

**Great Thinkers  
on  
Swami Vivekananda**

## II

### SWAMI VIVEKANANDA

A. D. PUSALKER

Universally acclaimed as a pioneer in the field of national liberation in India, Swami Vivekananda was complex personality being a lover of humanity, a world teacher of religion, a great patriot, and a leader of the Indian people. Truly has he been regarded as a patriot-saint of modern India and an inspirer of her dormant consciousness, who instilled a freshness and vigour into it. He presented the rare combination of being patriot and a saint, in whom patriotism was deified into the highest saintship and loving service to fellow men into true worship.<sup>1</sup>

A. L. BASHAM

Even now a hundred years after the birth of Narendranath Datta, who later became Swami Vivekananda, it is very difficult to evaluate his importance in the scale of world history. It is certainly far greater than any Western historian or most Indian historians would have suggested at the time of his death. The passing of the years and the many stupendous and unexpected events which have occurred since then suggests that in centuries to come he will be remembered as one of the main moulders of the modern world, especially as far as Asia is concerned, and as one of the most significant figures in the whole history of Indian religion, comparable in importance to such great teachers as Śaṅkara and Rāmānuja, and definitely more important than the saints of local or regional significance such as Kabīr, Caitanya, and the many Nāyanmārs and Āḷvārs of South India.

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I believe also that Vivekananda will always be remembered in the world's history because he virtually initiated what the late Dr C. E. M. Joad once called 'the counter-attack from the East'. Since the days of the Indian missionaries who travelled in South-East Asia and China preaching Buddhism and Hinduism more than a thousand years earlier, he was the first Indian religious teacher to make an impression outside India.<sup>2</sup>

ANNIE BESANT

A striking figure, clad in yellow and orange, shining like the sun of India in the midst of the heavy atmosphere of Chicago, a lion head, piercing eyes, mobile lips, movements swift and abrupt — such was my first impression of Swami Vivekananda, as I met him in one of the rooms set apart for the use of the delegates to the Parliament of Religions. Off the platform, his figure was instinct with pride of country, pride of race — the representative of the oldest of living religions, surrounded by curious gazers of nearly the youngest religion. India was not to be shamed before the hurrying arrogant West by this her envoy and her son. He brought her message, he spoke in her name, and the herald remembered the dignity of the royal land whence he came. Purposeful, virile, strong, he stood out, a man among men, able to hold his own.

On the platform another side came out. The dignity and the inborn sense of worth and power still were there, but all was subdued to the exquisite beauty of the spiritual message which he had brought, to the sublimity of that matchless truth of the East which is the heart and the life of India, the wondrous teaching of the Self. Enraptured, the huge multitude hung upon his words; not a syllable must be lost, not a cadence missed! 'That man, a heathen!' said one, as he came out of the great hall,

‘and we send missionaries to his people! It would be more fitting that they should send missionaries to us!’<sup>3</sup>

A. RAMASWAMI MUDALIAR

I have come under no greater influence than the influence of the life and teachings of Swami Vivekananda. ... I have spoken of that life and have testified to the great influence that that life has had on the generation which immediately succeeded the premature departure of the Swamiji from this world.

After I began to study in the college, there were friends and elders of mine who used to tell us stories of the days in 1893 when Narendra Datta (Swami Vivekananda)—as he then was — often sat on the pials of the houses of Triplicane and began to discuss with learned pandits in Sanskrit — and some of them in Madras were very learned indeed — the great truths of our religious teaching. The exposition, the dialectic skill he showed, and the masterly way in which he analysed what even to those well-educated and learned pandits were unfathomable depths of Sanskrit literature and law, greatly attracted attention from all and sundry.

Swami Vivekananda was a fighter himself. He was one who knew not any kind of physical cowardice or moral cowardice. ...He is a citizen of the world. His contribution will stay on forever. His immortal soul pervades the whole universe.<sup>4</sup>

BAL GANGADHAR TILAK

It is doubtful if there is any Hindu who does not know the name of Sri Vivekananda Swami. There has been extraordinary advancement of material science in the nineteenth century. Under the circumstances, to present the spiritual science prevailing in India for thousands of years by wonderful

exposition and then to kindle admiration and respect among the Western scholars, and, at the same time, to create a sympathetic attitude for India, the mother of spiritual science, can only be an achievement of superhuman power. With English education, the flood of material science spread so fast that it required extraordinary courage and extraordinary genius to stand against that phenomenon and change its direction. Before Swami Vivekananda the Theosophical society began this work. But it is an undisputed fact that it was Swami Vivekananda who first held aloft the banner of Hinduism as a challenge against the material science of the West. ... It was Swami Vivekananda who took on his shoulders this stupendous task of establishing the glory of Hinduism in different countries across the borders. And he, with his erudition, oratorical power, enthusiasm and inner force, laid that work upon a solid foundation. ... Twelve centuries ago Śaṅkarācārya was the only great personality, who not only spoke of the purity of our religion, not only uttered in words that this religion was our strength and wealth, not only said that it was our sacred duty to preach this religion in the length and breadth of the world—but also brought all this into action. Swami Vivekananda is a person of that stature—who appeared towards the last half of the nineteenth century.<sup>5</sup>

BENOY KUMAR SARKAR

If we look upon Ramakrishna as the Buddha of our time, Vivekananda may pass for one or other of the great apostles of yore, say, the scholar Rāhula, the constitutional authority Upāli, the devoted lieutenant Ānanda, the sage Sāriputta, or that master of discourses, Mahākachchāyana. One can almost say that Vivekananda was all these great Buddhist preacher-organizers boiled down into one personality.

...He was much more than a mere exponent of Vedanta, or Ramakrishna, or Hinduism, or Indian Culture. ...In all his

thoughts and activities he was expressing only himself. He always preached his own experiences. It is the truths discovered by him in his own life that he propagated through his literature and institutions. As a modern philosopher he can be properly evaluated solely if one places him by the side of Dewey, Russell, Croce, Spranger, and Bergson. It would be doing Vivekananda injustice and misinterpreting him hopelessly if he were placed in the perspective of scholars whose chief or sole merit consists in editing, translating, paraphrasing or popularizing the teachings of Plato, Aśvaghōṣa, Plotinus, Nāgārjuna, Aquinas, Śāṅkarācārya and others.<sup>6</sup>

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With five words he conquered the world when he addressed men and women as ‘Ye divinities on earth,—Sinners?’ The first four words thundered into being the gospel of joy, hope, virility, energy and freedom for the races of men, and yet with the last word, 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. The first four words he brought from the East, and the last word he brought from the West. All these are oft-repeated expressions, copy-book phrases both in the East and the West. And yet never in the annals of human thought was the juxtaposition accomplished before Vivekananda did it in this dynamic manner and obtained instantaneous recognition as a world’s champion.

