes, this is the eternal mystery.

चित्तस्य हि प्रसादेन हन्ति कर्म शुभाशुभम्।  
प्रसन्नात्मात्मनि स्थित्वा सुखमव्ययम् अश्नुते॥

For by the serenity of one's thought, one destroys all actions, good or bad. Dwelling within the Self, with a serene self, he enjoys imperishable happiness.

मनो हि द्विविधं प्रोक्तं शुद्धं चाशुद्धमेव च।  
अशुद्धं कामसङ्कल्पं शुद्धं काम विवर्जितम्॥

The mind, it is said, is of two kinds, pure and impure—impure from contact with desire and pure when freed from desire.

लयविक्षेपरहितं मनः कृत्वा सुनिश्चलम्।  
यदा यात्यमनीभावं तदा तत्परमं पदम्॥

By freeing mind from sloth and distraction and making it motionless, he becomes delivered from his mind, then that is the supreme state.

मन एव मनुष्याणां कारणं बन्धमोक्षयोः॥  
बन्धाय विषयासक्तं मुक्त्यै निर्विषयं स्मृतमिति॥

Mind, in truth, is the cause of bondage and liberation for mankind; for bondage if it is bound to objects; freedom from objects—that is called liberation.

*Maitri Upaniṣad*



## Obstacles to Spiritual Practice

Spiritual awakening or the urge to break the shackles of slavery does not come easily. And much more difficult is the task of keeping the flame burning with personal efforts. That deep yearning does not touch the vast majority of people, who are ever busy with the concerns of the world. Therefore they feel that spiritual pursuit should be thought of only in old age, and not before. 'When worldly desires and ambitions are fulfilled, when one's family and social responsibilities are over, one should devote some time to contemplation and in the discussion of things religious.' Most people despise the idea of renunciation and look with suspicion on those few young people who think about it and talk about it. Belief in God and adherence to religious tradition are all right, but to renounce everything to find God or Truth is something baffling to people. What urgency is there, they ask, to go about it at a young age? In old age, they maintain, spiritual ideas come naturally, and that is the suitable period of life. In old age, when a person is worn out physically and mentally, can he undertake strenuous spiritual practices? Sri Ramakrishna describes the condition of the man of the world:

"The new-born calf looks lively, blithe and merry. It jumps and frisks all day long, stopping now and then to suck sweet milk from its mother. But no sooner is the rope tied about its neck than it begins to pine away and, far from being merry, wears a dejected and sorry look. So long as a boy has no concern with the affairs of the world, he is as merry and full of high hopes as the day is long. But as soon as he takes up the responsibilities of a man of family, he is weighed down by their burden and feels himself unfit

for the higher attainments of life." <sup>1</sup>

It is true that Hindu tradition has laid down four stages of life. The *Jābāla Upaniṣad* says:

"After completing the life of a student, let one become a householder; after completing the life of a householder, let one become a forest-dweller (lead a life of retirement and seclusion); after completing the life of the forest-dweller, let one renounce. Otherwise (if suitable occasion arises), let one renounce even from the state of a student, or from the state of a householder, or from that of a forest-dweller. . . . On whatever day he has the spirit of renunciation, that very day let him renounce." <sup>2</sup>

The ancient ṛṣis of the Vedas very wisely divided the ideal life into four successive periods. But they did not make compulsory the householder's life. Instead, it is said that when one is ready, let him renounce, even from the stage of *brahmacarya*. Emphasis is laid on the supreme ideal of life, i.e., spiritual realization. Whatever might be the stage of life, it must be guided by the light of *dharma*—(spirituality). Therefore the four values of life to be pursued are placed before man with much spiritual insight. They start first with *dharma*, then come: *artha* (wealth), *kāma* (fulfilment of rightful desires), and

1. *The Teachings of Sri Ramakrishna* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1975) page 157.

2. *Jābāla Upaniṣad*, verse 4.

*Brahmacaryam parisamāpya grhī bhavet,  
grhī bhūtvā vanī bhavet, vanī bhūtvā pravrajat.  
yadi vetarathā brahmacaryādeva pravrajat grhād  
vā vanād vā.  
...yad ahara eva virajet tad ahara eva pravrajat...*

lastly *mokṣa* (liberation). Life is not meant merely for sense enjoyments till one breathes his last. The Vedic seers did not ask man to shun the enjoyment. Enjoy all things, says *Īśa Upaniṣad*, by renouncing the idea of personal ownership of them. Because the world is not ours, it is God's. He pervades everything. Therefore do not covet what belongs to others.<sup>3</sup> Cultivation of non-attachment is the central principle of human life. That dispassionate attitude is developed and nourished by practising spiritual disciplines.

Purification of mind and heart from all desires, greed, and attachments is surely an uphill task. It requires vigour, the enthusiasm of youth and limitless perseverance. *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* (III. 14) therefore, rightly points out, "Like the sharp edge of a razor is that path, so the wise say, difficult to cross and hard to tread." Sri Rama-krishna stressed that young men and women of pure minds should be led early into the path of religion, before worldliness enters deeply into them. If people think that religion should be taken up seriously only at the end of life, they are mistaken. One must take up with right earnestness the spiritual practice at an early age. When the mind is steeped with worldliness one is unable to penetrate the thick veil of ignorance. In homes and educational institutions children should be imbued with the spiritual ideals and impressed with the sublimest goal of human life. *Yogavasiṣṭha*, an advaitic text advises, "O Rama, men should be religious in their temperament, even in their young age, because who knows when they will draw their last breath? Death may happen today,

or tomorrow or any day. " <sup>4</sup>

Practice of spiritual discipline is not smooth, it has its ups and downs, periods of calm and smooth sailing. Many, unaware of this, take up the practice spurred by initial fascination, and after facing some difficulties bid goodbye to it. And some feel satisfied with the intellectual stimulation only. The mystery of spiritual life is that the results are not immediately perceptible. In worldly life, on the contrary, in any field success is noticeable. Any person can through his effort earn a lot of wealth, gain knowledge, status or fame in society. Tangible outcomes are there. With the same crude ideas of success and failure if we enter into the realm of spirituality we surely are in for disappointment. The years of efforts and *sādhana* may not reveal externally any signs of success. It is like moving in an uncharted territory. Moreover, spirituality does not confer fame or wealth or elevated social status. It is a journey in silence, from recognition to anonymity.

In any field other than the spiritual, means and goals are clear cut. If one adheres to a certain means he will achieve his desired goal. If one follows specific steps he will reach his destination. Things are clear. Ideas and concepts are well-defined. There is little scope for doubt or ambiguity. Concepts and ideas do have specific roles in day-to-day life. They are part of our knowledge. They become not only useless but stumbling blocks in spiritual practice. Spiritual experiences transcend all conceptualizations and thoughts. The mind cannot lean on preconceived ideas. Stillness, quietness of the mind, and cessation of all mental activities are the prerequisites in spiritual endeavour. The mind has to stop all thoughts and

3. *Īśa Upaniṣad*, Verse 1

*Īśa vāsyamidam sarvam yatkiñca jagatyām jagat tena tyaktena bhuñjīthā mā grdhaḥ kasyasvid-dhanam.*

4. *Yuvaiva dharmaśīlaḥ syāt anityam khalu jīvitam kōhi jānāti kasyādyā mṛtyukāla bhaviṣyati.*



dissolve all concepts. We have strong habits, arising not only from our experiences in the present life, but due to the previous experiences of many lifetimes, wherein we learned to misidentify ourselves with our body and mind. Further, we identify ourselves with and feel responsibility for each thought and claim it as our own. Our minds are full of wrong ideas about ourselves. Strongest of them is to jump to the conclusion "I am my mind and these thoughts are mine." To deny all such ideas about ourselves and our little self-images is an arduous work. It requires relentless efforts and ceaseless watchfulness. Self-effort is necessary.

"Many are the worldly impressions," cautions Swami Brahmananda, a direct disciple of Sri Ramakrishna, "already accumulated in your mind, and many are the impressions created in this life also. As you struggle against them, they will seem to grow stronger, so he alone truly conquers them who never loses sight of the ideal and never gives up the struggle." <sup>5</sup>

The major hurdle is that the mind does not yield so easily to control, nor it allows its own extinction. It thrives on the support of concepts and thoughts. Mind is ego and ego is nothing but the 'I-concept.' The *antaryāmin*—the indwelling God, does not reveal Himself until the delusion of 'I-sense,' is totally destroyed. Of all the attachments, the stubborn attachment is to this 'I-sense.' 'I am a separate entity, different from all other entities,' a dominant thought, is hard to get rid of. In spiritual practice one tries to uproot it but it springs again from nobody knows where. Naturally many feel discouraged and spent up, and abandon spiritual practice as fruitless.

5. *The Eternal Companion* (Madras: Ramakrishna Math, Mylapore, 1971) page 264.

Swami Brahmananda advises: "Regular war must be waged against the mind. To force the mind to obey you is the ideal of spiritual discipline." <sup>6</sup> The frustration is due to our tendency to be impatient and seek quick results. We are in a tremendous hurry. We want instant success. The desire that 'I must swiftly achieve spiritual success' is rather misplaced. The 'I' is an imaginary entity. The impure 'I' may hurry to reach a goal, but that goal is part of its own imagination. Spiritual practice is to free consciousness from the limited self-concept. "A man cannot," affirms Sri Ramakrishna, "realize God unless he gets rid of all such egoistic ideas as, 'I am such an important man, or 'I am so and so.' Level the mound of 'I' ground with tears of devotion." <sup>7</sup> On another occasion he said: "One ultimately discovers God by trying to know who this 'I' is." <sup>8</sup>

Spiritual *sādhana* is freedom from the ego and not freedom of the ego. We have, instead, led a life giving utmost freedom to our ego. Without any inhibitions it has reigned supreme. For lasting peace and bliss the troublesome ego has to be wiped out without any trace. The avowed aim of all spiritual paths is to annihilate this ego by constantly negating it and denying its conceptual activity. What exists prior to the ego and thoughts is Divine Consciousness or God. We have to go back to that primal state—the state of our true nature. Till then there are no permanent peace and happiness. We have always directed our attention to other things—not-self, now that attention has to be focused on ourselves. That is the beginning of spiritual life. The mind, however, rebels against any attempt to silence it and it repeatedly tries to go

6. *Ibid.*, page 380.

7. *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* (Madras: Ramakrishna Math, Mylapore, 1985) page 385.

8. *Ibid.*, page 180.

back to its old habit of indulging in desires and worldly objects. It creates an illusion that spiritual pursuit is not worthy and a sheer waste of life. Those who are under the sway of the mind remain unaware of their slavery. That is why we find only a few take interest in spiritual matters and sincerely try to free themselves and realize the Truth. The Gita rightly points out: "Among thousands of men, there will just be one here or there striving for spiritual perfection. From among the aspirants so striving, one perchance knows Me in reality." <sup>9</sup>

The fact is that there is no failure in spiritual life. Efforts, however little, in the right direction, bring clarity and remove the mist of confusion. That clarity, or lifting of veil after veil, has no end. With every forward step we move towards perfection. The final illumination is sudden, as Sri Ramakrishna describes it:

"Those fetters fall off in a moment, by the grace of God. Do you know what it is like? Suppose a room has been kept a thousand years in darkness. The moment a man brings a light into it, the darkness vanishes. Not little by little." <sup>10</sup>

Sādhana is not just groping in darkness. Not at all. There are signs which indicate that one is progressing in the right direction. Mental peace increases and with that the restlessness of mind lessens; attraction towards the world diminishes and one's impulsive reactions to phenomena decrease.

There are some impediments to the practice of Yoga. Patanjali calls them "nine kinds of obstacles to Yoga." They are:

9. Gita, VII, verse 3.

*Manuṣyānām sahasreṣu kaścidyatati siddhaye, yatatāmapi siddhānām kaścinnām veti tatvataḥ.*

10. The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna, page 298.

Disease, mental laziness, doubt, lack of enthusiasm, lethargy, clinging to sense-enjoyments, false knowledge, non-attaining of concentration, and instability while trying to stay in a state when attained; these distractions of the mind are the obstacles. <sup>11</sup>

1. *Vyādhi*—disease. Sickness of the body affects the mind also. Physical illness cannot exist in isolation, without causing some anxiety and worry to the mind. There is a complex interdependence between mind and body, both in healthy states and in illness. A healthy and robust body keeps the mind in a cheerful mood and in a state of well-being. 'A healthy mind in a healthy body,'—the old dictum is worth remembering. When there is perfect physical condition the mind never thinks of the body. Any physical pain throws the mind into disarray, disturbing its equilibrium. It is difficult to keep the mind peaceful when there is either a toothache, or headache or fever. Whenever one tries to meditate or concentrate, his attention is forcibly drawn to the affected part of the body. Therefore sickness or a weak body is a hurdle in spiritual practice. A spiritual aspirant cannot make much headway by neglecting the body. Vivekananda warned that all our ills were due to our physical weakness. He remarked, "...strength is the medicine for the world's disease." <sup>12</sup> Through proper diet, exercise and healthy habits, one can build a strong body—an indispensable instrument for sādhana.

2. *Styāna*—mental laziness. When the mind works at a low key, when its energy is at the low ebb, it loses its interest in higher things

11. *Vyādhi-styāna-saṁśaya-pramāḍālasavirati-bhrāntidarśnālabdhābhūmikatvānavasthitatvāni cittavikṣepāste'ntarāyāḥ*.—Chapter I, Sutra 30.

