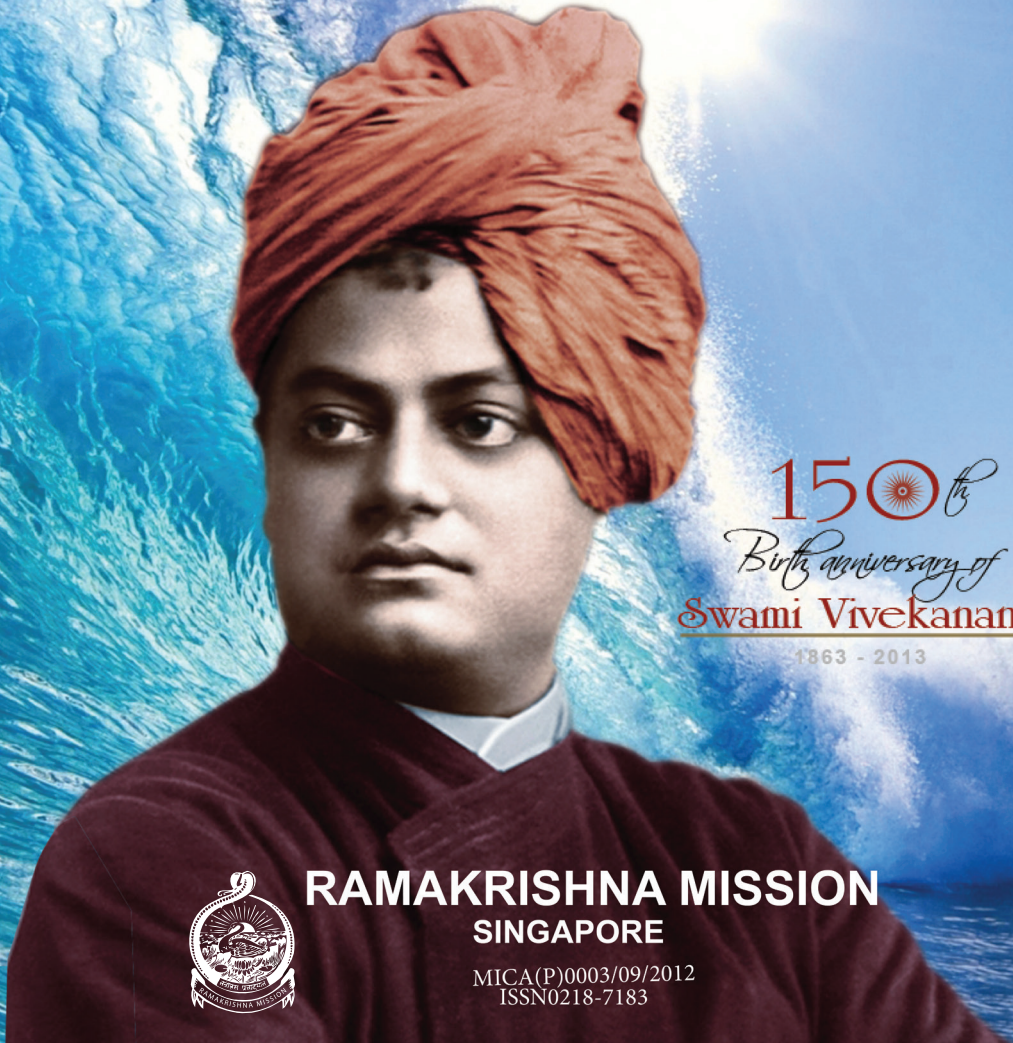


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# Nirvāṇa



150<sup>th</sup>  
*Birth Anniversary of*  
**Swami Vivekananda**

1863 - 2013



**RAMAKRISHNA MISSION**  
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State of Spiritual enlightenment or illumination. **Nirvana** releases humans from the cycle of birth, suffering, death and all forms of worldly bondage.

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## In this issue...

The screening of a two-hour feature film “Sri Ramakrishna Darshanam” marked the start of celebrations of Swami Vivekananda’s 150th Birth Annivesary in Singapore. The two-hour Tamil film, with English sub-titles, was watched by a thousand-strong audience. (p.3)

The blending of the best elements of the East and the West for the good of the world was the key element in Swami Vivekananda’s efforts throughout his life. That it is becoming a reality, though at a sluggish pace, is the theme of Swami Muktirupananda’s article Unity of East and West (p.5)

The invisible hand of Sri Ramakrishna guiding Swami Vivekananda to record astonishing achievements at the Chicago Parliament of Religions is meticulously traced and recorded by our contributor Dr P. Achuthan. (p.14)

We bring you the glorious tributes paid to Swamiji by former President of Indonesia , Dr. Sukarno (p:22)

Our Sarada Kindergarten celebrated another year of remarkable progress with a colourful concert and graduation ceremony. (p23)

Note: Our regular Ramayana series has been held over due to pressure on space.

# Pearls of Wisdom

## Uddhava Gita

Translated by Swami Madhavananda

Śrī bhagavān uvāca

Tayorekataro hyardhah prakritih sobhayātmika  
Jnānam tvanyantaro bhāvah Puruṣah so'bhidhiyate  
Tamo rajah sattvamiti prakriterabhavangunah  
Maya praksobhyamanayah purusanumatena ca  
Tebhyah samabhavatsutram mahānsutrena samyutah  
Tato vikurvato jāto yo'hamkaro vimohanah

The Lord said:

Of these two things one is Prakriti, which has a dual nature, and the other Knowledge Absolute, which is called Purusha.