Vivekananda’s gospel here is that of energism, of mastery over the world, of *elan vital* subduing conditions that surround life, of creative intelligence and will, of courage trampling down cowardice, of world-conquest. And those who are acquainted with the trends of world-thought since the middle of the nineteenth century are aware that it was just along these lines

that the West was groping in the dark to find a solution. A most formidable exponent of these wants and shortcomings was the German man of letters and critic, Nietzsche (on whom the influence of Manu was powerful), whose...works had awakened mankind to the need of a more positive, humane and joyous life's philosophy than that of the *New Testament*. This joy of life for which the religious, philosophical and social thought was anxiously waiting came suddenly from an unexpected quarter, from this unknown young man of India. And Vivekananda was acclaimed as a tremendous creative power, as the pioneer of a revolution,—the positive and constructive counterpart to the destructive criticism of Nietzsche....

The key to Vivekananda's entire life ... is to be found in this *Śakti-yoga*, energism, the vigour and strength of freedom. All his thoughts and activities are expressions of his energism. Like our *Paurāṇik* Viśvāmitra or the Aeschylean Prometheus he wanted to create new worlds and distribute the fire of freedom, happiness, divinity and immortality among men and women.<sup>7</sup>

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His [Vivekananda] politics and economics are all to be found in his social philosophy. And in this domain we encounter Vivekananda as the messenger of modern materialism. It is possible to establish here an equation between Vivekananda and Immanuel Kant. ...What Kant did for Euro-America towards the end of the eighteenth century was accomplished for India towards the end of the nineteenth century by Vivekananda. Kant is the father of modern materialism for the West. Vivekananda is the father of modern materialism for India. ...It is to them that the world is indebted for the charters of dignity for Nature, matter, material science and material welfare. ...India like Europe was in need of a man who could say with all honesty

he could command that *Prakṛti* was no less sacred than *Puruṣa* and that the pursuit of material sciences and material prosperity was as godly as that of the sciences and activities bearing on the soul.<sup>8</sup>

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The combined intelligence of the entire world assembled at Chicago listened to this uninvited and perhaps unwelcome intruder [Swami Vivekananda] from the banks of the Southern Ganges and was convinced that a new power had arisen in the international sphere and that this new power was Young India. ... Vivekananda was acclaimed as the world-conqueror for Young India.

... From 1757 down to 1893 for more than a hundred years – for nearly 140 years, the world had known almost nothing about Indian India, nothing of the creative Hindus and Mussulmans, nothing of Indian culture, nothing of India's constructive energism. In 1893 Vivekananda threw the first bombshell that announced to mankind in the two hemispheres, to the men and the women of America, of England, France, Germany, Russia, Italy, nay, to the yellows of Japan and China that India was once more to be a power among the powers of the world. Mankind came to realize 1893 as the year No.1 of a vast empire and to recognize the founder of that empire as Vivekananda.<sup>9</sup>

BEPIN CHANDRA PAL

## I

Vivekananda, however, does not stand alone. He is indissolubly bound up with his Master, Paramahansa Ramakrishna. The two stand almost organically bound up, so far as the modern man, not only in India but in the larger world of

our day, is concerned. The modern man can only understand Paramahansa in and through Vivekananda, even as Vivekananda can be understood only in the light of the life of his Master. The Master was a great spiritual force. He was therefore inevitably a mystery to a generation possessed by the un-understood slogans of what is called rationalism, which really means lack of that imagination which is the soul of all spiritual life. Imagination is not fancy. It is really the power to cognize, if not to visualize, that which stands above not only the sensuous but also the intellectual plane. The generation to which Ramakrishna belonged, lacked this imagination. He was, therefore, a mystery to it. It was given to Vivekananda to interpret and present the soul of Paramahansa Ramakrishna and the message of his life to this generation in such terms as would be comprehended by them.

Ramakrishna Paramahansa belonged to no sect or denomination or to put it in another way, he belonged to all sects and denominations both Indian and non-Indian. He was a true Universalist, but his Universalism was not the Universalism of Abstraction. He did not subtract the particularities of different religions to realize his universal religion. With him the Universal and the particular always went together like the sun and shadow. He realized therefore the Reality of the Universal in and through the infinite particularities of life and thought. Vivekananda clothed this realization of his Master in the language of modern Humanism.

Ramakrishna Paramahansa's God was not the God of logic or philosophy, but the God of direct, personal, inner experience. Ramakrishna believed in his God not on the authority of ancient scriptures or traditions, nor on the authority of any guru, but on the testimony of his own direct, personal experiences. He was a Vedantist ; because, his direct allegiance and early training was

in the cult of *Śakti*. The *Śakti* cult in Bengal has been built upon Vedantism. But the Vedantism of Ramakrishna Paramahansa could hardly be labelled as Śāṅkara-Vedantism, nor could it be labelled either as any of the different schools of Vaiṣṇava-Vedanta. These labels are for those who borrow their theology from speculations of great thinkers. But Ramakrishna Paramahansa did not belong to this class. He was not a philosopher; he was not a Pundit, whether modern or ancient ; he was not a logician ; he was a simple seer. He believed in what he saw.

The seer is always a mystic. So was Paramahansa Ramakrishna: so was Jesus; so were all the great spiritual leaders of men. The crowd cannot understand them; least of all are they understood by the learned and the philosophers of their age. Yet they reveal that which all philosophies grope after. Paramahansa Ramakrishna, like Jesus Christ, needed an interpreter to explain him and deliver his message to his age. Jesus found such an interpreter in St. Paul; Ramakrishna found him in Vivekananda. Vivekananda therefore must be understood in the light of the realizations of Paramahansa Ramakrishna.

## II

The story of Vivekananda's conversion has not as yet been told. I do not know if anybody knows how this miracle happened. Vivekananda had been a rationalist and a deist, though he fancied that he was a theist. His early religious associations were with the Brāhmo Samāj. They were not very congenial to the development of faith in saints and seers. Ramakrishna Paramahansa attracted however many members of the Brāhmo Samāj by his great psychic powers and more particularly by his passionate love of God. But they never were able to open the secret springs of the life and realizations of the

Paramahansa. They saw him through the prism of the intellect. The Paramahansa never really opened to most of them the secret chambers of his piety. Vivekananda was favoured by the Paramahansa in this matter.