12. The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1989) Vol. 2, page 201.



and engages itself in trivial matter. Spiritual practice appears sheer drudgery. This mental lethargy can be overcome by gentle persuasion of the mind, and by constant efforts to continue the practice. "Whether you like it or not," advises Swami Brahmananda, "sit down at the appointed hour everyday." <sup>13</sup>

3. *Samśaya*—doubt. Many kinds of doubts may arise in the mind of an aspirant. He may doubt about the existence of God, or his own competence to realize Truth, or the veracity of scriptures or illumined teachers. Due to recurring doubts he may change from one kind of spiritual practice to another frequently. A doubting person is flippant and cannot advance in any field, let alone the spiritual. Lack of firmness and faith in one's own capacity will lead a person nowhere. Sri Ramakrishna describes the nature of such people:

"When they need water they begin to dig a well. But as soon as they strike a stone they give up digging there and begin at another place. Perhaps they come to a bed of sand. Finding nothing but sand, they give that place up too. How can they succeed in getting water unless they continue to dig persistently where they started." <sup>14</sup>

Doubt is a great stumbling block and brings to naught all one's efforts. Therefore the Gita cautions: "An ignorant man, without any faith, who knows only to doubt, goes to ruin. To such a doubting soul there is neither this world nor the world beyond. There is no happiness for him." <sup>15</sup> Company of

spiritually advanced souls, unwavering trust in the words of great sages and occasional glimpses of certain lofty spiritual experiences can remove nagging doubts.

4. *Pramāda*—delusion. Due to carelessness or self-forgetfulness, one becomes indifferent to the spiritual practice. Some trivial worry or problem can distract the mind and make one forget all about meditation and japa. Such vexing problems do come now and then. If one holds onto the highest ideal of life—realization of God—one does not allow the temporary problem to sway him. Such problems lose their power and no more disturb the tranquility of the mind. Worries are short-lived, they appear and disappear.

5. *Ālasya*—lethargy. It is heaviness of the body and mind which not only creates dullness, but lack of enthusiasm in everything. There is no interest nor energy to do anything. It is *tamas*. Such periods of sloth come in every person's life. Vigorous physical exercise, like jogging and brisk walking, or any other physical work, fasting or cheerful surroundings can obviate the *tamas* from the body and mind.

6. *Avirati*—clinging to sense enjoyments. The thirst for worldly pleasures is difficult to control. As long as mind is captivated by these enjoyments and worldly objects, so long it does not feel any taste for higher ideals. It feels contented with them. Swami Shivananda, a direct disciple of Sri Ramakrishna, said: "How can anyone have love for God, pure and untouched by sin as He is, unless one's own mind becomes purified? For that one needs intense spiritual practice and sincere yearning for God." <sup>16</sup> Because of its previous impressions the mind reverts back to the

13. *The Eternal Companion*, page 309.

14. *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, page 208.

15. *Gita*, IV, verse 40—

*Ajñāścāśraddadhānaśca samśayātmā vinaśyati,  
nāyam loko'sti na paro na sukham  
samśayātmanah.*

16. *For Seekers of God* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1985), page 219.



pleasures and forgets the spiritual goal. Discrimination—giving up interest in the worldly affairs, holy association, and constant vigilance over the mind, foster detachment. The mind should be brought back again and again, the moment it starts thinking about the fleeting pleasures.

7. *Bhrāntidarśana*—false knowledge. We don't have to go far to know what is false knowledge. We are the ample proof of it. The ideas: 'I am a person hedged in by body and mind; this is my mind; the world is the only reality; seeking pleasures is the ultimate goal of life,'—these are some kinds of erroneous knowledge. Most of us are brought up and nursed on these false notions. Spiritual awakening means to kindle the flame of investigation to find out the validity of these myths. With the deepening of enquiry the untrue knowledge slowly melts. As we advance we laugh at our ignorance.

8. *Alabdha-bhūmikatva*—non-attainment of concentration. Concentration requires steady and prolonged practice. To bring back the scattered mind to total attention is not a matter of days, but years. We need not give up the practice because we cannot concentrate. Through *abhyāsa* (practice) and *vairāgya* (dispassion) we can subdue the turbulent mind. A few years' practice will bring considerable calmness and equipoise. It is a question of time and needs patient preparation.

9. *Anavasthitatva*—inability to stay in a state when attained. During meditation the mind becomes peaceful and happy. Suddenly a stray worldly thought appears and the quiet of the mind is ruffled. With that single thought rush in a host of other thoughts, bringing in their train anxiety, irritation, and worries. From the higher plane the mind

descends to a lower plane. One cannot regain that peaceful state again. Sometimes the mind remains in a blissful state. But soon the clouds of self-concern cover it and the state is lost. The clear and attentive mind is swallowed by worldly concerns. This inability to sustain the higher state and falling away from it is one of the obstacles. Patience and sustained efforts are the cure for it.

Patanjali further says these nine distractions of the mind are accompanied by the following: Grief, dejection, shakiness of the body, and irregularity in breathing.<sup>17</sup> The weak and restless mind is subject to sorrow, depression, nervous shakings, and defective breathing. Mostly our minds are restless. Therefore we suffer, get agitated, become anxious, and are easily upset by little things. Our peace and calmness are tenuous. These disturbances influence our breathing. Our changing patterns of breathing truly reflect our various emotional states. When we are frightened, angry, in the grip of grief, our breathing undergoes startling changes, becoming rapid and shallow. This in turn excites the psyche. Prayer, regular practice of meditation and japa, surrender to God, not only purify our minds, but bring about insight and stillness. Vyāsa in his commentary on the verse says, "These disturbances generally appear in a person whose mind is in a restless state. They do not exist in a reposeful mind."<sup>18</sup>

That reposeful mind can be attained through constant spiritual exercises.

17. *Yoga Aphorisms*, I, verse 31.—

*Duḥkhadaurmanasyāṅgamejayatva-  
śvāsapraśvāsā vikṣepasahabhuvah*

18. *Ete vikṣepa sahabhuvo vikṣipta cittasyaite  
bhavanti, samāhita cittasyaite na bhavanti.*





# Centenary of Swami Vivekananda's Voyage for the World's Parliament of Religions<sup>\*</sup>

SWAMI GAHANANANDA

*This inspiring writeup by Revered Maharaj, a Vice-President of the Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, was broadcast over All India Radio, Delhi, on 31st May, 1993.*

Swami Vivekananda's Voyage for the World's Parliament of Religions on 31st May, 1893 heralded an important decade in the history of mankind. This decade, full of important events in the Swami's life, ended with his Mahānirvāṇa on 4th July, 1902. The Celebration of this Voyage to the Parliament of Religions by Swamiji, organised by the Ramakrishna Yogodyan Math, Kankurgacchi, Calcutta from 31st May to 2nd June 1993, marked the beginning of such celebrations of important events of his life which will continue throughout the decade 1993-2002. Swamiji wanted integration of mankind through acceptance of all religions as true. The decade 1993-2002 may, therefore, be observed as the "DECADE OF INTEGRATION OF MANKIND, 1993-2002", and as the Centenaries of all the important events in the life of Swami Vivekananda falling within this period—i.e., his appearance in the World's Parliament of Religions, his return to India, the setting up of the Ramakrishna Mission and so on,—all may be celebrated for the spreading of Swamiji's messages. The following calls given by Swamiji at the final session of the World's Parliament of Religions, on 27th September 1893, may be regarded as his calls for the "DECADE OF INTEGRATION OF MANKIND, 1993-2002":

- 1) Help and not Fight,
- 2) Assimilation and not Destruction,
- 3) Harmony and Peace and not Dissension.

Swami Vivekananda's appearance before the World's Parliament of Religions in September 1893 was a momentous occasion for India, nay, for the entire world, as Swamiji put before the World's Parliament of Religions the message of acceptance of all religions as true, which was new to the world. Besides, apart from appearing before the World's Parliament of Religions, Swamiji also played the role of a wandering religious teacher in the West. His appearance and wanderings as a religious teacher in the Western World brought glory to India, as the rest of the world thus became aware of the spiritual wealth of India. The Centenary of Swami Vivekananda's appearance before the World's Parliament of Religions is being celebrated not only in India, but also in many other places of the world.

After concluding his Bharat Parikrama, Swamiji sailed for the U.S.A. on 31st May, 1893 to appear before the World's Parliament of Religions. This was, therefore, a very significant day for not only India, but also for the entire world. Swamiji undertook this voyage for the World's Parliament of Religions after receiving Sri Ramakrishna's command in a divine vision. This voyage had also the approval of the Holy Mother, who had a similar

<sup>\*</sup> Based on the broadcast over All India Radio on 31st May, 1993, by Swami Gahanananda, Vice-President of the Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission.



divine vision of Sri Ramakrishna desiring the same.

During his Bharat Parikrama, Swami Vivekananda not only discovered the spiritual wealth of India, but also the misery and deprivation from which his countrymen had been suffering. That is why he said,—“The poor, the illiterate, the ignorant, the afflicted—let these be your God; know that service to these alone is the highest religion.” He went on to say: “I love the poor, the ignorant, the down-trodden, I feel for them—the Lord knows how much.”

He not only loved his countrymen, but also immensely loved his motherland. Sister Nivedita has described Swami Vivekananda's love for his motherland in the following words:

“He told us how he had longed, when in the West, to stand once more at dusk some little way outside an Indian village and hear again the evening calls—the noise of children growing sleepy at their play, the evening bells, the cries of the herdsmen and the half veiled sound of voices through the quickly-passing twilight. How homesick he had been....”

This love for his country and his countrymen made him a great patriot. Fighters for freedom of the country and politicians drew inspiration from his writings and speeches. It is with this patriotism that he wrote to Swami Ramakrishnananda from the U.S.A.: “As our country is poor in social virtues, so this country is lacking in spirituality. I give them spirituality, and they give me money.” Swami Vivekananda did not need the money for himself; he needed the money for the poor and down-trodden in his motherland. This love for his country and countrymen prompted him to say in the World's Parliament of

Religions on 20th September, 1893: “...the crying evil in the East is not religion—they have religion enough—but it is bread that the suffering millions of burning India cry out for with parched throats.”

Swami Vivekananda's Voyage to America on 31st May 1893 to appear before the World's Parliament of Religions and to play the role of a wandering religious teacher was not an isolated event. The preparation for this significant event had been going on for long.

Left to himself, Swamiji would have liked to remain deeply in meditation. Sri Ramakrishna, however, had already earmarked his role in this world. When Swamiji expressed that his highest ambition was to remain always in meditation, Sri Ramakrishna told him, “I thought you had been born for something greater, my boy!”

When Sri Ramakrishna was lying critically ill in Cossipore Garden House, he was training his disciples for their future roles. On one of these days Sri Ramakrishna asked for a piece of paper and wrote on it that “Naren (later Swami Vivekananda) will teach others.” Not only that, three or four days before Sri Ramakrishna left his mortal body, he called Swami Vivekananda (then Naren) and asked to be left alone with him. What happened thereafter has been described by Romain Rolland in his book, “The Life of Ramakrishna.” According to this description, Sri Ramakrishna “looked lovingly at Naren and passed into ecstasy. It enveloped Naren in its folds. When he came back from the shadows, he saw Ramakrishna in tears.” Romain Rolland has added that Sri Ramakrishna then told him, “Today I have given you my all and am now only a poor fakir, possessing nothing. By this power you will do immense good in the world and not until it is



accomplished will you return. "

This is the power, with which Swami Vivekananda completed his Bharat Parikrama and then sailed for the U.S.A. to attend the World's Parliament of Religions and perform the role of a wandering religious teacher in the West.

Such was the power passed on to him by Sri Ramakrishna that sometime before his voyage to U.S.A. he told a brother disciple, "I feel a mighty power! It is as if I were about to blaze forth. There are so many powers in me! It seems to me as if I could revolutionize the world. "

It is, therefore, no wonder that he appeared before the World's Parliament of Religions, nay, before the entire spiritual world as a blaze and became an instant success. He himself had written in a letter to his brother disciples from the U.S.A.: "...whatever comes to my lips—Gurudeva backs me up. " In an earlier letter he wrote from the U.S.A. to Swami Ramakrishnananda, a brother disciple: "I am an instrument, and He is the operator. Through this instrument He is rousing the religious instinct in thousands of hearts in this far-off country. "

In response to the welcome on the 11th September 1893 at the World's Parliament of Religions, Swami Vivekananda addressed the people of America as "Sisters and Brothers of America" which had an electrifying effect on the people of that country. Not only that, he went on to pronounce: "We believe not only in universal toleration, but we accept all religions as true"—this was a new message to the Western World—"acceptance of all religions as true. "

Swamiji pointed out to the august Assembly on 19th September 1893, in his

paper on "*Hinduism*": "Unity in variety is the plan of nature, and the Hindu has recognised it." He went on to say in the final session of the Parliament of Religions: "...if any one here hopes that this unity will come by the triumph of any one of the religions and the destruction of the others, to him I say, 'Brother, your's is an impossible hope.' " He went on to clarify: "The Christian is not to become a Hindu or a Buddhist, nor a Hindu or Buddhist to become a Christian. But each must assimilate the spirit of the others and yet preserve his individuality and grow according to his own law of growth. " And then he declared: "...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. In the face of this evidence, if anybody dreams of the exclusive survival of his own religion and the destruction of others, I pity him from the bottom of my heart, and point out to him that upon the banner of every religion will soon be written, in spite of resistance: 'Help and not Fight,' 'Assimilation and not Destruction,' 'Harmony and Peace and not Dissension.' "

Swami Vivekananda put forward the concept of a Universal Religion before the Parliament, saying that it would be one "...which will have no location in place or time; which will be infinite like the God it will preach, and whose sun will shine upon the followers of Krishna and of Christ, on saints and sinners alike; which will not be Brahminic or Buddhistic, Christian or Mohammedan, but the sum total of all these, and still have infinite space for development; which in its catholicity will embrace in its infinite arms, and find a place for, every human being. . . ." Subsequently, he went on to say: "What I want to propagate is a religion that will be acceptable to all minds; it must be equally philosophic, equally emotional, equally



mystic, and equally conducive to action. "

To Swami Vivekananda, "Religion is realisation; not talk nor doctrine, nor theories, however beautiful they may be. It is being and becoming, not hearing or acknowledging; it is the whole soul becoming changed into what it believes," and, "the end of all religions is the realising of God in the soul. That is the one Universal religion. If there is one universal truth in all religions, I place it here—in realizing God. Ideals and methods may differ, but that is the central point. "

Swami Vivekananda wanted religion to be subjected to the same methods of investigation as are applied to sciences. He said: "Is religion to justify itself by the discoveries of reason, through which every other science justifies itself? Are the same methods of investigation, which we apply to sciences and knowledge outside, to be applied to the science of Religion? In my opinion this must be so, and I am also of opinion that the sooner it is done the better. . . . Not only will it be made scientific—as scientific, at least, as any of the conclusions of physics or chemistry—but will have greater strength, because physics or chemistry has no internal mandate to vouch for its truth, which religion has. "

Why did he want religion to be subjected to such investigation? He wanted this because the purpose of religion is realisation of God. That is the absolute goal. In Swami Vivekananda's words: "God is Truth " and, "...the absolute truth is only one. " As such, religion which leads to this

absolute truth will certainly withstand the scientific investigations to satisfy the modern minds.