From the Prakriti as I agitated it, there emanated the Gunas, Sattva, Rajas, and Tamas, with the approval of the Purusha.

From them emanated the Sutra, with which the Mahat is united. From the transformation of that was produced egoism, which deludes all.

(To be continued)

Uddhava Gita, XIX, 4-6



## ***Swami Vivekananda and his message***

**T**he followers and admirers of Swami Vivekananda, who have been inspired by his life, work and thought are celebrating his 150th birth anniversary around the world. It is to remember and pay homage to a rare personality who worked selflessly for the welfare of mankind. In his short life of thirty nine years he compressed lofty spiritual realizations, intellectual and social accomplishments that had a substantial impact on India and the western world. Such a many-sided genius, spiritual luminary rarely walks on the earth. Noted thinkers from the East and West have tried to draw attention to his great contributions to enrich human life.

Swamiji said, "I have a message to the West as Buddha had a message to the East." He had twin messages to broadcast to the world and that he did from the platform of Parliament of Religions held in Chicago in September 1893. One, the divinity of each soul and second, harmony of all faiths. To him the essence of religion is the manifestation of this divinity or Godliness which is inherently present in all. He did not care much for the non-essentials of religion, viz doctrines, dogmas and beliefs. Like a hurricane he rushed from place to place to plant the seeds of his message. Rightly many newspapers in America called him a 'Cyclonic monk'.

He said, "My ideal can be put into a few words and that is: "to preach unto mankind their divinity and how to make it manifest in every movement of life." In all his hundreds of lectures this message ran through as a steady background. And he placed it on a rational, scientific and empirical foundation. He explained in detail the spiritual discipline to be employed to express this divinity. In a thundering voice he reminded people that, 'man is not a finite, helpless being, behind his finitude is the infinite, behind every wave there is the limitless ocean. The God we worship externally is our own inmost Self, the Atman.' One can deny God or the Creator but one cannot deny oneself, one's own existence. Vivekananda urged people to follow any path, belong to any faith or sect, practise any method and manifest your divinity, God within. Swamiji was the personification of his universal teaching which embraced the entire mankind.

*Film on Ramakrishna*

## ***Sri Ramakrishna Darshanam***

**C**elebrations marking the 150th Birth Anniversary of Swami Vivekananda were flagged off in Singapore with the release of a full-length Tamil feature film “Sri Ramakrishna Darshanam” on 24 November. Mr S.R.Nathan,

Inter-religious Organization, and community and business leaders. It was also a treat for more than a hundred inmates of welfare homes sponsored by various organizations and individuals. Himself Tamil-speaking, Mr Nathan hailed



*Swami Muktirupananda, Mr. Dass, Mr. Nathan and Vicnesh who acted as Gadadhara*

the past President of Singapore, ceremoniously released the film at the elegant University Cultural Centre watched almost by a thousand people. Among the VIPs were Deputy Prime Minister Tharman Shanmugaratnam, diplomatic representatives, leaders of the

the two-hour film as “a great success” in portraying the life of Sri Ramakrishna and his spiritual experiences faithfully as the layman can understand and appreciate. He noted that Director G. Narayana Dass has resisted the temptation of

modern film makers to build halos around their heroes.

Mr Nathan strongly emphasised the relevance to Singapore of Sri Ramakrishna's strong advocacy of religious harmony because the republic has a multi-religious population.

In his remarks, Swami Muktiupananda described the film as "gripping." He was glad to note that Mr Dass had made no attempt to "sell" Sri Ramakrishna, but had kept the narrative absolutely loyal to the events in life. In fact there was no need for exaggeration, he said, because Sri Ramakrishna's life was a confluence where diverse streams of spiritual disciplines mingled harmoniously. That is the reason why a variety of spiritual seekers who followed different disciplines – and even followers of religions other than Hin-

duism – sought his help and guidance. "So it is not surprising that Sri Ramakrishna never uttered a word of criticism or condemnation against other religious practices," he added.

The film was directed and co-produced by Mr G.Narayana Dass, an old boy of the Mission Boys' Home in Singapore and attended normal schools. He recalls the love and care the monks showered on him during his stay at the Home which left a deep impression in the formative years. He worked for the Singapore Government's broadcasting organisation Mediacorp for several years before retiring. "I wanted to give something back to the society, and this is my humble offering," added Mr Dass.

The film has English sub-titles. Mr Dass said he was planning to have it dubbed in Hindi and other Indian languages.



# *Unity of East and West*

*Swami Muktirupananda*

**W**e have divided the world into two parts and call them East and West. This division is based on culture, ethics, life style, ideals, physical features and some other factors. Each half has its special features and notable achievements in certain fields. It is good for the human society if they come together, share and work unitedly.

One of great achievements of Swami Vivekananda was his vision of blending of the best elements of East and West. For the welfare of mankind and for the good of the world, he felt these two halves must come together. Vivekananda acted as a bridge between the two. In the 21st century we are witnessing how both these cultures have embraced each other and are forging this relationship. We have left long behind Rudyard Kipling's assertion that, 'East is east and West is west, and the twain shall never meet.' The twins have already met in a friendly way and are unitedly shaping the destiny of the human society. Now they can no longer ignore each other or ridicule each other. Mutual respect, understanding and cooperation have reached new heights between them. To find solutions to our global problems both the

Orient and the Occident have to work side by side and share together the fate and responsibility. Modern era is witnessing the salutary signs of increasing inter connectedness and interdependence among the two hemispheres of the world. Swamiji was a great visionary and he could see the future far ahead of others. Therefore he felt that the world needed for its own benefit and progress the fusion of great values and ideas developed by mankind.