Paramahansa Ramakrishna saw into the innermost composition of Vivekananda's nature and spirit and recognized in him a fit instrument for delivering the message of his own life. This is the real story of Vivekananda's conversion. It is the story of the conversion also of Soul, though it was set in a different psychological setting. Vivekananda felt drawn to his Master by what he hardly knew. It was the operation of what is now called soul-force. When one soul touches another on this deep spiritual plane, the two are united for ever by unbreakable spiritual bonds. The two henceforth become practically one; the Master working in and through the disciple, the disciple not even knowing that he is dancing to the tune of the Master. People call it inspiration. Vivekananda worked after his conversion under the inspiration of his Master.

### III

The message of Vivekananda, though delivered in the term of the popular Vedantic speculation, was really the message of his Master to the modern man. Vivekananda's message was really the message of modern humanity. His appeal to his own people was, 'Be men.' The man of religion in India had been a mediaeval man. His religion was generally a religion of the other world. It was a religion that enjoined renunciation of the world and all the obligations of the physical and the social life. But this was not the real message of Paramahansa Ramakrishna. He was as much a *Vedāntin* as a *Vaiṣṇava*. His ideal of piety was a synthesis between these two rival schools of Hindu religion. His cult of the Mother was really the cult of *Bhakti*, or love of God,

realized in the terms of the human motherhood. As with the Bengal Vaiṣṇavas, so with the Paramahansa, the Ultimate Reality was not an abstraction. It was not carnal, but therefore it was not without form. And the real form of the Ultimate Reality is the Human Form—not the sensuous form of man which we see with our eyes, but the spiritual form which stands behind it, invisible to mortal eye. Man and God are generically one.

To help man to realize his essential divinity is the object of all religious culture. This is what Vivekananda really meant when he appealed to his people to be men. In the ritual of divine worship of the Brahmin, is used the following text which says : ‘I am Divine. I am none other. I am not subject to grief and bereavement. I am of the form of the True, the Self-conscious and the Eternally Present. I am by nature eternally free.’ This was the message really of his Master as delivered to the modern world by Vivekananda.

It is the message of freedom, not in a negative sense, but in its positive and most comprehensive implications. Freedom means removal of all outside restraint. But constituted as we are, we cannot cut ourselves off from all outside relations, whether with our natural environments or our social environments. Such isolation spells death both physically and spiritually. The law of life is therefore not isolation, but association, not non-co-operation but co-operation. And real freedom is achieved not through war, but through peace only. War or renunciation or isolation has a place no doubt in the scheme of life, but only a temporary place as a means to the attainment of the ultimate end which is not perpetuation of the inevitable conflict of evolution, but the settlement and cancellation of these conflicts in a closer and permanent union. Freedom again is one. Freedom from the domination of our passions and appetites is the first step in the realization of the ideal. Freedom from the fear of brother-man is

the next step. Freedom from the domination of any external authority must follow next. In this way from personal freedom, through social freedom including political freedom, man must attain his real freedom. And when he attains it, he realizes finally that he and his God are one. This is the message of the Vedanta as interpreted by Vivekananda. This is really the message of his Master to the modern world.<sup>10</sup>

Some people in India think that very little fruit has come of the lectures that Swami Vivekananda delivered in England, and that his friends and admirers exaggerate his work. But on coming here I see that he has exerted a marked influence everywhere. In many parts of England I have met with men who deeply regard and venerate Vivekananda. Though I do not belong to his sect, and though it is true that I have differences of opinion with him, I must say that Vivekananda has opened the eyes of a great many here and broadened their hearts. Owing to his teaching, most people here now believe firmly that wonderful spiritual truths lie hidden in the ancient Hindu scriptures. Not only has he brought about this feeling, but he succeeded in establishing a golden relation between England and India. From what I quoted on 'Vivekanandism' from *The Dead Pulpit* by Mr Haweis, you have already understood that owing to the spread of Vivekananda's doctrines, many hundreds of people have seceded from Christianity. And how deep and extensive his work has been in this country will readily appear from the following incident.

Yesterday evening I was going to visit a friend in the Southern part of London. I lost my way and was looking from the corner of a street thinking in which direction I should go, when a lady accompanied by a boy came to me, with the intention, it seemed, of showing me the way. ... She said to me, 'Sir, perhaps you are looking to find your way. May I help

you?’ ... She showed me my way and said, ‘From certain papers I learned that you are coming to London. At the very first sight of you I was telling my son, Look there is “Swami Vivekananda.” ’ As I had to catch the train in a hurry, I had no time to tell her that I was not Vivekananda, and compelled to go off speedily. However, I was really surprised to see that the lady possessed such great veneration for Vivekananda even before she knew him personally. I felt highly gratified at the agreeable incident, and thanked my *geruā* turban which had given me so much honour. Besides the incident, I have seen here many educated English gentlemen, who have come to revere India and who listened eagerly to any religious or spiritual truths, if they belong to India.<sup>11</sup>

#### BRAHMABANDHAB UPADHYAYA

দিন কয়েকের জন্য আমি বোলপুর আশ্রমে বেড়াইতে গিয়াছিলাম। ফিরিয়া আসিয়া যেমন হাবড়া [হাওড়া] ইস্তিশনে পা দিলাম অমনি কে বলিল—কাল স্বামী বিবেকানন্দ মানবলীলা সম্বরণ করিয়াছেন।—শুনিবামাত্র আমার বুকের মাঝে—একটুও বাড়ানো কথা নয়—ঠিক যেন একখানা ছুরি বিঁধিয়া গেল। বেদনার গভীরতা কমিয়া গেলে আমার মনে হইল—বিবেকানন্দের কাজ কেমন করিয়া চলিবে। কেন—তঁাহার তো অনেক উপযুক্ত বিদ্বান গুরুভাই আছেন—তঁাহারা চালাইবেন। তবুও যেন একটা প্রেরণা হইল—তোমার যতটুকু শক্তি আছে তুমি ততটুকু কাজে লাগাও—বিবেকানন্দের ফিরিঙ্গি-জয় ব্রত উদ্‌যাপন করিতে চেষ্টা করো। সেই মুহূর্তেই স্থির করিলাম যে, বিলাত যাইব। আমি স্বপ্নেও কখনও ভাবি নাই যে, বিলাত দেখিব। কিন্তু সেই হাবড়ার [হাওড়া] ইস্তিশনে স্থির করিলাম—বিলাত গিয়া বেদান্তের প্রতিষ্ঠা করিব। তখন আমি বুঝিলাম—বিবেকানন্দ কে। যাহার প্রেরণাশক্তি মাদৃশ হীনজনকে সুদূর সাগরপাড়ে লইয়া যায়—সে বড় সোজা মানুষ নয়। তাহার কিছুদিন পরেই সাতাইশটি টাকা লইয়া বিলাত যাইবার জন্য কলিকাতা নগরী ত্যাগ করিলাম। অবশেষে বিলাত গিয়া উক্সপার (Oxford) ও কামব্রজে (Cambridge) বেদান্তের ব্যাখ্যা করিলাম। বড় বড় অধ্যাপকেরা আমার ব্যাখ্যান শুনিলেন ও হিন্দু অধ্যাপক নিযুক্ত করিয়া বেদান্ত-বিজ্ঞান শিক্ষা করিবেন বলিয়া স্বীকার করিলেন। ঐ অধ্যাপকেরা যে-সকল চিঠি আমাকে লিখিয়াছেন তাহা আমি ছাপাই নাই। ছাপাইলে বুঝিতে পারা যাইবে