Swami Vivekananda's voyage to U.S.A. to attend the World's Parliament of Religions and for performing the role of a wandering religious teacher in the West had a mission; his mission was to integrate mankind by arousing spirituality in them and by spreading the message of acceptance of all religions as true.

The world had already heard of the need for religious co-operation, religious unity and religious tolerance. These are all laudable objectives. But all these have a limit, a breaking point; they do not last for all time.

Sri Ramakrishna has given us the message of "As many faiths, so many paths." Once this message is realised, acceptance of all the religions as true follows. Acceptance has no limit. So, with acceptance of all the religions as true, the cause of conflict vanishes. That is the need of the hour, when the world is afflicted with violence and strife. With spirituality aroused in us, let us march forward, with the acceptance of Religions as true, to the truth that "The one thing unchangeable is God. " That is the only way to integrate mankind and thus to make the world a better place to live in, and fulfil the mission of Swami Vivekananda. In the words of Swami Vivekananda: "God helps them that help themselves. " Let us help ourselves in fulfilling the mission of Swami Vivekananda.



"Man, therefore, according to the Vedanta philosophy, is the greatest being that is in the universe, and this world of work the best place in it, because only herein is the greatest and best chance for him to become perfect."

—*The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, Vol. 2, page 271.

# Reflections on Sri Ramakrishna's Temple

A WESTERN DEVOTEE

*Temples dedicated to Sri Ramakrishna are charged with special spiritual power. One can feel the uplifting and purifying vibration of it in His temples, images and photographs. The author, a devotee, articulates feelings which are not his alone, but belong to thousands.*

For the devotees of Sri Ramakrishna, his temple is the holiest spot on earth. Here his image sits, enthroned in glory; here his relics are enshrined. It is true that, from a monistic point of view, Brahman is everywhere; hence every place is holy. But from a dualistic point of view, the power of Brahman manifests itself more fully in some places than in others; and for devotees of Sri Ramakrishna, it manifests itself most fully in his image, and in his temple.

Foreign devotees who are fortunate enough to be able to make the pilgrimage to Belur Math need to know one thing. You may or may not go to Dakshineswar, to Cossipore, to Kamarpukur and Jayrambati to receive Sri Ramakrishna's blessing. By all means, devotees should visit these places, sanctified as they are by his earthly play, and permeated even now by his presence. They may receive his blessing at any of these places.

But all you have to do is sit in his temple before his image, and everything will come to you. For everything is in that image. No matter how anxious and distracted your mind may be, no matter how confused and scattered your thoughts are, if you sit there long enough, his presence will slowly make itself felt. It radiates from his image and pervades the very stones. The walls, the arches, the pillars, the vaulted ceiling, even the marble floor are shot through with light emanating from that radiant form.

This is not something that can be perceived immediately. You may have to sit there a long time. If you have come directly from the hustle and bustle of the world, it may take several days for your mind to calm down and for him to cleanse it of its impurities. When a child has been outside playing in the mud and comes into the house all dirty, the mother does not feed it immediately. First she gives it a bath and scrubs it clean—then only does she give it sweets to eat.

Again, if you raise the sail of your mind to catch the breeze of God's grace, it won't do any good if your sail is all torn and tattered. The breeze will blow right through it, and your boat will sit dead in the water. First implore the Lord to mend your sail; then will the breeze take hold and move your boat.

The more you sit, the more you get. Anyone who prays or meditates for less than a considerable length of time at a stretch is not giving God a chance. You may have to sit there till your legs ache. But pray to Him, do japam and meditate on His shining form, and He will surely come.

For Westerners, whose spiritual tradition emphasizes prayer more than meditation, it may be beneficial to begin with prayer. Pray to Him earnestly to come forth from his image and take his seat upon the lotus of your heart. For prayer is a reaching out to Him, beseeching Him to come to you.



**Meditation** is fixing your mind upon Him **once** He has established His presence **within**. When a man wants a king to visit his house, first he sends messages to the king, begging him to visit. Then, when the king arrives, the man sits there silently, feasting his eyes upon his beloved guest.

Ultimately it is all a matter of paying attention to the Lord. If we pay attention to Him, He will pay attention to us. Cry in the depths of your heart, "Come, Lord, come! O Lord, dwell within me! Purify my heart and take your seat within it!" And He, emerging smiling from his image, will do so. And what does He say? Only "My beloved child!" For that is all we need to hear.

We devotees go to Belur Math as Spiritual robbers, for we steal Him from his image and take Him away with us. And yet He never leaves the image, for the more we take, the more He gives. "Take the fullness out of the fullness, and the fullness remains," says the *Īsopaniṣad*. But having

taken Him away, it is our duty not to lose Him, not to let Him dissipate among the cares and distractions of the world. Shelter Him within your heart as you would cherish a precious jewel; nourish Him with the milk of devotion as you would nourish a newborn child. Unless you cherish Him constantly with attention and love, He will slip away; for where there is no love for Him, He cannot abide.

And when you return home, know that his photo on your altar is the same as his image in the temple. Both are repositories of his presence. Cherish his photo with love and devotion, for He dwells within it; but it takes love to draw Him forth. And when He comes forth smiling to dwell within you, your heart will become his temple, and your body Belur Math. When photo, image, and heart all fuse in the radiance of his presence, then we have attained the goal. May we all become His temples, that He may abide within us and make us one with Him.



"It is religion, this inquiry into the beyond, that makes the difference between man and an animal. Well has it been said that man is the only animal that naturally looks upwards; every other animal naturally looks down. That looking upward and going upward and seeking perfection are what is called salvation, and the sooner a man begins to go higher, the sooner he raises himself towards the idea of truth as salvation. It does not consist in the amount of money in your pocket, or the dress you wear, or the house you live in, but in the wealth of spiritual thought in your brain. That is what makes for human progress; that is the source of all material and intellectual progress, the motive power behind, the enthusiasm that pushes mankind forward."

—The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda, Vol 4, page 208.

# The Emergence of Swami Vivekananda at Chicago

DR. JAYASREE MUKHERJEE

*In this research paper the author depicts lucidly not only the triumph of Swamiji at the Parliament of Religions, but also the tumultuous aftermath which he had to face with stoic patience. The writer is a lecturer in History at Govt. College, Krishnanagar, West Bengal.*

The Parliament of Religions held as a part of the World's Fair at Chicago in September 1893, brought the representatives of different religious faiths of the world to present their respective beliefs to an enlightened and cosmopolitan audience. It provided an unprecedented opportunity for promoting understanding and goodwill among the seekers of Truth on an international level. It was inspired and organized largely by the Christian Churches, and the ulterior motive of the sponsors was to demonstrate the superiority of their own religion before an august international gathering. Rev. John Henry Barrows, pastor of the First Presbyterian Church of Chicago, became the Chairman of the General Committee. From India came the representatives on behalf of the Brahmo Samaj, Buddhism, Jainism and Theosophical Society. Swami Vivekananda (1863-1902), without any great personal reputation or credentials, was finally allowed, with the help of some American ladies and gentlemen, to be a delegate there on behalf of Hinduism.

After a dazzling procession by the high dignitaries on the opening day, the delegates, all dressed impressively in their distinctive robes, sat on the dais, waiting to defend their religious faiths. One among them was Vivekananda who at the very outset became conspicuous, according to all sources, for his saffron robe and turban and graceful appearance. Facing the dais was

the vast audience, clerical and lay, of varying degrees of intellectual calibre and shades of opinion. The Parliament continued for seventeen days, divided into different sessions.

## *Swamiji's Message At Chicago*

Vivekananda in his very first lecture (delivered on September 11) made a powerful impression. When he addressed the audience as "[My] sisters and brothers of America" he stormed the hearts of his listeners by his very sincerity and immediately drew a thundering applause from them.<sup>1</sup> He addressed the Parliament about a dozen times between September 11 and 27. His outstanding address was a discourse on *Hinduism*. Drawing his inspiration from his Master, he went on to explain to them powerfully and lucidly the sublime ideas of Vedantic Hinduism, and described all people as "the children of Immortal Bliss, Holy and Perfect Being." He sharply challenged the basic Christian idea of man as a born sinner and said: "Ye divinities on Earth—sinners? It is a sin to call a man so. It is a standing libel on human nature." Benoy Sarkar, while interpreting this writes, "The first four words ("Ye divinities on earth") summoned into being the gospel of joy, hope, virility, energy and

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1. Marie Louise Burke, *Swami Vivekananda in the West—New Discoveries* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1983) Vol. 1, page 81.



**freedom** for the races of man. And yet with **the last word** ("Sinners ? ") embodying as it **did** a sarcastic question, he demolished the **whole** structure of soul-degenerating, cowardice-promoting, negative, pessimistic thoughts. On the astonished world the little five-word formula fell like a bombshell. " <sup>2</sup> In Vivekananda's lectures we find no apologetic or negative tone, but an affirmative and invigorating voice. The text of Swamiji's address is given in Barrow's history: *The World's Parliament of Religions*, and in several contemporary newspaper accounts and descriptions, and in *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*. Swamiji gave a coherence and unity to the numerous sects and beliefs which had developed within Hinduism, and showed that the central beliefs were common to all of them. <sup>3</sup> What he wrote sarcastically to Alasinga Perumal in May, 1895 may be quoted here: "I am the one man who dared to defend his country, and I have given them what they never expected from a Hindu—giving them tit-for-tat, with a compound interest. " <sup>4</sup> He spoke against bigotry, hypocrisy and superficiality, and highlighted the Vedantic message of catholicity, liberalism, sublimity and human dignity. Swamiji delivered extempore speeches many times, and was allowed to speak longer than the usual half an hour allotted to different speakers at the Parliament. Being the most popular, the Chairman always brought him last to hold the audience intact. <sup>5</sup>

2. Benoy Kumar Sarkar, *The Might of Man in the Social Philosophy of the Ramakrishna and Vivekananda*, (Madras: 1945) pp. 23-24.

3. *Swami Vivekananda in the West—New Discoveries*, Vol. 1, page 114.

4. *Ibid.* Vol.3, page 32.

5. *Boston Evening Transcript*, April 5, 1894; quoted in *The Life of Swami Vivekananda*, by his Eastern & Western Disciples, Vol. 1 (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1979) page 427.

### *Immediate Reactions at Chicago*

Vivekananda's Chicago lectures produced results of a mixed character. Appreciation and condemnation soon followed. The liberals became more liberal and the bigots more bigoted, though the former proved to be more influential. On most of the Americans who attended the Parliament, Vivekananda produced an electrifying effect. His graceful appearance with ochre robe and turban, his vigorous personality, impressive oration and brilliant exposition of Vedanta at once produced a magic spell on his listeners. They heard his lectures with rapt attention, and were overwhelmed with the loftiness and sublimity of his ideas. He made the people think afresh. The *Chicago Inter Ocean*, of Sept. 1, 1894, published a report on "Vivekananda and the Hindoos." It reported: "There was no delegate to the Parliament of Religions who attracted more courteous attention in Chicago by his winning ways, his ability, and his fearless discussion of all questions relating to his religion than Swami Vivekananda. [He] not only won admiration for himself but consideration for his own teachings. " <sup>6</sup> The *New York Herald* said: "He is undoubtedly the greatest figure in the Parliament of Religions. " <sup>7</sup> J.H. Barrows said, "Swami Vivekananda exercised a wonderful influence over his auditors. " <sup>8</sup> In general, the U.S. press was full of eulogies for him.

Merwin Marie Snell, President of the Scientific Section of the Parliament of Religions, wrote: "And by far the most important and typical representative of

6. *Swami Vivekananda in the West—New Discoveries*, Vol 1, pp. 137-38.

7. Swami Nikhilananda, *Vivekananda: A Biography* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1987) page 123.

8. *Ibid.*

Hinduism was Swami Vivekananda, who, in fact, was beyond question, the most popular and influential man in the Parliament. . . . The people thronged about him wherever he went and hung with eagerness on his every word." <sup>9</sup> Another version of an eye-witness, though written many years after, came from the pen of Sir Hiram Maxim, the gun-expert, who had been in the audience at Chicago. In the Foreword to his book entitled, *Li Hung Chang's Scrap-Book*, he recollected his Chicago memory: "His [Vivekananda's] first speech was no less than a revelation. Every word was eagerly taken down by the reporters, and telegraphed all over the country, where it appeared in thousands of papers. Viva Kananda became the lion of the day. He soon had an immense following. No hall could hold the people who flocked to hear him lecture." <sup>10</sup>

Prior to the Parliament of Religions, Vivekananda was virtually an unknown figure, both in his own country and abroad. But after the Parliament he reached the pinnacle of fame and publicity. Most of the delegates were well advanced in age and men of distinction. But Vivekananda, young in age, had no name, fame or credentials except that of being a Hindu. His Master, Sri Ramakrishna, was still a little known figure even in India, not to speak of the West. Yet he carried with him the august Parliament, which found in his words the accumulated wisdom and strength of India. His predecessors, who had come to the West on a religious mission, were apologetic in their approach. But Vivekananda, for the first time in the history of modern India, made a counter-

attack on Western chauvinism and held aloft the banner of Indian culture.