Today when we look around nothing about East-West exchange strikes us as strange or surprising. But more than a century ago when Vivekananda visited America and Europe things were different. There was an unbridgeable gulf between Eastern and Western cultures and ethos and no common ground to unite them. One part of the globe remained religious, otherworldly fettered by their age-old tradition and socio-economic conditions. The results were poverty, lack of education and a feeling of despair. In contrast to this dismal scene the West was pulsating with tremendous energy, was rolling in material prosperity and basking in the grandeur of advanced science and technology.

Naturally they thought of themselves as the superior race and the new master of the world. The purpose of the world's Columbian exposition and Parliament of Religions held in Chicago in 1893 was to showcase to the world the stupendous achievements of the white race in the fields of physical sciences, technical know-how and industrialization. Really it left its visitors spellbound including Vivekananda. It opened up a new dimension for him. He realized what determined, practical people could achieve, make impossible things possible and create a heaven for human beings.

Living in the midst of luxury and affluence in America Swamiji delved deep into the hearts of people and could not fail to detect the whimperings of discontentment, sorrow and emptiness. He observed, "Social life in the West is like a peal of laughter, but underneath it a wail. It ends in a sob. The fun and frivolity are on the surface; really it is full of tragic intensity." (The Master as I saw him, Sister Nivedita, p.116) In their relentless pursuit of wealth, grandeur and unbridled physical pleasures people had lost all self-restraint. Mere sense-enjoyment as the goal of life without wisdom erodes the health of both body and mind. Swamiji saw that the West was heading recklessly towards the brink of self-destruction. He also noted, "The ground

in the West, in Europe and America is very fertile and fit for sowing seeds. Therefore, they have reached the climax of bhoga.... When one is satiated with Bhoga, then it is that one will listen to and understand the teachings of Yoga." (C.W. Vol. V p. 379) Like a whirlwind he went from place to place throughout America planting the seeds of spiritual wisdom and reminding his listeners that fleeting pleasures of this world can never become the end of life, life has a higher purpose. He said referring to the limitations of Eastern religion and Western Science, "Each of these types has its grandeur, each has its glory. The present adjustment will be harmonizing, the mingling of these two ideals" (C.W. Vol. IV p. 155). The seeds planted by him took decades to germinate and grow and today they have begun to bear fruits.

During Swamiji's visit to the West yoga, meditation, guru, Vedanta karma and mantra such words were not heard and sounded strange to the Western ears. Even India was a weird far off country, a land of magicians and fakirs, inhabited by people devoid of any initiative or hope. We have to remember Swamiji had to fight single-handedly many hostile forces and set in motion the waves of spirituality for the good of the many. A prophet's love embraces the whole world, cares for



the welfare of all and not particular race or country. That is why so boldly he declared at the Brooklyn Ethical Society, "I have a message to the West as Buddha had a message to the East." (C.W. Vol. X p. 514) He unleashed the spiritual current of India for the benefit of other people. In this context he said, "Shankara left this Advaita philosophy in the hills and forests, while I have come to bring it out of those places and scatter it broadcast before the workaday world and society".(C.W. VII p. 162)

Thus today in Europe and America yoga, guru, mantra, maya, avatar and many other Sanskrit words are not only familiar but also are used liberally with understanding in books and journals. One finds teachers from the East as well as from the West teaching their followers. It is also common place to find in Western cities yoga studios and meditation centres that train eager and enthusiastic practitioners. In a number of hospitals yoga therapy is a part of treatment, in some schools a part of physical education, in workplaces stress reducing and relaxation exercise. Every year hundreds of books come out praising the positive effects of yoga and meditation supported by scientific evidence. Slowly it is turning into a lucrative industry.

In America spirituality has entered into the workplace. The

Business Week in its November 1, 1999, issue wrote: "A spiritual revival is sweeping across corporate America as executives of all stripes are mixing mysticism into their management, importing into office corridors the lessons usually doled out in churches, temples and mosques. Gone is the old taboo against talking about God at work." The journal further reported in many workplaces prayers and scriptural studies are introduced. (Vivekananda, a born leader – Asim Chaudhuri p. 213) With this sweeping new trend, spiritual gurus now hold corporate workshops and retreats to ever-increasing demand.

In 1960, famous writer Abraham Maslow wrote: "Enlightened management is one way of taking religion seriously, profoundly, deeply and earnestly." Maslow did not mean just conventional religion of going to places of worship and performing rituals. It is a religion when there is, "deep concern with the problems of human being, with the problem of ethics, of the future of man, then this kind of philosophy, translated into the work life, turns out to be very much like the new style of management and of organization." (Quoted Vivekananda a born leader p. 214) Some of the best sellers are Jesus, CEO, J. Pfeffer's Hand book of workplace spirituality and organizational performance, Maslow on Management and Peter

Senge's Fifth discipline.

Disillusioned with extreme materialism and hedonism the West is turning its attention inward to the realm of spirit. Now they are looking towards the East not with old derision and scorn but with newfound respect. East has given up its smug self-admired sluggishness and condemnation of material prosperity as a vice and praise of poverty as a virtue. Poverty is not a virtue rather a curse. It was a great vision of Vivekananda to see an emergence of a new race of human beings endowed with dynamism, energetic action and also capable of calmly withdraw into deep meditation. The Gita also mentions, "Wherever is Krishna, the Lord of yoga, wherever is Partha, the wielder of the bow, there are prosperity, victory, expansion and stable order." Krishna represents absorption in meditation and Partha the archer stands for active nature. This was the ideal of Vivekananda. Has his vision come true, not yet, it will take decades to fulfil it. Human transformation is a slow process, age-old beliefs die hard.