বিলাতে বেদান্তের প্রভাব কীরূপ গভীর হইয়াছিল। আমি সামান্য লোক। আমার দ্বারা যে এতবড় একটা কাজ হইয়া গেল—তাহা আমার কাছে ঠিক একটি স্বপ্নের মতো। এই সমস্তই বিবেকানন্দের প্রেরণাশক্তির দ্বারা সম্পাদিত হইয়াছে—অর্থাৎ ঘটনা ঘটিয়াছে—আমি মনে করি। তাই অনেক সময় ভাবি—বিবেকানন্দ কে। বিবেকানন্দ যে প্রকাণ্ড কাজ ফাঁদিয়া গিয়াছেন তাহা ভাবিলে বিবেকানন্দের মহত্বের ইয়ত্তা করা যায় না।

আর একবার বিবেকানন্দের সঙ্গে কলকাতার হেদোর ধারে আমার দেখা হয়। আমি বলিলাম—ভাই চুপ করিয়া বসিয়া আছে কেন? এসো—একবার কলিকাতা শহরে একটা বেদান্ত-বিজ্ঞানের বোল তোলা যাউক। আমি সব আয়োজন করিয়া দিব, তুমি একবার আসরে আসিয়া নামো।—বিবেকানন্দ কাতর স্বরে বলিল—ভবানী ভাই—আমি আর বাঁচিব না (তাহার তিরোভাবের ঠিক ছয় মাস পূর্বের কথা)—যাহাতে আমার মঠটি শেষ করিয়া কাজের একটা সুবন্দোবস্ত করিয়া যাইতে পারি—তাহার জন্য ব্যস্ত আছি—আমার অবসর নাই। সেই দিন তাহার সঙ্কল্প একপ্রতা দেখিয়া বুঝিতে পারিয়াছিলাম যে, লোকটার হৃদয় বেদনাময়-ব্যথায় প্রস্ফীড়িত। কাহার জন্য বেদনা, কাহার জন্য ব্যথা? দেশের জন্য বেদনা, দেশের জন্য ব্যথা। আর্থজ্ঞান, আর্থসভ্যতা বিধ্বস্ত বিপর্যস্ত হইয়া যাইতেছে—তাহার স্থলে যাহা ইতর, যাহা অনার্থ তাহাই সূক্ষ্মকে, উদার বস্তুকে, আর্থতত্ত্বকে পরাভূত করিতেছে—আর তোমার সাড়া নাই, ব্যথা নাই। বিবেকানন্দের হৃদয়ে ইহার যন্ত্রণাময় সাড়া পড়িয়াছিল। সেই সাড়া এত গভীর যে, উহাতে মার্কিন ও যুরোপের চৈতন্য হইয়াছিল। ঐ ব্যথার কথা ভাবি—বেদনার কথা চিন্তা করি—আর জিজ্ঞাসা করি—বিবেকানন্দ কে! দেশের জন্য ব্যথা কখনও শরীরিণী হয়? যদি হয় তো বিবেকানন্দকে বুঝা যাইতে পারে।<sup>12</sup>

(For a few days I had been on a trip to Bolpur. On my return as I stepped down at the Howrah Station, someone said, 'Swami Vivekananda passed away yesterday.' At once an acute pain, sharp like a razor—not the least exaggerated—thrust into my heart. When the intensity of the pain subsided, I wondered, 'How will Vivekananda's work go on? He has, of course, well-trained and educated brother-disciples. Why, they will do his work!' Yet an inspiration flickered in me: 'You give your best with whatever you possess by trying to translate into action Vivekananda's dream of conquest of the West.' That very moment I vowed I would sail to England. So long I never even dreamt of visiting England. But on that day at the Howrah

Station I decided I must go to England and establish Vedanta there. Then I understood who Vivekananda was. He whose inspiration can drive a humble person like me across the seas, is not, really, an ordinary man. Shortly afterwards I left Calcutta and sailed for England with a sum of only twenty-seven rupees in my pocket. Finally, I reached England and delivered lectures at the Oxford and Cambridge Universities on Vedanta. Celebrated [British] scholars listened to my expositions and expressed their desire to learn the science of Vedanta by appointing Hindu scholars. I did not publish the letters of appreciation which those scholars wrote to me. How profound was the influence of Vedanta in England could be understood if I had published those letters. I am just an ordinary man. It was all like a dream that such a great work was accomplished by me. All these were miracles brought about by the inspiration and power of Vivekananda behind me—this is what I believe. That is why sometimes I think, who is Vivekananda ? The greatness of Vivekananda surpasses my power of assessment as I think of the stupendous programme of work he had boldly initiated.

On another occasion, I came across Vivekananda by the side of Hedua Park in Calcutta. I said to him, 'Brother, why are you keeping silent? Come, raise a stir of Vedanta in Calcutta. I will make all arrangements. You just come and appear before the public.' Vivekananda's voice grew heavy with pathos. He said, 'Brother Bhavani, I will not live long (it was just six months before his death). I am busy now with the construction of my *Math*, and making arrangements for its proper upkeep. I have no leisure now.' At the pathetic earnestness of his words I understood that day that his heart was tormented with a passion and pain. Passion for whom? Pain for whom? Passion for the country, pain for the country. The knowledge and culture of the Aryans were being destroyed and crushed. What was gross and

un-Aryan was deflating what was finer and Aryan. And yet there is no response, no pain in your heart? —this [callous indifference of his countrymen] evoked a painful response in Vivekananda's heart. The response was so deep that it struck at the root of the conscience of America and Europe. I think of that pain and passion in Vivekananda, and ask, who is Vivekananda? Is it ever possible that passion for the motherland becomes embodied? If it is, then only one can understand Vivekananda.)