As the news of Vivekananda's spectacular success at Chicago came from the U.S. press, it was reprinted in the leading Indian newspapers, particularly the *Indian Mirror* of Calcutta (November 15 and December 6, 12, 27, 1893; February 21 and March 21, 1894 etc.), *The Pioneer* of Allahabad and *The Hindu* of Madras. Before long, the Indians became aware of this world-renowned Hindu monk. Swamiji's letter to his disciple Alasinga, dated Nov. 2, 1893, was the first letter to his countrymen in which he reported his success at the Parliament. After the close of the Parliament he undertook a lecture-tour of the Western states for some time.

#### *Attacks on Swamiji in America*

Vivekananda's spectacular success at Chicago, however, engendered jealousy and hatred among many persons both in the U.S.A. and India. The first group of men who attacked him most vindictively was the different bodies of Christian missionaries in the U.S. These missionaries, who had so long been portraying India and Hinduism in the darkest colours, could not reconcile themselves with his sudden and unexpected success. Vivekananda spared no words in presenting the true picture of India's culture and religion and vigorously criticized the proselytizing methods of the missionaries. He openly declared before the American people, "Religion is not the crying need of India," and many seemed to agree with him. An official report of the missionaries said: "As a consequence of Vivekananda's success and teaching, the contributions to the Indian missionary funds have decreased in one year by as much as one million pounds." <sup>11</sup> On the

9. *The Complete Works of Swami Abhedananda* (Calcutta: Ramakrishna Vedanta Math, 1967) Vol. 5, page 581.

10. *Swami Vivekananda in the West—New Discoveries*, Vol. 1, pp. 138-40.

11. *Life of Swami Vivekananda*, Vol. 1, pp. 480-81.



intellectual level the "white man's burden" theory received a great setback. In retaliation, all those who had so long been propagating this theory, particularly the Christian missionaries, addressed themselves now to the vilification of Vivekananda and the subversion of his mission. They tried through the press and on the platform to convince the American public that Vivekananda was not a bona fide Hindu representative of India, and that his ideas were his personal religious views, and, therefore, had nothing to do with Hinduism. They even indulged in the character assassination of Swamiji in the meanest conceivable manner. They described him as 'a fraud,' 'a deceit,' and 'a man without character.' Vivekananda even apprehended that he might be poisoned. We are told that at a dinner in Detroit, Swamiji was about to sip from his cup of coffee when he suddenly had a vision of Ramakrishna warning him against taking that drink; and Vivekananda did not touch it.<sup>12</sup>

Added to this missionary vilification was the muckraking of a section of the U.S. press. Some American newspapers and journals (e.g. *The Interior*, *The Boston Daily Advertiser*, etc.) started slandering Swami Vivekananda, the 'so-called' Hindu representative of India. *The Boston Daily Advertiser* of May 16, 1894, basing its observations mainly on a Brahmo report, published in *Unity and the Minister*, made derogatory remarks about Vivekananda when he was lecturing at Boston. It tried to prove that Swamiji was neither a genuine monk nor an orthodox Hindu. He was simply a singer and an actor. "Any follower of modern Hinduism cannot command that respect from us which we entertain for a genuine orthodox Hindu." It condemned Vivekananda's modern ideas as "glaring non-

sense."<sup>13</sup> *The Interior* likewise maligned him immensely and that report reached India too. According to Swamiji, that paper was not very influential in the U.S.A., but could well be utilized for the purpose of vilification by the Indian missionaries. He wrote, "I pity them—if their means of living fine lives in India is cut down by the influx of oriental religions here."<sup>14</sup>

It is interesting to note in this connection that only those articles of Indian origin which could hamper Vivekananda's work were published by the U.S. press at that time and were widely read with avidity. It is significant that articles written in a different vein and favourable to Swamiji were not printed. In fact, this strong campaign against Swamiji was intended to lower him in the estimation of the American and Indian people, and eventually it led some of his admirers to doubt his integrity and credentials. Vivekananda felt that even a strong supporter like Prof. John Henry Wright, without whose active help he could not have attended the Parliament as a delegate, might change his opinion about him. In a letter written to the said Professor in May, 1894, Vivekananda observed, "By this time you [Professor Wright] have got the pamphlet and the letters. If you like, I would send you over from Chicago some letters from Indian Princes and ministers—one of these ministers was one of the Commissioners of the late Opium Commission that sat under the Royal Commission in India. If you like, I will have them write to you to convince you of my not being a cheat. But, my brother, our ideal of life [commonly] is to hide, to suppress, and to deny. . . . I am morally bound to afford you every satisfac-

13. *Ibid.*, pp. 485-86.

14. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1989) Vol. 5, page 28.

12. *Ibid.*, page 483.

tion, my kind friend; but for the rest of the world I do not care what they say—the sannyasin must not have self-defence. So I beg of you not to publish or show anybody anything in that pamphlet or the letters.”<sup>15</sup> Swamiji felt that Professor Wright was not satisfied with the pamphlets and letters he had already sent. This prompted him to write again on May 24, 1894, from Chicago enclosing further testimony in his defence, including letters from the Raja of Khetri (April 7, 1894), and the Dewan of Junagadh (August 2, 1894).<sup>16</sup> However, by mid-1894 Professor Wright seemed to be quite satisfied with Vivekananda’s credentials.

#### *Attacks from Indians*

Among the Indian circles which were most active in denouncing Vivekananda at that time were the Brahmo Samaj and the Theosophical Society. Both these groups had thrived in India on the passivity of the traditional Hindu religion and society. But Vivekananda’s success at Chicago and his aggressive stand on Vedantic Hinduism, carrying everything before it, created a deep feeling of jealousy in their minds, and they apprehended that their work would soon be undone. Their ill-feeling and animosity against Vivekananda goaded them to action mainly through the press. This, on its part, encouraged the Christian missionaries and a section of the U.S. press to malign Swamiji with vehemence.<sup>17</sup> The opposition of the Brahmo Samaj was stronger than that of the Theosophical Society. Pratap Chandra Mozoomdar, a close friend of Keshab Chandra Sen, was the most vociferous in this respect. Pratap, who had been at one time respectful to Sri Ramakrishna and cordial to Vivekananda, radically changed his attitude following

Swamiji’s magnificent success at the Chicago Parliament. Himself a delegate in the Parliament of Religions on behalf of the Brahmo Samaj, Pratap criticized Vivekananda strongly and tried to foster an opinion against him among other delegates there. Vivekananda himself wrote a letter to his brother monk, Ramakrishnananda, to this effect, “...when the whole Chicago population began to flock to me in overwhelming numbers, then grew the canker in his (Mozoomdar’s) mind! . . . Mozoomdar slandered me to the missionaries in the Parliament, saying that I was nobody, a thug, and a cheat, and he accused me of coming here and pretending to be a monk. Thus he greatly succeeded in prejudicing their minds against me. He so prejudiced President Barrows that he did not even speak to me decently.”<sup>18</sup> In another letter, to Alasinga, Vivekananda wrote again about his character assassination by Mozoomdar.<sup>19</sup> On his return to Calcutta, Pratap vilified Swamiji before the educated public by saying that in the U.S.A. Swamiji was indulging in “unchastity of the most degraded type.”<sup>20</sup> Pratap carried on this slandering campaign particularly through the organ of the Navavidhan Brahmo Samaj, the *Unity and the Minister*. This vilification itself showed that Vivekananda enjoyed a marked edge over the Brahmo preacher in his missionary work in the U.S.A. The instinct of self-preservation prompted the leadership of the Samaj to offer resistance to Vivekananda’s triumphal march. Already it stood isolated from the general body of the Hindu society, and was afraid of losing its popularity with the younger generation still further before the onrush of the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda movement. As a

15. *Ibid.* Vol. 7, pp. 466-67.

16. *The Life of Swami Vivekananda*, Vol. 1, page 488.

17. *Ibid.*, page 482.

18. *Ibid.*, pp 481-82.

19. *The Letters of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1976) pp. 89-91.

20. *Ibid.* pp. 74-75; 89-91.



matter of fact, the Brahmo Samaj, unable to move forward with the times, rapidly declined from the nineties of the last century.

Strangely enough, some of the orthodox Hindus also condemned Vivekananda's Western mission, mainly on three grounds—his crossing of the seas, no restriction of diet, and donning of the monastic robe though being a Kayastha.<sup>21</sup> These activities, according to them, were nothing but acts of sacrilege. Even a sedate scholar like Sir Gooroodass Banerjee refused to preside over the proposed Town Hall Meeting of Sept. 5, 1894, convened to express the nation's gratitude to Vivekananda, on the ground that Swamiji, in spite of being a 'śūdra', had accepted monasticism, and though a Hindu, had crossed the sea.<sup>22</sup> However, he later changed his mind and attended the meeting.<sup>23</sup> It is also learnt that Vivekananda was not permitted to enter the Dakshineswar Temple on his return to India.<sup>24</sup> Several years later, two judges of Calcutta refused to attend a meeting organized to mourn Vivekananda's death.<sup>25</sup>

#### *A Critical Hour*

Notwithstanding all criticisms and opposition, Swami Vivekananda was hailed as a hero by the general public both in India and in the U.S.A. The common people of Chicago were so highly impressed by his lectures that they began to

flock to him in larger and larger numbers.<sup>26</sup> Even a section of the clergy appreciated his exposition of Hinduism.<sup>27</sup> Mrs. Bagley, a friend and hostess of Vivekananda in America, felt anger and sorrow for those who, knowing little of him, called his character into question.<sup>28</sup> It was, in fact, with the support of some American people that Vivekananda, even in the face of heavy odds and severe criticisms, managed to survive and go ahead with his scheme. His lofty idealism and gigantic personality stood him in good stead at this critical moment.

In India the general feeling was one of wholehearted appreciation of Vivekananda's mission in the U.S.A. Not only were his brother-monks and admirers elated at his success, but the educated public, including a large number of traditional Sanskrit scholars, also realized the significance of his achievement. Vivekananda's success pandered to the nation's pride. But in spite of all this, neither Swamiji's brother monks nor the patriotic public of India could rise to the occasion in a befitting manner. What Vivekananda needed most in the U.S.A. at that time was a powerful support from his countrymen which would thwart the Brahmo and Christian challenges and enable him to carry on his work of propagating the Vedanta in the West and enlisting American support for his nation-building work in India. Without the public recognition of the Hindus of India, his work in the U.S.A. might be jeopardized. The lukewarm support of his co-religionists to his mission abroad encouraged his enemies

21. Sankari Prasad Basu, *Vivekananda O Samakalin Bharatvarsha*, (Calcutta: 1385 B.S.) Vol. 3, Ch. XIX.

22. Swami Abhedananda, *Amar Jibankatha*, (Calcutta: Ramakrishna Vedanta Math, 1983), page 177.

23. *Ibid.*

24. Sankari Prasad Basu, Vol. 3, page 143.

25. *The Viswavanee*, Bhadra, 1383 B.S., page 268.

26. *The Life of Swami Vivekananda*, Vol. 1, pp. 481-82.

27. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, Vol. 5, page 28.

28. *The Life of Swami Vivekananda*, Vol. 1, pp. 491-92.

to oppose him with greater vigour, and an impression gained ground that what his critics said of him was the actual truth.

### *Efforts to Counter the Attack*

On his part, Vivekananda initially took no action in his defence, but some time after, when the opposition assumed greater dimensions, he started defending himself. He did not directly refute the allegations made against him. But he asked the Hindus of India, particularly his brother monks and admirers, to acknowledge him as the accredited leader of the Hindu religion and to lend wholehearted support to his mission in the West. In great despair he wrote from the U.S.A. letter after letter emphasizing the urgent need of organizing public opinion in his favour in India. In a letter to Alasinga Perumal (April 9, 1894), Vivekananda asked him to convene a big meeting in Madras with someone like the Maharaja of Ramnad as its President, to pass a resolution in favour of his exposition of Hinduism in the West. Such resolution should be sent to some leading newspapers in different cities in the U.S.A. He also asked Alasinga to get letters of support from some prominent Hindus like the Maharaja of Mysore, the Dewan of Junagadh, the Maharaja of Khetri, etc., who must be invited to join the meeting. Vivekananda even gave his disciple detailed instructions regarding the proposed meeting.<sup>29</sup> In the same vein he wrote to his brother monks in Calcutta to hold similar public meetings. He also sought sympathetic acknowledgement of his work in the U.S.A. from some eminent personalities of the country.

But no letter of recognition reached Vivekananda in the U.S.A. before the middle of July, 1894. In utter despair and

disgust he wrote to Haridas Viharidas Desai, the Dewan of Junagadh (June 20, 1894), "...a year has rolled by, and our countrymen could not even do so much for me as to say to the American people that I was a real *sannyasin* and no cheat, and that I represented the Hindu religion. Even this much, the expenditure of a few words, they could not do ! Brave, my countrymen ! " He further pointed out that so far as the people's reception was concerned, the denunciations made by Mozoomdar and Nagarkar (the Brahmo delegates at Chicago Parliament) and Sorabji (a Christian girl from Poona) had little effect on the U.S. nation, but so far as monetary help was concerned, these condemnations had made many of them take off their helping hands.<sup>30</sup>

In another letter to the disciples of Madras, dated June 28, 1894, Vivekananda drove home the same point. He wrote that in spite of his "best purpose " his prospects now seemed "well-nigh zero, " "not a word of that (Indian support to him) ever came to America. " On the other hand, all criticisms and denunciations in India were sedulously picked up by the missionaries and given wide publicity. And actually it resulted in the withdrawal of sympathy and support by many of his friends who had so long stood by him. He made the bitter comment, "but it is the punishment for relying upon man and upon brutes, for our countrymen are not men as yet. " <sup>31</sup>

### *Contemporary Indian Appreciation for Swamiji*

The Hindus of India actually started, though at a somewhat late date, to defend and praise Vivekananda as their accredited leader in meetings and writings. They held public meetings, wrote letters, published

29. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, Vol. 5, pp. 30-32.

30. *Ibid.*, Vol. 8, pp. 305-10.