Some of the high ideals of the West are worthy of emulation which would surely enrich the socio-economic conditions of the East. Living these ideals himself he tried to infuse such beneficial ideas into Indians. Thus he personified his plan of East-West

synthesis.

1) **Dynamism and Practicality:** People of the Western hemisphere are endowed with extraordinary energy, the force of rajas keeps them always active and doing. This restless spirit has enabled them to conquer external nature and make rapid progress in physical sciences and technology. They are the ones who explored the distant giant galaxies, stars and planets, tiny atoms, particles and cells. Every mystery is a challenge to them, they cannot rest till they unravel it. Motion, incessant activity, unremitting toil are the innate qualities of Westerners. Praising America Vivekananda said, "Here you have wonderful manifestation of grit and power, what strength, what practicality and what manhood! ... Here is a manifestation of tremendous energy." (C.W. Vol. VI p. 272). We are happy to see today that the East, specially India has caught this spirit and given up tamas, inertia and moving ahead. This dynamism of the West has done immense good to the other half of the world. In the field of activity and innovation America still leads the rest of the world.

Westerners are intensely practical. They trust and apply their intellectual and physical powers and leave nothing to fate or destiny. For success or failure they neither praise nor curse any ex-

ternal agency like fate, stars but take the entire responsibility on their shoulders. It is because of this indomitable spirit that they are able to overcome insurmountable obstacles and problems. The following incident gives an idea of this spirit.

Vivekananda in June 1900, got an offer of 160 acres of land in San Antone Valley, California to start a retreat. Swamiji sent Swami Turiyananda to train some American devotees there. It was a desolate place and a hilly country. When Turiyananda arrived there with twelve American spiritual students many difficulties surfaced. There was only one old log cabin and no water. Where to live and where to get water from? The situation was dreary and dismal. Seeing the depressing conditions, dejected Turiyananda complained to the Divine Mother, "Mother! What have you done, where have you brought us? These people will die without shelter and with no water. What shall we do?"

However the American students went to the dispirited Swami and assured him that everything would be taken care of and there was nothing to worry. These resourceful students of Vedanta, undaunt-

ed, surmounted all the difficulties. Tents were pitched, a well was dug and duties were allotted. With their dexterity and hard work things became more comfortable. Later many log cabins were erected and both teacher and students happily continued their spiritual practices. Such tremendous faith in themselves, courage to face adversities and hard toil have set them apart from other people. 'God do it for me', is the Eastern attitude, 'God help us to do it', is the Western disposition.

## 2) **Equality and Community Spirit:**

In Western countries individual freedom and equality are greatly respected. No distinction is made between rich and poor, high and low. Each individual has the opportunity to raise himself or herself through intelligence and hard work. Human dignity and the dignity of labour are held in high esteem. To them common good of community or collective welfare of society is more important than one's family. Their loyalty first goes to society and later to family. They work for and take care of people, they look after their safety and comforts. Because of their concern for collective welfare one finds high standard and



*Sara Ole Bull*

quality of public and community life. Clean streets, well-kept public parks, spick and span hygienic hospitals, clean toilets, litter-free and noise-free roads. The orderly and polite behaviour of the people show their respect for others. Because of this community spirit Western Society is relatively free of corruption. The disease of corruption is due to solely looking after one's own and family interests. In the West priority is given to larger interest of society than to petty self-interest.

### 3) **Respect for Women:**

Swamiji had great admiration for American women and they received his highest praise. He treated them the same way as he treated men. Women in the West enjoy the same freedoms, equal rights and opportunities as men; there is no discrimination. They are really daughters of Shakti, learned, active, courageous and independent. They do not accept and submit meekly to the male supremacy. Here is an example of their invincible spirit.



*Tantine in front of the Propbet's Pine at Ridgely, 1939.*

*Miss Joe Macleod*

Swamiji one day took Mrs. Sara Ole Bull and Miss Joe Macleod, his American women disciples to show them the newly acquired plot of land at Belur on the bank of Ganga. The land was covered with grass and coconut trees and near the river stood a dilapidated one-storied house and had three rooms. Sara and Joe looked over the battered old building and Joe asked Swamiji could they not use that house to stay there. Swamiji objected that it was in such a bad shape so they could not. But both of them said that they would put it in order. With Swamiji's consent both of them soon had the house repaired and white washed. They went to the Calcutta market and bought old furniture and furnished the rooms and made them comfortable. At last they were happy to live in their quiet house facing beautiful river. Vivekananda in one of his letters mentioning this incident exclaimed, "My! These Yanks can do anything! After the luxuries of Boston and New York, to be quite content and happy in this wretched little house!" (C.W. Vol. IX p. 101) It is these American women who helped him immensely and his spiritual work in the West. Swamiji acknowledged it in one of his let-

ters (1896). "Last year I came to this country in summer, a wandering preacher from a far distant country, without name, fame, wealth or learning to recommend me, friendless, helpless, almost in a state of destitution; and American women befriended me, gave me shelter and food, and treated me as their own son, their own brother." He once expressed, "If I have to come back again as a woman, I must and will come as an American Woman." (Life Vol. II p. 272)

Vivekananda believed that, "Liberty of thought and action are the conditions of life and growth and well-being." (C.W. Vol. IV P. 115) Western women have freedom of thought and action in society, therefore, have become successful leaders in many fields. In fact, in some vocations they have gone much ahead of and become more powerful than the men of the East. Whatever positive ideas Western women take up today, the same ideas will inspire Eastern women tomorrow. This is how the world is becoming more or less Westernized.