স্বামীজী ! আমি তোমার যৌবনের বন্ধু—তোমার সহিত কত আমোদ-প্রমোদ করিয়াছি—বনভোজন করিয়াছি—গল্পগাছা করিয়াছি। তখন জানিতাম না যে, তোমার প্রাণে সিংহবল আছে, তোমার হৃদয়ে ভারতের জন্য আগ্নেয় পর্বতভরা ব্যথা আছে। আজ আমিও আমার ক্ষুদ্র শক্তি লইয়া তোমারই ব্রত উদ্‌যাপন করিতে উদ্যত হইয়াছি।...এই ঘোর সংগ্রামে যখন ক্ষত-বিক্ষত বিধ্বস্ত হইয়া পড়ি—অবসাদ আসিয়া হৃদয়কে আচ্ছন্ন করে—তখন তোমার প্রদর্শিত আদর্শের দিকে দেখি—তোমার সিংহবলের কথা ভাবি—তোমার গভীর বেদনার অনুধ্যান করি—অমনি অবসাদ চলিয়া যায়—কোথা হইতে দিব্যালোক দিব্যশক্তি আসিয়া প্রাণমনকে ভরপুর করিয়া ফেলে।<sup>13</sup>

(Swamiji ! a friend of your youth—how much of merry-making I have made with you ! With you I went on picnics and spent hours in talks and conversations. But then I never knew that there was a lion's strength in your soul, a volcanic pain and passion for India in your heart. Today with all my humble strength I have come to follow your way. ... In the midst of this fierce struggle, whenever I get torn and tossed, whenever despondency comes and overwhelms my heart, I look up to the great ideal you set forth, I recollect your leonine strength, meditate on the profound depths of your agony—then all at once my weariness withers away. A divine light and a divine strength come from somewhere and fulfil my mind and heart.)

BROJENDRA NATH SEAL

When I first met Vivekananda in 1881, we were fellow-students of Principal William Hastie, scholar, metaphysician, and

poet, at the General Assembly's College. ... I saw and recognized in him a high, ardent and pure nature, vibrant and resonant with impassioned sensibilities. He was certainly no sour or cross-grained puritan, no normal hypochondric; in the recesses of his soul he wrestled with the fierce and fell spirit of Desire, the subtle and illusive spirit of Fancy.

...He tried diverse teachers, creeds and cults, and it was this quest that brought him, though at first in a doubting spirit, to the Paramahansa of Dakshineswar, who spoke to him with an authority that none had spoken before. ...But his rebellious intellect scarcely yet owned the Master. ...It was only gradually that the doubts of that keen intellect were vanquished by the calm in the subsequent life-history of Vivekananda who, after he had found the firm assurance he sought in the saving Grace and Power of his Master, went about preaching and teaching the creed of the Universal Man, and the absolute and inalienable sovereignty of the Self.<sup>14</sup>

C. F. ANDREWS

I would refer in the first place to that greater word *Advaitam*. The word *Advaitam* really means, the occasions of all spiritual life, to see (as the Upanishads tells us). The Universal self in all things and all things in the Universal self. I feel that the greatest of all debts the youths of modern India owe to Swami Vivekananda is the renewal in practical life of this faith in the *Advaitam*.<sup>15</sup>

C. P. RAMASWAMI AIYAR

Swami Vivekananda...was a democratic saint. He revived for us the idea of nationhood. He was the first of those, who made it possible to think of India as a whole irrespective of the existing differences of class, creed, colour and custom. He

pleaded for the driving away of everything that would prevent the union of India. He knew that unless India was one spiritually and intellectually, India could not step into the outer world. A distracted, quarrelsome, feeble minded India would not be of any assistance in the world and therefore he said, Unite ... our ship of religion and of State is now laden full of many cargos, precious, some by no means precious, some wholly nugatory. We must throw aside such cargo. The storm is there. The great winds are blowing and unless the useless cargo is thrown aside, the ship will sink. The Swami asked us to sink the unnecessary cargo. And unless we got that lesson India will perish as the several other nations have perished. ...His gospel was the gospel of courage, of hope and admiration, of eschewal and assimilation.<sup>16</sup>

#### CHAKRAVARTI RAJAGOPALACHARI

Swami Vivekananda saved Hinduism and saved India. But for him we would have lost our religion and would not have gained our freedom. We therefore owe everything to Swami Vivekananda. May his faith, his courage and his wisdom ever inspire us so that we may keep safe the treasure we have received from him!<sup>17</sup>

#### CHRISTOPHER ISHERWOOD

Vivekananda was, as I said, profoundly moved by the realization of India's poverty and the state of her oppression under the British colonial rule. And he proposed a revolution. The spirit of this revolution enormously influenced Gandhi and influences Indian political thought to this day. Vivekananda in this sense is a great figure in Indian history, one of the very greatest historical figures that India has ever produced. But it must always be noted that Vivekananda's revolution, Vivekananda's

सेवाग्राम  
पत्राचार (सि.पी.)  
सेवाग्राम  
बापू होकर (सत्य प्रेम)  
SEVAGRAM  
Via WARDHA (C. P.)

Dear Avinashi,

Surely swami Viveka.  
nand's writings need  
no introduction from  
any body. They make  
their own irresistible appeal.

22-7-'41

Yours

Bapu

LETTER TO T. S. AVINASHILINGAM  
FROM MAHATMA GANDHI, DATED 22 JULY 1941

C. RAJAGOPALACHARI

60, BAZLULLAH ROAD  
TVAGARAYANAGAR  
MADRAS - 17

Swami Vivekananda saved Hinduism  
and saved India. But for him we would  
have lost our religion and would not have  
gained our freedom. We therefore owe  
everything to Swami Vivekananda. May his  
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*C. Rajagopalachari*

nationalism, were not like the kind of revolution, the kind of nationalism, which we associate with other great leaders, admirable and noble as they may be. Vivekananda was far greater than that. In fact, when one sees the full range of his mind, one is astounded. Vivekananda looked toward the West, not simply as a mass of tyrants exploiting various parts of Asia, and other undeveloped areas, but as future partners, people who had very, very much to offer. At the same time, without any false humility, he faced the West and said, 'we have fully as much and more to offer *you*. We offer you this great tradition of spirituality, which can produce, even now, today, a supremely great figure such as Ramakrishna. You can offer us medical services, trains that run on time, hygiene, irrigation, electric light. These are very important, we want them, and we admire some of your qualities immensely.'