31. *Ibid.*, pp. 310-12.



news in their papers and sent reports to the U.S. press and to important citizens. But there was a communication gap. Swamiji did not receive any news from India in his support before July, 1894. If his countrymen caused delay in organizing themselves for Vivekananda, much greater delay was caused in conveying that heartening news to him in that distant land.

On April 7, 1894, the Maharaja of Khetri wrote to Vivekananda a letter which he sent at once to Professor Wright. "...If a man like you," the Maharaja wrote, "would give up your long cherished design for bettering your mother country by getting some help from the noble, civilized people of the West, who else could even attempt to fulfil it?..."<sup>32</sup>

On April 10, 1894, was published a report in defence of Swamiji, interestingly enough, in the Brahmo paper, *The Indian Mirror*: "...It is doubtful whether Swami Vivekananda would have become so widely known, if he had not visited America. The broad-hearted Americans are to be thanked for whatever success the Swami met with in his exposition of Hinduism in the Parliament of Religions at Chicago. How far Swami Vivekananda succeeded in impressing his American hearers with the intrinsic worth of Hinduism is well known to us...we think that Hindus will be doing a grateful duty by presenting an address to the Swami, and also to the organizers of the Parliament of Religions but for whose help the Swami would have found it difficult to obtain such a strong footing in America. We hope our Hindu brethren all over the country will heartily join the movement...."<sup>33</sup>

Of all the Indian cities, Madras took the

lead in organizing a public meeting in honour of Vivekananda, which was held in Pachaiyappa's Hall on April 28, 1894 under the chairmanship of Dewan Bahadur S. Subramania Iyer. Many distinguished citizens, like Sri Ramaswami Mudaliar, attended the meeting and offered flowing tributes to Swamiji. The disciples of Madras, it may be noted, had sent Vivekananda to the United States and now they were giving the first public meeting in his honour. If Bengal had given birth to Vivekananda, it was Madras who discovered the genius in him, and gave him the recognition that he deserved. Moreover, the first meeting was arranged to felicitate Swamiji days before his letter of April 9 to Alasinga reached India. (In those days a letter from America took more than a month to reach this country.) Reports were also published in local newspapers. In the history of the growth of the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda movement, Madras legitimately occupies a unique place.

Interestingly, the Buddhists of this country did not hesitate to hold meetings and publish reports appreciating Swamiji's work in the U.S.A. H. Dharmapala, the Secretary of the Mahabodhi Society of Calcutta and the Buddhist representative at the Parliament of Religions at Chicago, spoke with admiration of Swamiji's achievement: He delivered a lecture on "Hinduism in America and Swami Vivekananda" at a public meeting in Calcutta held on May 14, 1894. It was attended by many Hindu and Buddhist dignitaries, including the Buddhist Archbishop of Japan, Utoki. Swami Shivananda referred to this meeting in his letter dated May 13, 1894.<sup>34</sup> *The Indian Mirror* of May 18 reported its proceedings.<sup>35</sup> This

32. *The Life of Swami Vivekananda*, Vol. 1, page 488.

33. *Ibid.* pp. 493-94.

34. *Mahapurushjir Patravali*, pp. 41-42.

35. *The Life of Swami Vivekananda*, Vol. 1, pp. 497-98

was the first meeting held in Calcutta. Dharmapala's warm acknowledgement of Vivekananda's success at Chicago encouraged other Bengalees to emulate him. Dharmapala's appreciation exposed glaringly before them the malicious attempt of Pratap Mozoomdar who had left no stone unturned to vilify Swamiji. This meeting in Calcutta frustrated Pratap's vile object and lowered him in public estimation in his native city. The news of Dharmapala's enthusiastic meeting reached Vivekananda in the U.S.A. by July 9, and it was probably the first news he got from India about the concerted move of his countrymen on his behalf. Swamiji heaved a sigh of relief in his letter to the Hale sisters.<sup>36</sup>

Almost simultaneously, Vivekananda received the news from Alasinga Perumal about the Madras meeting. The relieved and elated Swamiji sent his prompt reply on July 11, 1894.<sup>37</sup> The news from Madras was published in many leading newspapers of the U.S.A. The American public were soon convinced that Vivekananda was the bona fide representative of Hinduism in India. In India also, the Madras meeting set the stage for many others to follow. Meetings were held in quick succession at Kumbakonam (August 22), Bangalore (August 26) and at other places. The Bangalore meeting at the Central College was presided over by Sir Seshadri Iyer, the Dewan of Mysore.

Meanwhile, Haridas Viharidas Desai wrote a letter to Mr. Hale, speaking highly of Vivekananda's probity (Aug. 2, 1894). He wrote, "...the Swami is known to me for some years. I respect and revere him very much. He is sincere to the avocation he has

disinterestedly taken up for the good of the people at large. He has given up his family and social connections since about 12 years and has devoted himself entirely to the good of his own soul and that of others. He went to Chicago only with the avowed object of enlightening the American nation with the true religion of the Hindus, the knowledge of which he has acquired so much as to win the admiration of those who are in a position to appreciate it. He is a true friend of the Hindus and a staunch advocate of their religion..."<sup>38</sup> Mr. Desai was a man of standing, being the Dewan of Junagadh, and also a member of the Royal Commission on Opium. A letter coming from such a distinguished man carried much weight. This letter and that of the Raja of Khetri of April 7, mentioned earlier, were sent to Professor Wright in due course by Vivekananda.

In Calcutta the first big public meeting held on behalf of the Hindu society to honour Vivekananda's Chicago mission was at Sri Madanmohanji's Temple at Bagbazar on Aug. 31, 1894. Its chief speaker was Annadacharan Mitra, and principal organizer was Kironchandra Datta. The Indian Mirror (Sept. 13, 1894) and *Bharat Saptahik Patrika* (Bhadra, 1343 B.S., pp. 206-7) made reference to this meeting. It was attended by about a thousand people. Unfortunately, this meeting was largely ignored by the authorities and by many modern scholars in their writings. Sankari Prasad Basu's critical comments<sup>39</sup> about this meeting are refuted by Sanat Mukhopadhyay and Manju Datta.<sup>40</sup>

36. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, Vol. 8, page 316.

37. *Ibid.* Vol. 5, pp. 36-38.

38. *The Life of Swami Vivekananda*, Vol. 1, pp. 489-90.

39. Sankari Prasad Basu, Vol. 1, page 241.

40. Sanat Mukhopadhyay & Manju Datta, *Vivekananda Parikar Kiranchandra Datta O Tatkalia Samai* (Calcutta: 1989) pp. 30-37.



More important was the public meeting held in Swamiji's honour at the Town Hall, Calcutta, on Sept. 5, 1894. Calcutta was the birthplace of Vivekananda, the capital of British India and the nursing ground of all progressive movements in this country at that time. It had also been so long a centre of the anti-Vivekananda propaganda in the country. Naturally, a big meeting organized in this city by Swamiji's brother monks and attended by prominent citizens of Calcutta had a very great significance.

The person most active behind the organization of this Town Hall meeting was Swami Abhedananda. Staying at Balaram Bose's house, he contacted a large number of prominent citizens of Calcutta, and proceeded in such a way as to give representation to each community at the meeting. Ramakrishnananda and Saradananda also made untiring efforts to make the meeting a success. Monomohan Mitra and other householder devotees also helped them with all their mite. Justice Gooroodass Banerjee, not agreeing to preside, the meeting was finally presided over by Raja Peary Mohan Mookerjee of Uttarpara and was attended by about 4,000 people representing different classes, professions and predilections. Many prominent personalities were present, such as Pandit Madhsudan Smritiratna, Kamakshyanath Tarkabagish, Umacharan Tarkaratna, Shivanarayan Shiromani, Justice Gooroodass Banerjee (who later changed his view), Ganesh Chandra Chandra, Surendranath Banerjee, Jatindranath Roy Chowdhury, the Zamindar of Taki, Rakhalchandra Chowdhury, the Zamindar of Barisal, Barristers Manmatha Mallick and Nagendranath Ghose, editor of *The Indian Nation*, and others. Some prominent men sent letters to the organizers of the meeting warmly supporting Swamiji's cause.

Peary Mohan Mookerjee in his Presiden-

tial Address said: "...We are assembled here....to express our high sense of appreciation and deep gratitude to a simple *Sannyasin*, only thirty (?) years old, who has been expounding the truths of our religion to the great American people with an ability, tact and judgement, which have elicited the highest admiration. Brother Vivekananda has opened the eyes of an important section of the civilized world by explaining the great truths of the Hindu religion, and convinced them that the most valuable products of human thought in the regions of philosophy and religion, are to be found not in Western science and literature, but in the ancient shastras...." <sup>41</sup>

It was resolved in this great meeting that copies of all the resolutions moved in support of Swamiji's Western mission be sent to him, as also to Dr. Barrows and Mr. Snell. Resolutions were to be accompanied by a letter, addressed to Swamiji and signed by the Chairman, in which thanks of the local Hindus were conveyed for his able representation of their religion at Chicago. <sup>42</sup>

The proceedings of the Town Hall meeting were published in the form of a brochure from the New Calcutta Press. Reports were sent to Vivekananda and to some leading U.S. newspapers and personalities. The meeting confidently proclaimed Vivekananda to be the most honoured and bona fide representative of the Hindu society. It also recorded its grateful appreciation of his valuable services rendered to the cause of Hinduism at the Chicago Parliament and elsewhere. It formally offered its thanks and gratitude to the American public in general, and to Dr. J.H. Barrows, Chairman of the Parliament of Religions, and to Mr. Merwin Marie Snell, President of the Scientific Section, in

41. *Amar Jibankatha*, pp. 175-78.

42. *Ibid.* pp. 179-80.

particular. It silenced to a large measure Vivekananda's detractors, and vindicated his position. Further, it demonstrated that Swamiji enjoyed the full support and sympathy of the Indians at large. Finally, it encouraged Swamiji to carry out with greater tenacity the mission of his life, i.e., to vindicate the eternal values of Vedantic Hinduism, to glorify the Indian tradition in the West, to create a public opinion in those lands in favour of Indian values, to stimulate the sympathy of the American people for India, and to raise funds for uplifting the poor and the downtrodden in this country to the full stature of manhood.

### *The Genesis of a Movement*

The Chicago success, followed by public meetings and recognition of his work by his own countrymen created a congenial climate for Vivekananda's work in the United States. He continued to receive from India greater and greater appreciation, and came to realize in the depths of his soul that it was not a punishment but an immense joy to work for his countrymen. He now requested his countrymen to stop sending such eulogies to him. He even sent letters to Mrs. Hale and Mrs. Guernsey, asking them not to send clippings of newspapers, full of praises for his work. Only a few months after his letter of admonition to Alasinga (April 9, 1894), referred to above, Vivekananda wrote to the same disciple

(Jan. 12, 1895), "I am sorry, you still continue to send me pamphlets and newspapers, which I have written you several times not to do. I have no time to peruse them and take notice of them. Please send them *no more*." <sup>43</sup> It shows of what mental and spiritual stuff Vivekananda was made. Swamiji was not hankering for personal glory. He asked for appreciative reports from India when they were needed most in the interests of his missionary work abroad. He wanted them no longer than was absolutely necessary. His later communications show how much busy he was in the U.S.A. with his work. Already Swamiji's ideas were taking the shape of a movement pregnant with immense possibilities. Before Vivekananda's appearance at Chicago, India was only borrowing from the West. But from 1893, thanks to Swamiji's efforts, she appeared in the role of a giver of ideas to the West. Treated so long as the land of the slaves and the pariahs, India now came to be treated with respect and dignity by the Western nations. Not only Vivekananda emerged before the world, but also his country secured an honoured place in the comity of nations. Vivekananda was the pioneer of a great moral, intellectual, and spiritual revolution in the relations between the East and the West.

43. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, Vol. 5, page 66.



"And mind its mantle, dreamy net,  
Casts o'er them all and holds them fast.  
In warp and woof of thought are set  
Earth, hells and heavens, or worst or best.

Know these are but the outer crust—  
All space and time, all effect, cause,  
I am beyond all sense, all thought,  
The Witness of the Universe!

Not two nor many, 'tis but One,  
And thus in me all me's I have,  
I cannot hate, I cannot shun  
Myself from me—I can but love!

From dreams awake, from bonds be free!  
Be not afraid. This mystery,  
My shadow, cannot frighten me!  
Know once for all that I am He!

—*The Song of the Free* by Swami Vivekananda



# Jnana Yoga: Basis of All the Yogas

ROBERT P. UTTER

*The keynote of jñāna yoga is discrimination and dispassion. To see the real is discrimination, and to eschew the false is dispassion. The path of knowledge, therefore, forms the philosophical basis for all the Yogas. In his insightful paper, the author casts illumination on this subtle subject. The learned writer is a retired teacher of English and Philosophy at the City College of San Francisco, in the United States.*

Swami Vivekananda expressed the essence of non-dualism when he said:

*"The flash of light that will illumine the darkness for us; it is the Knowledge that is our nature. (There is no such thing as our 'birthright': we were never born.) All we have to do is to drive away the clouds that cover it."<sup>1</sup>*

The path of jñāna yoga is the actual practice of the philosophy of non-dualism, the striving towards and the achievement of the life of the everfree soul who has attained the full realization of his true self. On this path, the path and the goal are one; we practise the path by thinking constantly of the goal: "I am He!" We climb the ladder by constantly reminding ourselves we are beyond the means, the path, the ladder, and have already attained the goal because we never really lost it. It is not the point merely to climb; the point is to climb by reminding ourselves we do not need to climb.

Yet there is a path and the path is right reasoning, using reason to go beyond reason. But the reasoning is not the goal, and should never be confused with the goal. Like the other three paths, there is the lower aspect, the means, and the higher aspect, the goal, and we must be very

careful not to confuse the two.

Śaṅkara sums up the essence of the path and goal of jñāna yoga in Verse 45 of his *Vivekacūdāmaṇi* (The Crest-Jewel of Discrimination), in which he says:

*"Reasoning on the meaning of the Vedānta leads to efficient knowledge [the highest knowledge or the realization of the identity of the individual soul with God], which is immediately followed by the total annihilation of the misery born of relative existence."<sup>2</sup>*

In this verse Śaṅkara defines the path as logical reasoning and the goal as unitive knowledge of the infinite. He also emphasizes that ultimate knowledge kills all sorrow, a power which relative knowledge does not possess.