4) **Organization:** The power and supremacy of the West lies in the secret of efficient

organization. Organization means people working together toward a common goal and thus power comes from coordination of wills and division of labour. It is like gathering scattered forces, bringing them into a focus and using thus amassed energy for productive purposes. Swamiji understood that no great cause could succeed without this Western type of organization. He gave simple analogy of grass: A single blade of grass is nothing but blades of grass united into a rope could restrain even a mad elephant. He wrote to Swami Brahmananda, referring to the Ramakrishna Mission, "Set up such a machine as will go on automatically, no matter who dies or lives." (C.W. Vol. VIII p. 456)

It is the pooling of people's talents, skills, energies and resources that in turn creates massive power and that power can benefit common people on a larger scale. Organization is necessary either in secular or religious field. In commercial field we know about giant multinational corporations and their immense work. It was the genius of Vivekananda to apply the concept of organization, and modern management in spiritual field and harvest its

benefits for the good of many. His neo-Vedanta teaches not to make any difference between service towards fellow beings and worship of God, between work and meditation. To practise and teach this message of profound karma yoga on a larger scale, Swamiji trained eager, obedient and dedicated young men under the banner of an organization. In course of time the Ramakrishna Mission, a socio-religious organization, has grown worldwide and through its branches does commendable work. Ramakrishna Movement has been spreading throughout the world. In India there is no other multi-dimensional monastic organization as large as Ramakrishna Mission.

Ramakrishna Mission owes its success to the Western idea of organization. Vivekananda had he not gone to the West and observed keenly the cause of the stupendous progress of other half of the world, the Ramakrishna Mission perhaps would not have come into existence. Indians lacked the sense of working together, sharing together for a common cause. Saints and reformers have appeared from time to time in the past and worked individually in limited

regions and vanished from the scene just leaving few ripples here and there. Their work did not last beyond their life span, so it did not make much lasting impact on the lives of people. Observing this, Swamiji entirely changed the outmoded and traditional concept of monasticism.

The Ramakrishna Order has shown that no great work can be done or no noble ideas can be spread without the support of a sound organization. However, changing the hearts of

people is not just a matter of years; it is a work of centuries. It is a slow and sustained task.

Vivekananda is the happy synthesis of what is good in the West and what is good in the East. It is the fusion of science and mysticism, vigorous work with detached withdrawal in meditation. Is it any wonder he chose July 4th American Independence day, to give up his body, perhaps to indicate the intimate relationship between India and America would augur well for the world.



Belur Math  
The Headquarters of Ramakrishna Math and Mission

# *Swami Vivekananda at the Parliament of Religions*

*Dr P Achuthan*

**T**he triumph of Swami Vivekananda at the Chicago Parliament of Religions could well be looked upon as a kind of watershed in inter-religious understanding in the modern world. For one thing, it certainly represented the fulfillment of the Indian Renaissance initiated by religious reformers like Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Swami Dayanand and Justice Ranade. For another, it was Swamiji's astonishing success at the Parliament that paved the way for the Ramakrishna movement to come into being. The Ramakrishna Math and Mission, in its turn, were to be the first religious institution to carry on its activities on the lines of a modern organization. It also marked the beginning of Hindu monks and missionaries sent across land and sea as preachers, the Buddhist practice revived after a lapse of nearly twenty-five centuries! Above all the inclusion of Daridra-Narayana-puja or service to the sick and the suffering, the poor and the needy as worship of the God-

in-man to be an integral part of monasticism (sannyasa-dharma) was a notable, revolutionary innovation in the history of Hinduism. It was practical Vedanta at its noblest best.

Thus, Swamiji's participation in the Parliament of Religions as the delegate representing Hinduism was of far-reaching consequence. Yet, it would appear as if he had attended it as an 'uninvited guest'! He had neither received any formal invitation from any organization from Chicago, nor had he reached there armed with any credentials from any Hindu organization in India. In fact, he did not even know when the Parliament was to begin! It would seem that the Swamiji ventured to go to America on the strength of some hearsay or rumour – so meager was his preparation for taking such a momentous step in his life. And yet, he not only represented Hinduism but also came out of the Parliament as its hero-figure! which was nothing short of a miracle.



It was during his wanderings in Kathiawar towards the close of 1891 that Swamiji came to know of the Parliament of Religions for the first time. Instinctively, he felt an urge to participate in it and soon the thought became stronger. "If someone can help me with the passage money, all will be well, and I shall go," he told his friend and host, Haridas, in January 1892. (1) He spoke about it to the rulers of Khetri and Mysore, to the Raja of Ramnad as also to his disciples of Madras like Alasinga Perumal. However, he had not made up his mind because he was not sure whether it was only his desire or God's wish. He was waiting for the signal from God.

And it did come one day not long afterwards when "the Swami had a symbolic dream in which Sri Ramakrishna walked out into the sea and beckoned him to follow." (2). This greatly pleased him and when he received also the blessings of the Holy Mother, the matter was finally settled. Dancing with joy like a child, he told his Madras disciples, "yes now to the West, to the West! Now I am ready.... The Mother herself has spoken." (3). In fact, he was so sure of his success in America as to

tell Swami Turiyananda of it, "Haribhai, I am going to America. Whatever you hear of as happening there (at the Parliament of Religions) is all for this. For this (me) alone everything is being arranged." (4). He received some financial help from the Raja of Ramnad, the Maharaja of Khetri, his disciple who provided the Swamiji "with a First class ticket, a handsome purse and ample clothings." (5). Thus equipped, Swamiji set sail from Bombay on the 31 May 1893.