One of the most enchanting things about Vivekananda is the way he was eternally changing sides when he was speaking to different people ; he could denounce the British in words of fire, but again he would turn on the Indians and say, 'You cannot manufacture one pin, and you dare to criticize the British !' And then he would speak of the awful materialism of the United States, and on the other hand, he would say that no women in the world were greater, and that the treatment of women in India was absolutely disgraceful. And so in every way, he was integrating, he was seeing the forces for good, the constructive forces, in the different countries, and saying, 'why don't we exchange ?' So Vivekananda's revolution was a revolution for everybody, a revolution which would in the long run be of just as much use to the British as to India. Vivekananda's nationalism, the call to India to recognize herself—this again was not nationalism in the smaller sense, it was a kind of super-nationalism, a kind of internationalism sublimated. You all know

the story that Vivekananda was so fond of, about the lion that was brought up with a lot of sheep. Now another lion comes out of the forest and the sheep all run away, and the little lion that had been brought up thinks it's a sheep and runs away too, and now the pursuing lion grabs it, takes it over to a pool of water and says, 'Look at yourself, you're a lion.' This is what Vivekananda was doing to the Indian people. He remarks in one of his letters, that the marvellous thing about all of the Western nations is that they know that they are nations. He said jealousy is a curse of India. Indians cannot learn to co-operate with each other. Why can't they learn from the co-operation of Western nations with each other? I'm quoting all this because by considering all these different attitudes that Vivekananda took, one sees the immense scope and integrity of his good will. He was really on everybody's side, on the side of the West, and on the side of India, and he saw far, far into the future ; his political prophecies are extremely interesting, and he said repeatedly, that the great force, which would finally have to be reckoned with, was China. He also remarked on visiting Europe for the last time in 1900 that he smelled war everywhere, which was more than most professional statesmen did, at that time.<sup>18</sup>

\* \* \*

[When I heard message of Vedanta as Vivekananda preaches it], I heard it with an almost incredulous joy. Here, at last, was a man who believed in God and yet dared to condemn the indecent grovelings of the sin-obsessed Puritans I had so much despised in my youth. I loved him at once, for his bracing self-reliance, his humour, and his courage. He appealed to me as the perfect anti-Puritan hero: the enemy of Sunday religion, the destroyer of Sunday gloom, the shocker of prudes, the breaker of traditions, the outrager of conventions, the comedian who taught the deepest truths in idiotic jokes and frightful puns. That

humour had its place in religion, that it could actually be a mode of spiritual self-expression, was a revelation to me; for, like every small boy of Puritan upbringing, I had always longed to laugh out loud and make improper noises in church. I didn't know, then, that humour has also had its exponents in the Christian tradition. I knew nothing, for example, about, St. Philip Neri.<sup>19</sup>

D. S. SARMA

He [Vivekananda] raised India in the eyes of the world, gave Hinduism a new turn and put a new spirit in the hearts of his countrymen. ...He was destined to be a pioneer. He broke new ground and led his people across and sighted the Promised Land. ...

...Three religious movements that immediately preceded the Ramakrishna Movement were rather poor and inadequate representations of the great historic religion of the Hindus. The religion of the Brāhmo Samāj was mere eclecticism, more Christian than Hindu in character. The religion of the Ārya Samāj was mere Vedism, which ignored all the later developments in Hinduism. The religion of the Theosophical Society, with its Tibetan Masters its occult phenomena and its esoteric teachings, was looked upon by most Hindus as a kind of spurious Hinduism. On the other hand, the fourth religious movement, of which Swami Vivekananda was the great apostle, was doubtless not only a full, but also authentic manifestation of Hinduism.<sup>20</sup>

E. P. CHELISHEV

Reading and re-reading the works of Vivekananda each time I find in them something new that helps deeper to understand India, its philosophy, the way of the life and customs

of the people in the past and the present, their dreams of the future. ... I think that Vivekananda's greatest service is the development in his teaching of the lofty ideals of humanism which incorporate the finest features of Indian culture. ...

In my studies of contemporary Indian literature I have more than once had the opportunity to see what great influence the humanistic ideals of Vivekananda have exercised on the works of many writers. ... In my opinion, Vivekananda's humanism has nothing in common with the Christian ideology which dooms man to passivity and to begging God for favours. He tried to place religious ideology at the service of the country's national interests, the emancipation of his enslaved compatriots. Vivekananda wrote that the colonialists were building one church after another in India, while the Eastern countries needed bread and not religion. He would sooner see all men turn into confirmed atheists than into superstitious simpletons. To elevate man Vivekananda identifies him with God. ...

Though we do not agree with the idealistic basis of Vivekananda's humanism, we recognize that it possesses many features of active humanism manifested above all in a fervent desire to elevate man, to instil in him a sense of his own dignity, sense of responsibility for his own destiny and the destiny of all people, to make him strive for the ideals of good, truth and justice, to foster in man abhorrence for any suffering. The humanistic ideal of Vivekananda is to a certain degree identical with Gorky's Man with a capital letter.

Such a humanistic interpretation of the essence of man largely determines the democratic nature of Vivekananda's world outlook. ...

Many years will pass, many generations will come and go, Vivekananda and his time will become the distant past, but never will there fade the memory of the man who all his life dreamed of

a better future for his people, who did so much to awaken his compatriots and move India forward, to defend his much-suffering people from injustice and brutality. Like a rocky cliff protecting a coastal valley from storm and bad weather, from the blows of ill winds and waves, Vivekananda fought courageously and selflessly against the enemies of his motherland.

Together with the Indian people, Soviet people who already know some of the works of Vivekananda published in the USSR, highly revere the memory of the great Indian patriot, humanist and democrat, impassioned fighter for a better future for his people and all mankind.<sup>21</sup>

**Chelishv further writes :**

The name of Swami Vivekananda is very popular in Soviet Russia and he is held in high esteem by our countrymen. Soviet people respect him as a great democrat, humanist and patriot who contributed immensely in the development of national consciousness and anti-colonial liberation movement in India. They also consider that his message and the message of Sri Ramakrishna, which are really one, are absolutely necessary for the survival of the human civilization which is now in great danger due to the menace of the devastating nuclear war. We believe that it is their message which can bring peace, harmony and understanding to the tormented world of today. They are not simply religious leaders, they are much more than that. They are prophets of peace, harmony and brotherhood. Their message was relevant in the past in India and in the world at large, but it is still more relevant in the present Indian context and in the context of the contemporary world. That is why a lot of Soviet research scholars and thinkers have dedicated to the study of Sri Ramakrishna and particularly Swami Vivekananda. I am proud that I happened to be one of the pioneers of this study in our

country and contributed an article on Swami Vivekananda to the *Swami Vivekananda Centenary Memorial Volume* twenty years ago, published from Calcutta.

I consider it a great honour for me to be associated with any programme connected with Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda. I and my colleagues will continue to devote to the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda studies with close co-operation of the scholars of India and other countries I will do my best to contribute to the development of the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda studies in the progressive direction. I consider this as a service to the humanity at large.<sup>22</sup>

ELLA WHEELER WILCOX

...We reached the hall just as Vivekananda was going on the stage in his robe and turban. We sat in the very last seat of the hall, clasping each other's hands as the impressive orator gave a never-to-be -forgotten talk on things spiritual. When we went out my husband said: 'I feel that man knows more of God than we do. We must both hear him again.'