The path consists of using the finite mind to propel itself beyond its own limitations by philosophical analysis. This analysis is called the discrimination between the true and the false, the rejection of the false, and the use of the true as the basis for completely remoulding one's life on the foundations of spiritual philosophy. If certain aspects of life are found to be rationally worthless, we should then cease to pursue them. If certain other modes of

1. Swami Vivekananda, *Inspired Talks* (New York: Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Centre, 1958) page 131.

2. Śrī Śaṅkarācārya, *Vivekacūdāmaṇi*, Swami Madhavananda, Trans., (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1978) Verse 45.

conduct and belief are found to be true, we should pursue and cultivate them regardless of consequences. The whole effort is to establish what is real and what is not real, and to act accordingly.

Jñāna yoga, or the path of reason, is the philosophical basis for all the yogas. It is the first path set forth by Sri Krishna in answer to Arjuna's grief and refusal to fight. This path is also called the path of knowledge, for it leads to the ultimate knowledge of the identity between the individual soul and God. How do we "drive away the clouds that cover" the ultimate Light of Truth, to use Swami Vivekananda's phrase? That is the path itself, using reason to go beyond reason to the ultimate vision. To do this the follower of this path must have a mind in which reason is the predominant and energizing force so that he can actually put into practice what reason concludes. The path of jñāna yoga is living a life based on philosophical reasoning in order to reach the goal of intuitive or mystical knowledge of the Infinite.

We start with a premise and deduce conclusions from that premise. That is what all philosophy is supposed to do, though in actual practice it seldom does. Jñāna yoga starts with the premise that reality is of the nature not of matter or mind but of formless, eternal, infinite consciousness, spirit, divinity, or God. It is easy to see that the conclusions drawn from this premise would be entirely different from those drawn from a different premise. For example, we can see that on such a system the death of the body would have nothing to do with the essential spirit or infinite consciousness of the real person or soul. This is the principle and conclusion Sri Krishna states to Arjuna on the battlefield of Kurukshetra. He says:

*"The unreal never is. The Real never ceases*

*to be. . . . That by which all this is pervaded know to be imperishable. None can cause the destruction of that which is immutable. . . . It is never born, nor does it die, nor, having once been, does It again cease to be. Unborn, eternal, permanent, and primeval, It is not slain when the body is slain. . . . Weapons cut It not; fire burns It not; water wets It not; the wind does not wither It. . . . The Self, which dwells in all bodies, can never be slain. Wherefore you should not mourn for any creature."*<sup>3</sup>

This statement is perhaps the most famous of all expressions of the path and practice of jñāna yoga. It forms the basis on which Sri Krishna builds all his other answers and teachings which comprise the whole of the eighteenth chapter of the Gita. We can see from this passage that the path of jñāna yoga leads to a heroic life of supreme indifference to external fate and fortune and a total dedication to Nirguṇa Brahman, or God without attributes and the whole philosophy known as Advaita Vedanta or Non-Dualism. It may be combined with any or all of the other three paths: devotion, selfless action, and meditation. What is love but the bliss of infinite knowledge, and what are compassion and good deeds but the bliss of seeing nothing but God? Though much has been written on the subject of jñāna yoga, it still remains baffling to many. Yet the study of this path is the most rewarding of all studies, for it is the basis of all human life and endeavour, and its principles pervade all the world's religions and many works of both Eastern and Western philosophy, literature, art, dance, music, and architecture.

And it is not difficult to see why. Man is never satisfied to leave enigmas unsolved, and the riddle of what is real and what is

3. *The Bhagavad Gītā*, Swami Nikhilananda, Trans. (New York: Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Centre, 1944) Versus 16-30.



unreal and what we should do about it is the riddle of all riddles. Whatever we seem to be doing in life, we are really all striving only to answer this riddle. The path of jñāna yoga is the only successful attempt to do so.

## 2

There is a famous Indian work on the philosophy of Advaita Vedanta called *Dṛg-Drśya Viveka* (Discrimination between the Seer and the Seen), of uncertain authorship, which expresses the basic assumption of non-dualistic philosophy. The first verse states:

*"The form [sense object] is perceived and the eye is the perceiver. [The eye] is perceived and the mind is its perceiver. The mind with its modifications is perceived and the Witness [the Self] is verily the perceiver. But it [the Witness] is not perceived [by any other]."*<sup>4</sup>

In Verse 5 of the same work the word "Consciousness" is used for the Self or Witness of all phenomena, and it is described as never-changing. In other words, Consciousness is Absolute and Eternal Being or Ultimate Reality, completely independent of time, space, and causality. Thus at the outset the statement is made that all knowledge comes from Absolute Consciousness and not from the sense organs or the mind. This is the basic assumption of non-dualistic philosophy. Is this assumption arbitrary, or is it based on rational grounds?

In philosophy there are really only two mutually exclusive assumptions we can make about ultimate reality. One is that consciousness is ultimately real; the other is that independent, non-sentient matter is ul-

timately real. Many actual systems of thought are based on some kind of combination of the two, but since these two alternatives are mutually exclusive, no combinations of them can logically stand.

The whole philosophy known by various names such as realism, naturalism, or materialism is based on the assumption that ultimate reality is independent, non-sentient matter, from which it follows that mind and its ideas are products of non-conscious matter. At first sight this seems to be the view most of us have of our world, but a little thought will reveal its hopeless inconsistencies. How can conscious mind and its ideas be products of anything that by definition has not a trace of consciousness in it? Consciousness is either absolute, or it simply does not exist. But we know it does exist, for we are very much aware that we are conscious beings. The fact that consciousness exists is basic to all that we know of ourselves and our world.

Whatever I am conscious of, that is, ideas, must be of the nature of consciousness too, however much they may appear to be objects independent of me as knower. But a little reflection will reveal that this assumed independence of my perceptions cannot be the case, for how can an independent, non-sentient "thing" or object ever enter into my consciousness as an idea? If we say an idea is a "copy" of this independent "object" or "thing," then we must ask, how do I know it is an accurate copy? Do I ever know the original, independent, non-sentient "thing-in-itself"? The answer must be that I cannot. But if I cannot compare the copy with the original, how do I know the copy is accurate? How do I know it is a copy of anything at all if I cannot know non-sentient matter? How can I ever claim any idea of mine to be "true" if I cannot compare it with that of which it is a supposed to be the copy? Materialism thus

4. *Dṛg-Drśya Viveka*, Swami Nikhilananda, Trans., 3rd ed. (Mysore: Sri Ramakrishna Ashrama, 1955) page 1.

cannot account for any knowledge at all.

Śaṅkara states: "This universe is verily Brahman...for that which superimposed (on something) has no separate existence from its substratum."<sup>5</sup> The universe may appear to be independent of consciousness, but that is an illusion. The only thing we ever know is God, Brahman, Absolute Consciousness. All ideas are nothing but God, the Universal Ground of all things. This was also taught by Sri Ramakrishna, who always said that God and His Creation are equally divine, for they are one, not two.

We thus see that, speaking philosophically, the assumption of consciousness as ultimate reality is the only possible assumption, for we know consciousness exists since we are conscious of our consciousness, whereas independent, non-sentient matter cannot be known in any sense, not even as an abstract assumption. The next question is, what do we do with this assumption?

### 3

We now come to the actual spiritual practice of the path of jñāna yoga. Starting with the assumption that infinite consciousness is ultimate reality, we then must not only deduce the philosophical system that follows, but we must put that system into practice if it is to become a spiritual path. How do we do it?

The answer is we must renounce everything that is not the infinite, that is, we must discriminate between the true and the false, the real and the unreal, hold fast to the true and real come what may, and discard the false and the unreal. It is simple to state this, but to put this into practice is the most difficult of all human tasks. It is a war that

makes all actual wars seem pale by comparison. It is a war waged throughout the inmost reaches of the human soul. (In ancient Indian literature it is symbolized by the Battle of Kurukshetra, before which Sri Krishna gave his famous discourse to Arjuna.)

This soul-battle involves a complete revolution of character and lifestyle on the part of the follower of this path. No longer can he pursue worldly ends, such as name, fame, wealth, bodily pleasures, mental pleasures, entertainments, and so forth. No longer ought he to fear or hate persons, labours, dangers, disasters, disease, or death. The path of jñāna yoga involves giving up everything but God Himself. It is the total "not this, not this" of everything finite. Swami Vivekananda said:

*"Tell the mind this incessantly—that what we see never existed; that there is only 'I'. Flash!—the dream will break. Think day and night, 'This universe is zero; only God is.'"*<sup>6</sup>

If all this seems like a terrifying recipe for spiritual practice, we must remember that we cannot forever evade the responsibility to ourselves to know our true identity. Self-knowledge is for each one of us our only possible destiny. We may put it off over and over again, but at last we must come to grips with it. Our very own deepest Self will not let it rest. Knowledge is inescapable, inevitable, but we must fight to the death for it, to the death of all our false masks, illusions, and dreams. Our motto must be: Death to all falsehood, victory to truth alone! We have the courage within us, for each one of us is the whole infinite truth itself. Why put off the quest any longer? We only prolong our own suffering. We have long been suffering for falsehoods. Why shrink from suffering for truth alone?

5. *Vivekacūḍāmaṇi*, Verse 231.

6. *Inspired Talks*, page 131.



But it is a daunting task. Many times we shall fail, but we must keep trying. Sri Krishna recognized the difficulty of this path when he said to Arjuna that it is extremely difficult for most people to know the Absolute Godhead all by Itself, that is, without form.<sup>7</sup> Yet he reveals to Arjuna the terrible aspect of God, the All-Destroyer, the Devourer of Māyā. This is the revelation in spectacular visionary form of the essence of the total renunciation involved in the path of jñāna yoga. This vision terrifies Arjuna so much that he begs Sri Krishna to take it away and show His kindly form again. Sri Krishna does so, and Arjuna's terror is allayed. Yet Sri Krishna must have considered it important to reveal this terrible aspect of God to Arjuna for the sake of his spiritual progress. This knowledge, however, is not secret or hidden; we pretend we do not see it, yet see it we do, for do we not all know perfectly well that time destroys every creature, every object, every form, every act, every event that exists in the relative world? We see the evidence every day we live, yet we refuse to learn renunciation from that experience. We blind ourselves to universal death so that we may enjoy our sense pleasures and use them to hide the awful truth from ourselves. The jñāna yogi forces himself to contemplate this truth of universal death so that he may make spiritual progress towards what is eternal and immortal. To do so, the jñāni must consider the philosophy of dreams.

## 4

The philosophy of dreams is entirely different from a doctor's using dream analysis to explore a patient's mind. Dream philosophy means discerning a profound philosophical meaning in the phenomena of dreams.

7. *Bhagavad Gītā*, XII, 5.

When we dream we first obliterate the type of consciousness we call "waking" and the "waking self" that goes with it, and then create a dream world and a dream self which we then assume are the "real" world and the "real" self. This dream creation means that there also comes into play, though completely hidden from the dream self, another self, namely, the dream-creator or dreamer. This self never appears to anyone, not to the waking self, not to the dream self, but somebody creates the dream, for upon waking we often wonder why or how we dreamed thus and so, and wonder at the incomprehensibility of having done so. Yet all these mysterious selves are my own self all the time, for there is no one else involved in what I call, possessively, "my" dream. But what do I know about creating dreams? Some self unknown to me or anybody else created my dream which only I can remember, and which seemed very "real" to me at the time, but which, now that I am awake, seems totally unreal.

Now here is the lesson to be learned from this philosophical analysis of dreams. If I can obliterate the waking world and waking self and substitute a dream world and dream self for them, and if there is a secret, completely hidden "self-who-dreams" unknown to either the dream self or the waking self, then is it not possible for some self unknown to the waking self to obliterate the real, eternal, true Self and substitute for it another self and world corresponding to the dream self and dream world, in other words my empirical or waking self and waking world, and to create all kinds of adventures for this unreal self to go through and to believe to be real? The answer is that if dreams are unreal from the waking standpoint, so also is the waking world from the Divine standpoint, for, like dreams, waking objects are unstable, unpredictable, changeable, and

impermanent. Moreover, if I can wake up from the illusion of dreams, can I not also wake up from the illusion of waking experience? The answer is that I can, however long it may take, and I must, for I shall never be satisfied if I do not.

When I wake up from the dream of waking life, then I realize that all these selves of which I was before largely unaware are really various aspects of my own self. It logically follows from this philosophical analysis of dreams, and from my own direct knowledge when I am awakened, that I am the dream, I am the dreamer, I am the dream-creator, I am the dream world, I am the sleeping self, I am the waking world, I am Māyā the Creator, and I am the Eternal Self who witnesses all yet is not itself known by any of these subordinate selves of mine. It also follows that to realize my true self I must see all these relative selves as figments in the larger dream of life and death. To say that all these selves are one is to say that the Witness of them all alone is real and all the others are unreal. That Witness is real only because it alone perceives them all but none of them perceive the Witness.

Now we know the true meaning of the total renunciation demanded on the path of jñāna yoga. It means awakening from all the dreams of life and death and seeing them all as but creations of the cosmic creator of dreams, or the Creator God. (That is how the Buddha got his name; it means "the Awakened One," one who has awakened from the dream of life and death.) According to jñāna yoga, the Creator God of the universe is Himself tainted by ignorance, otherwise He would not be able to create. He creates by the power of māyā or ignorance. Māyā first hides the truth, and then creates illusion in its place, just as clouds first hide the sun and then create rain and snow in place of

the sunlight. Thus in order to create, the Witness must make Itself less than all-knowing, and out of its ignorance the world is formed. Yet all the while, the Creator God is ever the true non-dual, Absolute Self, unsullied by and free from the dreams of form which It as Creator creates.<sup>8</sup>

Thus we see that the philosophical analysis of dreams leads us to the heart of the mystery of knowledge and ignorance, selfhood, life and death, creation and uncreation, renunciation, and illumination. The *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* devotes a whole chapter (Book IV, Chapter iii) to a discussion of the four states of consciousness: waking, dream, deep sleep, and the "fourth state" or illumination, showing how important it has been since ancient times for the seeker of truth to meditate on the philosophical meaning of waking, sleep, dreams, and illumination. It points out that we can never be satisfied to remain in the waking state that is as unreal as dreams. When we realize the unreality of the waking state, we will strive to escape from it by becoming illumined.