He reached Chicago on 30 July, but was taken aback when he learnt that the Parliament was to begin only in September and that only those with proper credentials would be admitted as delegates to it. A coloured man in strange clothes from far-off India, Swamiji was like a lost child, a perfect stranger puzzled by the dazzling material prosperity of the New World. He was without a friend and fast becoming penniless. Soon, he was on a train to the less expensive city of Boston and it so happened that a fellow-passenger, Miss Katherine Osborne, a rich society lady of Boston invited Swamiji to be her guest throughout his stay in the city. It was a godsend and Swamiji

gladly accepted it.

Through Miss Osborne, Swamiji became acquainted with Prof John Wright of Harvard to whom he spoke of his problem of credentials. To this, the Professor's reply was, 'To ask you, Swamiji, for your credentials is like asking the sun to state his right to shine.'"(6). He then gave his letter of in-

gether." (7). Returning to Chicago, Swamiji found to his horror that he had lost the letter as well as the address of the office of the Parliament. Friendless and dejected, he had to spend that cold night in a big box in the railway freight yard. When he begged for food the next morning, he was rudely driven away from every door. Tired and hungry, he sat



roduction addressed to the Chairman of the Parliament in which he chose to describe Swamiji thus, "Here is a man who is more learned than all our learned professors put to-

down under a tree by the roadside resigning himself to God's grace which came to him in the form of a lady of regal bearing offering help. She was Mrs George W Hale, 'my American

mother,' who took him to her house for bath and breakfast and then took him to the office of the Parliament. She returned home after Swamiji was safely accommodated with the other oriental delegates to the Parliament.

The Parliament of Religions which was held from the 11th to the 27th of September

in fact, he had no experience of public speaking at all. Nor had he prepared short lecture notes as the other speakers had done. All that he had was stage fright in an ample measure! But hardly had he finished speaking the endearing address of five words – “Sisters and Brothers of America” – when the entire audience of “seven thousand people



1893 opened in the Columbus Hall which seated more than six thousand educated, enlightened men and women. Swamiji had never before faced such a huge audience;

rose to their feet as a tribute to something, they knew not what.” (8). The power and charm of the ‘panchakshari mantra’ that Swamiji then chanted laid such an irresist-

ible, indefinable enchantment on the soul of the audience that the listeners were moved to give a standing ovation to Swamiji for full two minutes!

With his opening speech lasting less than five minutes, the nameless monk from India became the world-famous Swami Vivekananda. The morning newspapers hailed him as “an orator by divine right” while Sister Nivedita assessed it thus, “.. when he began to speak, it was of ‘the religious ideas of the Hindus,’ but when he ended, Hinduism had been created.”( 9). What he did, in fact, “was to proclaim the charter of Neo-Hinduism”... (10). Was it not a miracle that the Swamiji with his maiden speech lasting less than five minutes should become the hero-figure in the Parliament of Religions? Was it not an incredible achievement that the Hindu delegate with no credential from any Hindu organization should become the honoured world-teacher of Vedanta over-night? Apparently, it was so, most undoubtedly; but if we cared to go a bit deeper into the matter, it would be found that this was the only natural outcome of all the trials that Swamiji had to face from time to time ever since he reached Chicago.

Nothing would prevent us from coming to the conclusion that it was the invisible hand of Sri Ramakrishna that guided the Swamiji through all the vicissitudes from near-defeat to glorious success. It was the same hand that beckoned Swamiji to follow and took him safely to America. In fact, the work entrusted to him was to spread the message of his Master which was the same as ‘doing the work of the Mother’, as he put it. And it was to carry out this life’s mission that Sri Ramakrishna led his wonderful and worthy instrument up the steps to the podium of the Parliament of Religions. And the message that rang out from the six lectures that he delivered there was the conclusions reached by the Parliament of Religions held under the banyan tree at Dakshineswar by Sri Ramakrishna in his own life some three decades earlier, namely, universality and harmony of religions. Swamiji’s success in Chicago was just their natural extension - the world’s recognition and acceptance of those conclusions. Therefore, it was both factual and reasonable to conclude that the unseen hand of Sri Ramakrishna was Swamiji’s strength and support at every step and in all his difficulties.

Even a surface analysis of Swamiji's six lectures given at the Parliament of Religions would show that he was interpreting his Master's teachings to the West effectively and in an idiom intelligible to them. In the very first address delivered on 11 September, Swamiji struck the keynote of all his lectures to follow, namely the spirit of universality, religious harmony and tolerance breathed by the world's most ancient religion, Hinduism, the mother of all religions which he had the honour to represent. The Hindus believed, he declared, that the followers of the different faiths, choosing different paths according to their tastes and tendencies, would finally reach the One God called by many names, even as the many rivers flowing straight or crooked would fall into the sea. Here, Swamiji was only paraphrasing Sri Ramakrishna's pithy statement, "as many paths, so many faiths."