My husband attended with me not only a number of evening lectures, but on several occasions came from his business office during the day to listen to the Swami. I remember him saying, as we went out on the street one day: 'This man makes me rise above every business worry; he makes me feel how trivial is the whole material view of life and how limitless is the life beyond. I can go back to my troubles at the office now with new strength.'<sup>23</sup>

FEDERICO MAYOR

There are many aspects of Swami Vivekananda's thought, his ideals and his social message which make UNESCO a very good setting for ... celebration in France of the centenary of his

participation in the World Parliament of Religions, held in Chicago one hundred years ago.

His (Swami Vivekananda) commitment towards universalism and tolerance, his active identification with humanity as a whole. He said from the tribune of the Parliament of Religions, and I quote : 'I fervently hope that the bell that tolled this morning in honour of this convention may be the death knell of all fanaticism, of all persecutions with the sword or with the pen.' I am sure all of us...would strongly identify with this aspiration, since the struggle against exclusiveness is one that must be perpetually renewed.

The Mission he established in India, and which has now spread all over the world, is working to reduce poverty and eliminate discrimination among the different segments of society. There is no more important challenge for us all than this—striving to overcome these problems at their roots; and it is one that I believe the United Nations, working with all possible NGO partners, must take its absolute priority in the years to come.

His preoccupation with human development and his vision of education, science and culture as the essential instruments for such development. The convergence with UNESCO's concerns will be obvious to all.

I am indeed struck by the similarity of the constitution of the Ramakrishna Mission which Vivekananda established as early as 1897 with that of UNESCO drawn up in 1945. Both place the human being at the centre of their efforts aimed at development. Both place tolerance at the top of the agenda for building peace and democracy. Both recognize the variety of human cultures and societies as an essential aspect of the common heritage.

The world today is going through a challenging period of transition. We see many evils like racism and inter-ethnic and religious conflict returning among us with renewed force. Celebrations like this today are a source of renewed strength and encouragement to fight against these evils.<sup>24</sup>

FELIX MARTI-IBANEZ

[Dr Felix Marti-Ibanez was asked what he considered to be the most valuable thing in his life. He responded:]

Life itself. Health and dreams and love. ...If what is meant by 'things', however, is something concrete in physical form, then I would have to say *books*. I was actually once put to the test of what I value most. It was in February 1939, when I had to leave Spain because of the fall of the Spanish Republic and all I could take with me was what I could carry. I chose to take one book. From the thousands of books in the library I have so lovingly built up with my father, I selected *The Universal Gospel and The Life of Vivekananda* by Romain Rolland. That uniquely magnificent mystical book inspired me through the years to dedicate my life to the service of others.<sup>25</sup>

FRANCIS YOUNGHUSBAND

On the death of Ramakrishna the leadership of the little group of disciples fell to Vivekananda, still only twenty-three years of age. Though busy with his own domestic affairs he set to work to fulfil the sacred task left him by Ramakrishna. Disregarding their vacillations he would spend hours in describing the soul-stirring experiences of the Master. And after a time they set out all over India preaching the message of Ramakrishna. They left their dearest. They suffered the agonies that all saints have to endure. And Vivekananda went further still. He went to Europe and America. He became [famous] all over

the world. But always he attributed every good he had or did to what his Master, Ramakrishna, had imparted to him.<sup>26</sup>

GOPAL HALDER

To us the Swami is the person who called India and its people to establish themselves with courage for acquiring self-knowledge. He said—first of all I was born to this country, and that in itself has reasons to be proud of. I don't need to feel shy or ashamed of in declaring my identity. To everyone in this world I would proclaim my identity and add that *I neither am inferior to anyone, nor having a nondescript antiquity*. Such utterance we first had from Vivekananda. I hardly know of any one in those days who could speak with such unhesitant bravery.<sup>27</sup>

HENRY MILLER

The story of the pilgrimage of this man who electrified the American people reads like a legend. At first unrecognized, rejected, reduced to starvation and forced to beg in the streets, he was finally hailed as the greatest spiritual leader of our time. Offers of all kinds were showered upon him; the rich took him in and tried to make a monkey of him. In Detroit, after six weeks of it, he rebelled. All contracts were cancelled and from that time on he went alone from town to town at the invitation of such or such a society.

I had just been reading [Romain] Rolland's book on Vivekananda. I had put it down because I couldn't read anymore, my emotions were so powerful. The passage which roused me to such a state of exaltation was the one in which Rolland describes Vivekananda's triumphal return to India from America. No monarch ever received such a reception at the hands of his countrymen : it stands unique in the annals of history. And what had he done, Vivekananda, to merit such a welcome?

He had made India known to America; he had spread the light. And in doing so he had opened the eyes of his countrymen to their own weaknesses. All India greeted him with open arms; millions of people prostrated themselves before him, saluting him as a saint and saviour, which he was. It was the moment when India stood nearer to being unified than at any time in her long history. It was a triumph of love, of gratitude, of devotion. I am coming back to him later, to his clean, powerful words, spoken like a fearless champion not of India but of the human race.<sup>28</sup>

HIREN MUKHERJEE

It is a blessing that we had only lately in our midst, in the cruelly inhibited conditions of foreign subjection, a truly great soul like Vivekananda, never a recluse but always with his leonine strength of character in the midst of his people . . . the monk whose heart bled for his people so that he gave his all for his country's recovery, self-assertion, and yearning, never wholly stifled, for fulfilment. This is why one like me, a sceptic and atheist to whom the ardent assumptions and ecstasies of belief are alien, salutes this tremendous man of faith and of action who gave back to his stricken people the long-lost pride in their manhood. This is why to dive into Vivekananda's life-story is to discover by no means just an archive but an arsenal of ideas, of instruments for refashioning 'the human condition' in our ancient country..

In his wisdom and his wit Vivekananda could be homely, but he could soar to the heavens even as his feet were planted on our Indian earth. In his meditations he could reach transcendental realms, but to him, as to the *Atharva-Veda* rishi, *Ayam lokah priyatamah* ('this, our world, is dearest of all') and to his fellow-humans he could truly say, as some of our finest old injunctions stress, that 'his mother was Pārvatī, his father

was Maheśvara, that all men were his brothers, and that the three worlds were his home.’ It was, thus, that in his own unique way Vivekananda could, if any one person did, give a vibrant unequivocal, people-oriented colour to subject India’s nationalism and will ever be remembered as one of the supreme figures in the annals of our freedom struggle. ...He knew too keenly that subject India had been debilitated and rejuvenation of her strength was imperative. ... He did say, of course: ‘We must conquer the world through our spirituality and philosophy. There is no other alternative, we must do it or die. The only condition of [Indian] national life, of awakened and vigorous national life, is the conquest of the world by Indian thought.’