We can now see what purity means according to the path of jñāna yoga. Purity means total non-duality, in which God alone is and nothing else appears. Even dreamless sleep is impure according to this, for though it appears to exclude all differentiation between perceiver and perceived, it is not infinite consciousness, the true definition of God, but rather unconsciousness or the complete lack of any appearance of consciousness. It thus appears to the waking self to be the opposite of consciousness of any kind. True infinite consciousness, on the other hand, is not the opposite of anything, for there is nothing except the infinite consciousness in existence, and there can be no "other" form

8. *Dṛg-Dr̥śya Viveka*, Verses 13-19.



of consciousness opposed to it within it or outside it. Thus dreamless sleep, which appears to be totally non-dual, is not non-dual at all, being differentiated from the waking and the dream state. The "fourth state," the state of the mystical experience or God-realization, is not really a "state" of consciousness at all; it is the source of all appearances but it is not itself an appearance but is rather the indescribable ground of all appearances. From the point of view of the waking state it may be erroneously regarded as having the waking, dream, and dreamless state as attributes; but they do not limit or alter the nature of pure consciousness at all. Pure consciousness is undivided, non-dual Godhead, without anything other than God to obtrude upon its limitlessness. From the point of view of pure consciousness itself there is nothing other than it in existence anywhere, any time, for other than it there is no space or time to limit its infinite, eternal being.<sup>9</sup>

## 5

The path of jñāna yoga thus leads to the heart of the infinite Itself. Try as we will, we cannot formulate this transcendental heart of pure being in words. It exceeds all words, all thoughts, all definitions. Knowledge of it is immediate, infinite, eternal, undivided into knower and known. It thus seems to many to be distant, cold, elusive, and unreachable. Yet the path leads to the very inmost Self of all of us. Swami Vivekananda says:

*"There is no individuality except in the Infinite. That is the only condition that does not change. Everything else is in a state of flux. We are struggling towards individuality;*

*and that is the Infinite. That is the real nature of man. When a man can say, 'I am in all that lives; I am the universe,' then alone comes the state of fearlessness. To talk of immortality in constantly changing things is absurd.... Infinite cannot be divided; infinity cannot be broken into pieces. It is the same one undivided unit forever; and this is the individual man, the Real Man."*<sup>10</sup>

Thus spoke one of the greatest jñāna yogis of all time, one who lived and thought and practised the path of non-dualism. If, as he says, the infinite is the real Self of man, then each one of us must learn to seek that real Self and to discard all false masks, no matter what the cost in suffering. But lest we think that the path of jñāna yoga is a bleak and joyless path, let us remember that what the devotee learns when he gains the ultimate vision of Nirguṇa Brahman, God without qualities, is that God is infinite Being, infinite Consciousness, and infinite Bliss in one. These are not separate attributes but the inseparable essence of Godhead. In Sanskrit they are written as one word, *Sacchidānanda*, to express their oneness. We may call them three-in-one, but they are neither three nor one, but three names for the same Being. The three are a unity without any differences whatsoever. God transcends all human ideas and words. The Divine Essence involves all three equally, Being-Consciousness-Bliss inseparable. The path of jñāna yoga reaches the goal in which being, knowledge, and bliss are present in infinite measure. There is thus no lack of joy in the infinite Goal of jñāna yoga.<sup>11</sup>

The jñāna yogi becomes a totally free soul, an *avadhūta*, who has shaken off all the

9. See *The Upaniṣads*, Swami Nikhilananda, Trans., Vol. I, "Discussion of Brahman," (New York: Harpers, 1945) pp. 63-75, and pp. 92-95.

10. Swami Vivekananda, *Jñāna Yoga*, "The Real Nature of Man", (New York: Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Centre, 1970) pp. 13-14.

11. *The Upaniṣads*, Vol. I, pp. 33-50.

shackles of the world. This totally free state is celebrated in the world-defying, rapturous book called *The Avadhūta Gītā* by Dattatreya, who says such things as the following:

*"The Self does not become pure through the practice of six-limbed yoga. It certainly does not become purified by the destruction of the mind. It certainly is not made pure by the instructions of the teacher. It is Itself the Truth, It is Itself the illumined One. There is no body made up of five elements; nor is there anyone who is disembodied. All is verily the Self alone...."*

*"I am not bound, I am not, indeed, liberated, and I am not different from Brahman. Neither doer nor enjoyer, I am devoid of distinctions of the pervaded and the pervader."*

*"As water, when water has been poured into water, has no distinctions, so puruṣa (soul) and prakṛti (nature) appear nondifferent to me."<sup>12</sup>*

So speaks Dattatreya, celebrating the bliss of non-duality. When we reach the goal we have left behind all differentiation, and we swim in the sea of infinite Godhead. Is not this attainment worth all the struggles of renunciation? The goal is total freedom. Dattatreya's book is the ultimate expression of "not this, not this," for he says:

*"Always 'not this, not this' to both the formless and the formed. Only the Absolute exists, transcending difference and non-difference."<sup>13</sup>*

12. Dattatreya, *Avadhūta Gītā* (The Song of the Free), Swami Ashokananda, Trans. (Madras: Sri Ramakrishna Math, Mylapore) Verses 48-51.

13. *Avadhūta Gītā*, Verse 62.

Thus does the complete jñāna yogi dismiss all means of reaching the goal; for him only the goal exists; the means are all swallowed up and forgotten in the total bliss of absolute freedom of spirit.

## 6

Sooner or later we must meet our real self face to face—meet, melt, and merge with it by realizing we have never been separate from it. Sooner or later we must sacrifice the false ego and identify with the infinite Self alone. It is jñāna yoga that can do this, for it is jñāna within the other three paths that gives them their power of attaining unity. The lover and the beloved become one only because of the jñāna within bhakti. The traveller and the path of selfless action and the goal become one only because of the jñāna within karma. The meditator and the object of meditation become one only because of the jñāna within rāja yoga. It is jñāna yoga that completes the other paths and reveals the same final, inexpressible goal of total unity at the end of each path, the One-without-a-second.

Superhuman as the path of jñāna may sound, the superhuman result is quite plausible, possible, and logically inevitable, because this path posits the complete identity of knower and known from eternity to eternity. Already I know, I possess the knowledge I seem not to have, just as the dreamer already knows who he is, though in the dream he seems not to know. Already I know I am infinite; I just have to know that I know. "Do not seek Him," said Swami Vivekananda. And that is the first and last word on jñāna yoga.<sup>14</sup>

14. *Inspired Talks*, page 52.





# The Twelve Steps of Spiritual Recovery

DR. GEORGE FEUERSTEIN

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In recent years, much has been said and written about addiction to alcohol, tobacco, drugs, food, sex and relationships. We can now appreciate how widespread a phenomenon addiction really is. In my recent book *Sacred Sexuality* I have made the point that ordinary life itself can be considered a form of addiction, because we are habituated to its dominant state of consciousness.<sup>1</sup>

That consciousness revolves around the dichotomy between ego and world. We habitually experience ourselves as separate from everything and everyone else. By calling this strongly ingrained habit of perception an addiction, we admit to ourselves that this state, though common, is not natural.

First of all, we engage in collective self-denial, for we deny that there is anything wrong with our "ordinary" state. Second, it engenders isolation and fear. Third, we believe the myth that we are really powerless to do anything about it anyway. We weave, fourth, all kinds of explanatory tales to justify our present condition to ourselves and each other. In other words, we engage in massive repression. Fifth, we are quite inflexible, dogmatic, and arrogant about defending our position. And yet, sixth, we are suffering our mood of separation, self-centeredness, and self-fragmentation.

Our addiction is so potent that we can-

not shake this habit even when we have realized that our habit of egoic self-encapsulation is artificial and that it rests on a denial of the essential interconnectedness and interdependence of everything. This precisely has been the bold claim of generations of mystics and spiritual visionaries who have experienced the unbroken unity and wholeness of the cosmos.

From this perspective, then, ordinary life is based on a jaundiced view of reality. When Freud spoke of the psychopathology of everyday life, he caught a glimpse of this fact. Only he did not look deeply enough, or he would have seen that the dichotomic consciousness itself is at the root of our malaise.

Spiritual life is a course of gradual recovery from the addiction to the peculiar type of awareness that splits everything into subject and object. This primary addiction is the seedbed from which arise all secondary addictions. These are possible only because the ego is confronted by objects, which it tries to control or by which it is controlled. The secondary addictions are all substitutes for the bliss or ecstasy that is the essence of the unitive condition. They are thus desperate, if mistaken, attempts to remove the primary addiction, which is the egoic consciousness itself. They are mistaken because they merely fortify the egoic habit of distinguishing subject from object. Aldous Huxley saw this very clearly. He said:

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1. See G. Feuerstein, *Sacred Sexuality: Living the Vision of the Erotic Spirit* (Los Angeles: J.P. Tarcher, 1992).

"The urge to transcend self-conscious selfhood is, as I have said, a principal

appetite of the soul. When, for whatever reason, men and women fail to transcend themselves by means of worship, good works, and spiritual exercises, they are apt to resort to religion's chemical surrogates—alcohol and 'goof-pills' in the modern West, alcohol and opium in the East, hashish in the Mohammedan world, alcohol and marijuana in Central America, alcohol and coca in the Andes, alcohol and the barbiturates in the more up-to-date regions of South America."<sup>2</sup>

Huxley did not even mention workaholism and sex as two widely used substitutes of ecstasy. He spoke, however, of some people's fascination with, and fatal attraction to, precious stones. This passion for gems, Huxley observed, is anchored in the fact that they "bear a faint resemblance to the glowing marvels seen with the inner eye of the visionary."<sup>3</sup> But deeper still than such splendid visions is the transcendental "light" of undivided Being itself.

Realizing that "light" through ecstatic self-transcendence is the ultimate form of healing person and planet. That is the purpose of authentic spirituality. Spiritual life can usefully be pictured as a progressive recovery from the addiction of ordinary life, which is inherently schizoid and hence lacking in fullness and bliss. The well-known twelve-step programme of recovery used in the literature on addiction can serve as a convenient model also for the spiritual process. Here are the twelve steps of spiritual recovery:

1. We admit the fact that our ordinary human condition, based on the dualistic perception of life, is a stubborn habit that

we normally conceal from ourselves through denial.

2. We begin to look and ask for guidance in our effort to cultivate a new outlook that embraces the spiritual vision of the unity of all existence. The means of doing so are varied—from supportive spiritual environments to uplifting books.

3. We initiate positive changes in our behaviour affirming that new outlook.

4. We practise self-understanding, that is, adopt conscious responsibility for noticing our automatic programmes and where they fall short of our new understanding of life.

5. We make a commitment to going through the necessary catharsis, or purification, of our cognitive and emotional patterns until our new outlook becomes a stable disposition, replacing the egoic habit of splitting everything into irreconcilable opposites.

6. We learn to be flexible and open to life so that we can continue to learn and grow on the basis of our new outlook.

7. We practise humility in the midst of our endeavours to mature spiritually. In this way we avoid the danger of psychic inflation.

8. We assume responsibility for what we have understood about life and the principles of spiritual recovery, applying it to our all relationships so that we can be a benign influence in the world.

9. Guided by our new outlook, we work on the integration of our multiply divided psyche.

10. We cultivate real self-discipline in all matters, great and small.

11. We increasingly practise spiritual communion, or the art of kything, which connects us to the inner dimension of all beings and things.

12. We open ourselves to the possibility of ecstasy, the breakthrough of transcen-

2. A. Huxley, *The Doors of Perception/Heaven and Hell* (Harmondsworth, England: Penguin Books, 1959).

3. *Ibid.*, page 86.

(Continued on page 515)



# Food from Heaven

SUBHASH LAKHOTIA

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We have not seen heaven and in that event how could one expect to taste the food from heaven? A common question to perplex any individual. Well, the answer is a positive one; everyone of us can have the taste of heavenly food brought for us exclusively. The magic formula for having a direct taste and experience of tasting this food from heaven is really very simple and is just a child's play.

Here is the magic formula for food from heaven. Whenever you buy any good food stuff for yourself and your family, be it in the form of fruits or sweets, first take out a portion of these eatables and serve it to the poor and down-trodden and then start consuming yourself. It may be substantial food, or food articles, or fruits. Believe it or not, by just doing this small act of charity of distributing to the poor and then taking for yourself, what you consume would have an altogether new taste. The taste of the fruit or

sweets or food stuff would change and you would soon experience the taste of the food from heaven. Just try it out once. You will never stop serving the poor first and then consuming for yourself when you feel like having a real taste of heavenly food. It is made delicious by God exclusively for you just as a reward for your small act of being concerned for the less fortunate of our brethren.

Swami Vivekananda, while addressing on Bhakti Yoga, also mentioned that "when the season's produce first comes into the market, such as strawberries or mangoes, a man buys some of them and then gives to the poor. Then he eats of them, and it is a very good example to follow in this country." According to Swami Vivekananda this act is known as KRIYA work—doing good to others, which also helps in the process of God realisation.



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## The Twelve Steps of Spiritual Recovery

*(Continued from page 514)*

dental unity into our consciousness, whereby the ego principle is unhinged and we fully recover "our" spiritual identity. Through this awakening we are made whole.



# The Lion

‘APPU’

Comes the lion upright in bearing  
To carry out a mission far-reaching  
Majestic in movement,  
Knowing freedom, ever  
Manliness personified,  
Doubting strength, Never.