The second lecture that Swamiji gave on 15 September dealt with the 'frog in the well' attitude of the religious leaders which was the cause of all the bigotry, intolerance and fanaticism in the world. The narrowness of 'my religion and my God alone, and no other' was

at the root of all troubles. This would end, Swamiji pointed out only with God-realisation when all quarrels and controversies in the name of God would be found hollow and futile. This was just an elucidation of the Master's parable of the strange creature on the tree – the chameleon. On the 19th Swamiji read a Paper on Hinduism on the Vedic religion. The Vedas, he explained, were "the accumulated treasury of spiritual laws" the eternal laws" that govern the spiritual world, the moral, ethical and spiritual relations between soul and soul and between individual spirits and the Father of all spirits," muck like the laws of nature, beginning-less and endless.

The religion of the Vedas taught us that the highest goal of human life was to realize the divinity inherent in us. Swamiji declared, "... The Hindu refuses to call you sinners. We are the children of God, the sharers of immortal bliss, holy and perfect beings. Ye divinities on earth – sinners! It is a sin to call a man so it is standing libel on human nature. Come up, O lions, and shake off the delusion that you are sheep; you are souls immortal, spirits free, blest and eternal ...." (12). Its

realisation could be attained only by long and intense seeking through spiritual disciplines and not by scholarly disputations or religious conversions. The truth of any religion was to be tested on the touchstone of experience, of the direct perception of God. And the means to reach and realize God, the Swamiji pointed out, were many and varied determined by the stage at which the spiritual aspirant stood. "To the Hindu, man is not travelling from error to truth," he declared, "but from truth to truth, from lower to higher truth. To him all the religions from the lowest fetishism to the highest absolutism, means so many attempts of the human soul to grasp and reach unity, and to remain free from the shackles of creedal dogmas, therefore, formed an essential, integral part of Vedanta.

It was here in the context of tolerance and acceptance of all paths leading Godward as true that Swamiji presented before the world audience his idea of a Universal religion: "...if there is ever to be a universal religion, it must be one which will have no location in place or time; which will be infinite like the God it will preach, and whose sun will shine upon

the followers of Krishna and of Christ, on saints and sinners alike.....It will be a religion which will have no place for persecution and intolerance in its polity....and whose whole scope, whose whole force, will be centred in aiding humanity to realize its own true, divine nature" (14). This, one can see, was the religion lived and taught by Sri Ramakrishna, the religion marked by the spirit of universality and harmony.

The fourth address delivered on 20 September was more humanistic than religious in its tone. In it, Swamiji made it clear that what India stood in need of was food for her starving bodies and not Christian preaching for her well-fed souls. To preach religion to the poor, starving people, he said, was an insult, a cruel joke. He concluded his short speech with the criticism that it was very difficult "to get (monetary) help for heathens from Christians in a Christian land." (15) (If one may hazard a guess, this lecture must have been given in answer to a provocative speech made earlier by a Christian delegate in justification of the useful missionary work in India by the American

preachers, for this one is distinctly different in tone from his other addresses).

The fifth lecture Swamiji gave on the 26th dealt with Buddhism as the fulfillment of Hinduism. Here, he made some significant points comparing the Indian and Semitic religions on the one hand and Brahminism and Buddhism on the other. He held the view that India's slavery for a thousand years was due to the divorce between the head of Sankara and the heart of Buddha. With the tremendous absolving capacity and wonderful resilience of Hinduism, the two were held in a happy harmony to form an ideal religion.

The sixth and final lecture of Swamiji was on 27 September 1893 at the concluding session of the Parliament of Religions. He made use of it to thank the organizers, the speakers and the audience, for making the wonderful religious dream come true. It was

possible for the Parliament to show that the followers of the different religions would grow to fullness and fruition in God-realization through their own innate strength much like a seed growing into a plant. The duty of every religionist was to strive for this goal and not to quarrel, fight and destroy the others, for virtuous, men of holiness and purity were to be found in all religions. Swamiji concluded his speech with the hope and prayer that the Parliament of Religions would succeed in keeping the banner of harmony and peace aloft to usher in a happy, new world order.

It will be easy even for a casual reader of the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda literature to recognize that Swamiji's Chicago addresses were eloquent recreations in English of the Universal Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna

References:-

- 1.Swami Vivekananda: His life and Legacy, by Swami Tapasyananda, Sri Ramakrishna Math, Chennai; 2002, page 62
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- 3.Swami Vivekananda, Chennai, 2002, page 63
- 4.Ibid, page 64-65
- 5.Ibid, page 64
- 6.Ibid, page 66
- 7.Vivekananda: His call to the nation; Advaita Ashrama,

- Mayavati, Pitoragarh, Himalayas, 1992, Page 12
- 8.Ibid, page 14
- 9.Chicago addresses, Advaita Ashrama, Mayavati, 1968, Inner cover flap.
- 10.Swami Vivekananda, Chennai, 2002,page 70
11. Chicago addresses, page 10
12. Ibid, page 19
- 13.Ibid, page 32
- 14.Ibid, page 36-37
- 15.Ibid, page 40



PRESIDEN  
REPUBLIK INDONESIA

Swami Vivekananda!  
What a name!

He was one of the men, who  
gave so much inspiration to me,  
— inspiration to be strong, inspi-  
ration to be a servant of God, in-  
spiration to be a servant of my coun-  
try, inspiration to be a servant of  
the poor, inspiration to be a servant  
of mankind.

He was it, who said: "We have  
wept long enough; no more weeping,  
but stand on your feet, and be men!"

Soekarno. —

4/10 1963

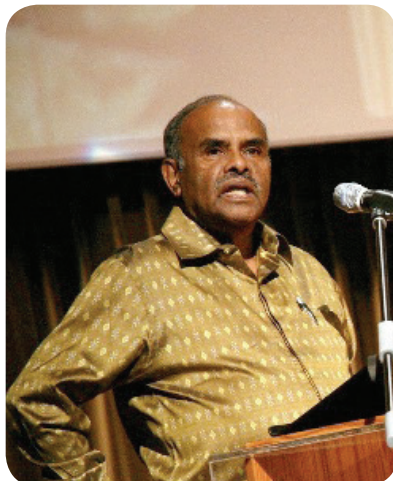
Jakarta

The facsimile of a hand-written forward from Dr. Sukarno, former President of Indonesia, to "Voice of Vivekananda" published by the Indian community in Indonesia in 1963 to commemorate the 100th Birth Anniversary of Swami Vivekananda. During the 25 years he was in prison or exile, Dr. Sukarno dived deep into the works of Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda and drew considerable inspiration from their lives.

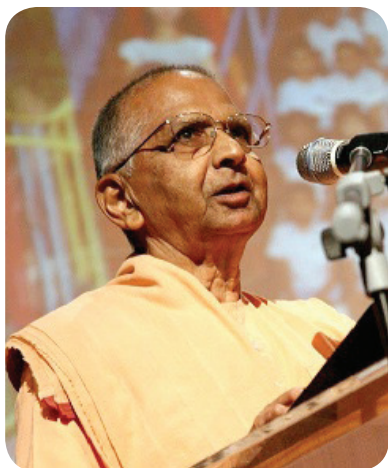


## “We Can Do It”

Innovation has been a key driving force of Sarada Kindergarten since its inception 20 years ago. During the current academic year, it took a bold step forward with its “Setting our own Goals” as the Innovation Project – a goal inspired by Swami Vivekananda’s saying, “Stop Not Till The Goal is Reached.” In this project, explained Swami Muktirupananda, President of the Ramakrishna Mission, each child sets and perseveres to achieve his or her goal. “I am very happy to inform you that this project has won us the



*Mr. Kesavapani*



*Swami Muktirupananda*

Distinction Award,” added the Swami in his address at the 20th Annual Graduation cum Concert on 29 September. Noting that the 2011-12 has been another year of achievements for Sarada, he detailed them:

1. Distinction Award for Outstanding Kindergarten Teacher.
2. Merit Award for Outstanding Innovation.

At the function all the children received their certificates from Guest of

Honour, Mr K. Kesavapani, Singapore's Ambassador to Jordan.

In brief remarks, Mr Kesavapani recalled his long association with the Ramakrishna Mission. He said he was happy to note that from all the three angles – the care and attention given to the children, their academic progress and the welfare of teachers – Sarada had continued to maintain high standards. He wished the children the very best in a challenging world.

Earlier in the day all the 164 graduating children took part in the hour-long concert which included songs and English and Tamil dramas. A rousing demonstration of martial arts by well-trained children in glittering attire was greeted by the audience with prolonged applause.

It was not all play though. The Tamil drama "Nammaal mudiyum" (We can do it) dealt with a social theme that is the topic of frequent discussion in the community – whether there is a gulf between the English-fluent youngsters and the dialect-speaking older generation.

A pair of grand parents visiting the son's family find the children very much at home in English but shy with Tamil because of the lack of fluency. The children also developed some complex in school with classmates fluent in Tamil. They sought the help of the grandparents who not only conversed with them in Tamil but also narrated several interesting stories in Tamil which spurred their interest in the language further.





RamakrishnaMissionWishes  
all our Readers,  
Members and  
Devotees a  
Happy, Peaceful and  
Contented  
New Year 2013

## FESTIVAL CALENDER (Jan 2013 - Mar 2013)

### Jan 2013

- 01 Tuesday Kalpataru Day  
04 Friday **Birthday of Sri Sarada Devi**  
08 Tuesday Birthday of Swami Shivananda  
08 Tuesday Ekadashi  
17 Thursday Birthday of Swami Saradananda  
22 Tuesday Ekadashi  
26 Saturday Birthday of Swami Turiyananda

### Feb 2013

- 03 Sunday **Birthday of Swami Vivekananda**  
06 Wednesday Ekadashi  
12 Tuesday Birthday of Swami Brahmananda  
14 Thursday Birthday of Swami Trigunatitananda  
21 Thursday Ekadashi  
25 Monday Birthday of Swami Adbhutanandai

### Mar 2013

- 08 Friday Ekadashi  
10 Sunday Maha Shiva-Ratri  
13 Wednesday **Birthday of Sri Ramakrishna**  
23 Saturday Ekadashi  
27 Wednesday Birthday of Sri Chaitanya Deva

## TEMPLE PROGRAMME

### Daily

- 6.00am Mangalarati  
9.00am Puja  
7.00pm Evening Arati & Bhajan

### Ekadashi

- 6.15pm Vishnu Sahasranamam  
7.00pm Arati followed by Rama-Nama Sankirtanam

## DISCOURSES and CLASSES

### Saturdays

- 5.00pm Religious-Bhajan & Cultural Classes For Children (Temple hall – I level)  
6.00pm Study of the Bhagavad Gita by Swami Satyalokananda (Library)  
7.30pm Vedic Chanting & Bhajan Class (Temple)

### Sundays

- 9.30am Yoga Class (Sarada Hall)  
4.00pm Sanskrit Language Classes (Library)  
5.00pm Discourse on “Svetasvatara Upanishad” by Swami Samachittananda (Temple hall – I level)  
6.00pm Discourse on “Narada Bhakti Sutras” by Swami Muktirupananda (Sarada Hall)