Countenance radiating light and peace  
Roar of his word crossing the boundless space  
Shaking the world from slumber deep,  
Nudging the sheep-masks of those who weep.  
Nerves of steel and iron muscles  
Abiding in truth forev’r  
Courageous in deeds and born to lead  
Harkening unmanly fears, Never.

Wandering the world like a valiant knight  
Heart melted beholding the motherland’s plight  
Lost in meditation on the last rock for light  
Gaining the vision which gave him full sight  
To regain once more the nation’s glory  
Heeding the Master’s beckoning call  
Pain of the cross, never caring at all.

Eyes penetrating the depths of hearts  
Exhorting the *tyāgis* with turban manes  
Charging us with the spirit of rishi lore  
Leading to ideals of Vedic yore—  
Forward! Onward! turn back, whither?

Thus came the Lion of this age  
Opening a grand and golden new page  
From the summit sending his clarion call  
Instilling the spirit in the hearts of us all.  
Urging to each brain and conscience—  
Arise ! Awake ! And stop not till the goal is reached !





# News & Reports

## WORLD'S PARLIAMENT OF RELIGIONS, 1993

### *At Chicago*

About 6000 people representing virtually every religion gathered for an extraordinary conclave—the 1993 Parliament of the World's Religions held from August 28, 1993 to September 4, 1993 in the Palmer House Hilton Hotel and other sites.

This event commemorates the 1893 World's Parliament of Religions, the first international meeting of its kind when members of 41 religious denominations and traditions met for 17 days (September 11, 1893 to September 27, 1893). Hinduism, Buddhism and other Eastern religions made their Western debut at that time and the worldwide inter-faith movement was born. The 1893 Parliament is correctly considered a landmark in the history of inter-religious dialogues.

A multi-faith council was formed as far back as in 1988 to plan the 1993 Parliament which sought to lay the groundwork for effective inter-religious cooperation resulting in fewer religion-tinged conflicts and more influence for religious groups and their leaders when it comes to solving global issues. The Parliament was intended to include seminars, workshops, communal celebrations, worship services and exhibitions of music and dance among its various activities making no distinction based on religious convictions. Every step was taken with a fond hope that it will promote mutual understanding and tolerance.

This Parliament was financed by grants from foundations and donors and registration fees. Registration forms for the meeting bore such self-descriptions by participants as "Buddhist Christian," "Catholic Hindu," "Multi-denominational" and "Jewish Hindu Witch."

Chicago Mayor Richard Daley and Illinois Governor Jim Edgar addressed the opening ceremony. In all there were more than 700 lectures, panel discussions, workshops and exhibits of religious art, music and dance.

With deep-throated Buddhist chants, a chorus of songs in Latin by the Chicago Music of the Baroque, elegant American Indian rituals and spirited prayers in many languages, clerics and devotees from across the globe formally opened the Parliament of the World's Religions on August 28, 1993. Rev. David Ramage, Chairman of the Parliament's Board, said in the opening address: "I wish for this gathering that our dream will come alive in the world and that we may travel together in a future of genuine hope."

Notwithstanding such high expectations, religious differences did surface. The 3-hour morning session called "Voices of the Dispossessed" was the most volatile of the meeting. One section felt that the Parliament was meant to be a celebration of respect for religious differences and a hopeful step toward cooperation and unity under the One God who is called by many names and worshipped in many ways. There was to be no voices of discord. Another section held that rather than feeling tarnished by such incidents, these discussions of conflicts were welcome in the hope that this may help find ways of resolving such disputes without bloodshed or ill-feeling. Jim Kinney, Vice-Chairman of the Parliament and Executive Director of the Common Ground in Chicago which seeks the common grounds of religions expressed the latter stand in the words: "If we want unity, we have to work on the tremendous issues that divide us."

Side by side with showing how religions can divide people, evidence was also given how religions were equally effective in uniting one another. The 1960's civil rights anthem "We Shall Overcome" was sung by a group of women and people from every continent stood up and joined hands to sing their determination to overcome all obstacles that stood in the way of harmonious living.

Stating that the international religious



gathering's purpose seemed to be "compromised" by the "distinctive participation of certain quasi-religious groups," the orthodox Christian representatives cancelled their involvement in the Parliament on September 30, 1993. It was held by them that "it would be inconceivable for Orthodox Christianity to establish a perceived relationship with groups which profess no belief in God or a supreme being." It was not mentioned specifically whose presence was objectionable. But its concerns seemed to be directed to participants such as witches and neo-pagans or worshippers of the ancient goddesses like the Egyptian deity Isis who were given a forum alongside Christian and non-Christian faith groups from around the globe. On the Orthodox Christian's decision to discontinue being part of the Parliament, Rev. David Ramage, Chairman of the Parliament, said, "We regret this very much....We understand that these communities are not comfortable with being in conversation with the breadth of religious participation actively present at this Parliament."

A Chicago Buddhist group objected to prayers at the Parliament indicating that the gathering is for the "worshippers of Almighty God and Creator God." The Buddhist Society of Compassionate Wisdom suggested using "Great Being" or "Power of the Transcendent" instead of "God" expressing "mutual understanding and appreciation of different approaches to spirituality and salvation."

On September 2, 1993 four local and national Jewish organizations including the Anti-Defamation League of the B'nai B'rith withdrew as participants because Black Muslim leader Louis Farrakhan of the Nation of Islam spoke at the gathering.

A Sikh speaker charged the Indian Government with repressive actions in Kashmir and was shouted down by some other Indian participants on August 30, 1993.

The Dalai Lama, Tibet's exiled spiritual leader, closed the historic Parliament of World's Religions on September 4, 1993 at 6 p.m. at Petrillo Band Shell in Grant Park asking the world's religious leaders to unite

their minds and hearts in the effort for world inter-religious peace. He said:

"When you return to your own places, please keep the spirit which we have experienced here. Obstacles and difficulties are bound to happen....Our determination must be firm. No matter how difficult, with constant effort, without losing hope and determination, we will succeed."

Most of the 250 world religious leaders attending the Parliament endorsed a Declaration of Global Ethic on September 4, 1993 urging an end to armed conflict affirming equality of men and women and the need for economic justice. The document affirmed non-violence, honesty, kindness and fairness and was primarily authored by the famous Swiss Roman Catholic theologian Hans Kung and refined over a period of three years. It warned that unless humans are guided by an overreaching global ethic, the future of the planet earth and the human race will be bleak. On September 4, 1993 none of the Jewish groups at the Parliament signed the declaration to reach a common ground of ethical behaviour, though not on account of the content of the declaration itself but on account of the presence of Farrakhan.

The declaration comes at a time when religious, scientific, political and environmental leaders are talking of a "paradigm shift" toward the development of a "global consciousness"—the realization that all things are interconnected. The Parliament stressed the declaration does not advocate "a global ideology or a single unified religion, and certainly not the domination of one religion over others." The declaration also said: "Our different religious and cultural traditions must not prevent our common involvement in opposing all forms of inhumanity and working for greater humaneness." In drafting the statement, the authors clearly admitted the failings and shortcomings of the religions: "Time and again we see leaders and members of religions incite aggression, fanaticism, hate and xenophobia—even inspire violent and bloody conflicts. Religion often is misused for purely power-political goals, including war. We are filled with disgust." The statement further says:



"We have the duty to resist wherever the domination of one sex over the other is preached—even in the name of religious conviction." It was however held that much can be learnt from the ancient wisdom of our religions and applied to modern circumstances.

Commenting on this endorsement of the Declaration, Rev. David Ramage Jr., President of the Parliament said that it was "beyond our wildest expectation in terms of endorsement and development, and we hope the world will find it a useful thing."

*Commemoration At Calcutta*

The Centenary of the Chicago Addresses of Swami Vivekananda was celebrated at Calcutta during the period September 11, 1993 to September 19, 1993. The functions on the 11th, 12th, 18th, and 19th were held in the Netaji Indoor Stadium. Over 12000 lovers and admirers enrolled as members and participated in the inaugural function. For the second, third and fourth days, there were an additional 2500, 1000, and 1000 members respectively. The Netaji Indoor Stadium was packed and the deliberations of the distinguished delegates could be heard in pin-drop silence.

One is reminded of Swami Vivekananda's immortal words: "Few understand the power of thought. If a man goes into a cave, shuts himself in, and thinks one really great thought and dies, that thought will permeate the walls of that cave, vibrate through space, and at last permeate the whole human race. Such is the power of thought." Indeed over 12000 people professing various religious beliefs and following different religious practices sat for hours together with one thought of harmony and peace in the modern cave of the Netaji Indoor Stadium. One can well imagine the effect of that concentrated thought.

There were three sessions on each of the four days. More than 110 distinguished speakers and scholars from Australia, Bangladesh, Canada, China, Finland, France, Germany, Holland, Israel, Japan, Malaysia, Netherlands, New Zealand, Rumania, Russia, Sri Lanka, U.K., U.S.A., and Vietnam expressed their views and convictions on "Swami Vivekananda's

Concept of Harmony: Prospects and Problems".

The benedictory speech was delivered by Most Revered Srimat Swami Bhuteshanandaji Maharaj, President, Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission in the inaugural session on September 11, 1993. The Chief Guest was Sri K. V. Raghunatha Reddy, the Governor of West Bengal. Revered Srimat Swami Ranganathanandaji Maharaj gave the Key Note Address. Swami Atmasthanandaji Maharaj, General Secretary, Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission gave the welcome address. Swami Lokeshwaranandaji in the vote of thanks expressed that he was the proudest man that day for being instrumental in bringing about the event. And on the concluding day he still was the most enviable person for having brought about such a successful and healthy mingling of people from all over the world on a common platform.

The twelve sessions were chaired respectively by Mr. Arjun Singh, Minister for Human Resource Development, Government of India; Dr. Houston Smith, Thomas J. Watson Professor of Religion and Distinguished Adjunct Professor of Philosophy (Emeritus) from Syracuse University, U.S.A.; Dr. B. Sheik Ali, Member and Formerly Vice-Chancellor of the Mangalore and Goa Universities; Rt. Rev. Dr. D.C. Ghorai, Bishop of Calcutta; Prof. Robin Twite, The Leonard Davis Institute for International Relations, Hebrew University, Jerusalem.; Dr. R.K. Dasgupta, Formerly Director, National Library, Calcutta; Mr. A.N. Ray, Formerly Chief Justice of India; Swami Chetanananda, Minister-in-Charge, Vedanta Society of St. Louis, U.S.A.; Swami Smaranananda, President, Ramakrishna Math, Madras; Swami Sridharananda, Secretary, Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, Lucknow; Prof. Mark Mokuski, Director, Institute of Molecular Genetics, Moscow; Mr. M.M. Ismail, Formerly Chief Justice, Madras High Court.

During the inaugural session, the Department of Communication, Government of India, released a commemorative postage stamp bearing Swami Vivekananda's 'Chicago posture' with the



memorable Art Institute on the background.

The speakers brought greetings from the people of their motherland to the people of Calcutta, a place sanctified by the birth of Swami Vivekananda who, they felt, was not to them a foreigner but one closest to their hearts. The life and message of Sri Ramakrishna, Holy Mother Sarada Devi and Swami Vivekananda are finding great relevance in modern times in every part of the globe. In a world torn by strife at different social and national levels, the message of harmony preached by Swamiji in 1893 before the World's Parliament of Religions was again and again recalled as the only solution to restore harmony.

The Indian attitude of acceptance of all religions as true opened the way for inter-religious dialogue and study of comparative religions. India is one nation that sheltered the persecuted and the refugees of all religions and all nations of the earth. The Zoroastrians fondly recalled the loving interactions that they received and continue to receive from India.

It was recognized that plurality of religions was a necessity for growth. The more sects there are, the more opportunities there are for making successful appeals to the divine instinct in all men and women. The ultimate in liberalization was expressed in these words: "As many faiths, so many paths." These varied religions are needed to suit the taste and temperaments of varied types of people. Diversity there must be, but along with it there should be the clear perception of the underlying Unity. That was the way to harmony.

Religious followers need not be at loggerheads if they perceived behind their manifold rituals, mythologies, and philosophies the One God or Divine Being that runs as the unifying Principle.

No religion can claim to have a special position for itself. These varied "religions are different forces in the economy of God, working for the good of mankind...." "Each religion takes up one part of the great universal truth, and spends its whole force in embodying and typifying that part of the truth."

It was expressed that there was no need for forceful conversion from one religion to

another. This echoed Swamiji's words: "The Christian is not to become a Hindu or a Buddhist, nor a Hindu or a Buddhist to become a Christian. But each must assimilate the spirit of the others and yet preserve his individuality and grow according to his own law of growth." It was not necessary to try to demonstrate the superiority of one's own belief over other beliefs for, "... holiness, purity, and charity are not the exclusive possessions of any church in the world..." Some of the delegates expressed that it is possible to become a staunch follower of Vedanta while professing their own faith.

Each religion has exhausted itself in expressing the harmony; only the followers of the different faiths have compartmentalized themselves into one group or the other. Conflicts arise when spirituality has been lost sight of. The approach should be to change oneself—the subjective approach—in conjunction with the objective approach.

Disharmony is an essential component of any materialistic approach to human relation and coexistence. Destruction is the inevitable end of all pursuit of sense objects. Conflicts in households, in localities, between persons professing the same religion show that conflicts need not be originating necessarily from inter-religious quarrels. India which has provided a common umbrella to different religious followers is a tangible example that people of different religious views can coexist in harmony.

The evenings were filled with music, vocal and instrumental, by eminent artists on the days of the deliberations. On the other days of the week the participants visited various places and were given a warm reception. There was thus a visit to Belur Math on the 13th, and a launch trip down the Ganges on the 17th. Receptions were given by Rotary Club of Calcutta on the 14th which included a visit to the Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama at Narendrapur; by Dr. Anutosh Datta, the Sherif of Calcutta on the 15th; and by the Mayor on the 16th. Dr. Shankar Dayal Sharma, the Hon'ble President of India paid glowing tributes to Swamiji in the Valedictory Session on the 19th September, 1993.