It was this man who actively inspired a whole host of national revolutionaries in the ‘Swadeśī’ era. ...No wonder the sedition (Rowlatt) Committee Report (1918) affirmed that Vivekananda had an important influence on those who created a big, pro-freedom tumult in the first decade of the century. That influence continued and pervades whatever is forward-looking in the national scene even today. ...

Vivekananda pre-eminently was a Prophet who could ascend, in contemplation, to what he sensed as the highest human end — the saint’s thought processes must be unique — and yet returns to insert himself in the sweep of time in order to reshape forces of history and create, if one can, a new world. Here is the shining quality distinguishing Vivekananda. ...Vivekananda...will always be with us, as a great and gorgeous liberator, a man with whom indeed we can match our mountains and the sea.<sup>29</sup>

HUANG XIN CHUAN

Vivekananda stands out as the most renowned philosopher and social figure of India in modern China. His philosophical and

social thought and epic patriotism not only inspired the growth of nationalist movement in India, but also made a great impact abroad. In 1893, Vivekananda visited Canton and its neighbourhood. He noted his impressions of the visit in a letter addressed to the citizens of Madras. He had some knowledge and understanding of Chinese history and culture. He often cited and spoke highly of China in his writings and speeches. He made a prophecy that the Chinese culture will surely be resurrected one day like the 'Phoenix' and undertake the responsibility of the great mission of integrating the Western and the Oriental cultures. His biographer Romain Rolland has narrated the evolution of Vivekananda's idea on this aspect. When Vivekananda went to America for the first time, he hoped that country would achieve this mission. But during his second visit abroad, he realized that he was deceived by dollar imperialism. He, therefore, came to the conclusion that America could not be an instrument to accomplish this task, but it was China which could do it.

Vivekananda had infinite sympathy for the Chinese people living under the oppression of feudalism and imperialism : and he pinned much hope on them. After his visit to China, he made a very interesting comment. He said: 'The Chinese child is quite a philosopher and calmly goes to work at an age when your Indian boy can hardly crawl on all fours. He has learnt the philosophy of necessity too well.' This shows Vivekananda's enormous sympathy towards the miseries of the children of China in the old society.

While explaining his visionary socialism Vivekananda made an interesting 'gospel'. He said that the future society would be ruled by the labouring people and that this would first take place in China. In *Modern India* he said : 'But there is hope. In the mighty course of time, the Brahmin, and the other higher castes

too, are being brought down to the lower status of the Śūdras and the Śūdras are being raised to higher ranks. ...Even before our eyes, powerful China with fast strides, is going down to Śūdrahood,... yet, a time will come when there will be the rising of the Śūdra class, *with their* Śūdrahood, ... a time will come when the Śūdras of every country... will gain absolute supremacy in every society. ... Socialism, Anarchism, Nihilism, and other like sects are the vanguard of the social revolution that is to follow.'

From the material cited above and his life and works, we can see at least that Vivekananda showed very much concern for, and sympathized with, the people of China who were living under the rule of feudalism and imperialism and placed great hopes on them. But we do not agree with B. N. Datta that the success of the Chinese and the Russian revolutions coming into being at concrete historical moments should be credited to the 'gospel' of Vivekananda. This would make him a divine mystique personality. We have seen that Vivekananda's approach to the laws of social developments was unscientific. However, it is not possible for any advanced thinker to make a correct prediction of the phases and events of the progress of history in every minute details. We should, therefore, appraise Vivekananda in the light of seeking truth from facts.

In conclusion, Vivekananda was the most eminent figure among the democratic patriots in India. He paid high tributes to our glorious ancient culture and loved the Chinese labouring people.

We pay homage to him.<sup>30</sup>

HUSTON SMITH

Spiritually speaking, Vivekananda's words and presence at the 1893 World Parliament of Religions brought Asia to the

West decisively. For, reading correctly the spiritual hunger of the West that his words and presence brought to the surface, Vivekananda went on to found the Ramakrishna Mission whose centres in almost every major city of Europe and America launched the influx of Asian spirituality that has changed the religious complexion of those continents permanently. Buddhism, Sufism, Sikhism, Baha'i and others have followed, but Vedanta was the pioneer.

The importance of this fact needs no belabouring, but I should like to expand the notion of East meeting West by pointing out that it houses a temporal as well as a spatial dimension. For though we have no time machine to set clocks back, it *is* possible (in our Westernized world) to break out of our modern time frame by venturing abroad. When I find Vivekananda reporting that 'when my Master touched me, my mind underwent a complete revolution; I was aghast to realize that there really was nothing whatever in the entire universe but God', and when he proceeds from such reports to conclude that our seeming self is not our true self, the latter being in actuality divine I hear his words echoing not only from a different land (India) but from a different time—a past when the human outlook was less hobbled by the materialistic, reductionistic styles of thought that the West has fallen into.

I grant that there is danger in stating things this way, for the cult of novelty has led many people to confuse 'past' with 'inferior'. Reflective thinkers, though, are coming to recognize that one of the most important questions of life—who are we? Where did we come from? What are we supposed to do, if anything?—modern science has confused us, along with clarifying things in other respects. For in being able to deal only with things that are woven of space, time, and matter ... science has unwittingly led many people to assume that *samsāra* (the

relative world) is more important and real than *nirvāṇa* (the experience of absolute Reality).

Personally, therefore, I welcome Vivekananda as envoy, not only from a different land but from a time that was more open to 'the breath of the eternal' that the Upanishads attest to so compellingly.<sup>31</sup>

INDIRA GANDHI

I had had the good fortune to know about the life and teachings of Swami Vivekananda as well as about the activities of the Ramakrishna Mission. My parents and specially my mother were very close with the Ramakrishna Mission. And I must say that the teachings of Vivekananda had inspired all the members of the Nehru family both in their political activities and day-to-day lives.

Swamiji's teachings, writings and speeches which appear on every page of his works, are indeed stimulant. Swamiji provides us courage, strength, and faith and teaches us how to be self-sufficient. These are the basic tenets of life which India needed most and which would be relevant for all time to come.

Swamiji has taught us that we are the inheritors of a glorious and sublime culture. He has at the same time shown us and analysed the root causes of our national malady. It was Swami Vivekananda who has given us the ways and means how to reconstruct a new India. Swamiji preached the message of universal brotherhood. And a single word which echoed and reached in all his speeches, was *abhīṭh* i.e. fearlessness.<sup>32</sup>

JAGADISH CHANDRA BOSE

What a void this makes! What great things were accomplished in these few years! How one man could have done it all! And how all is stilled now. And yet, when one is tired

and weary, it is best that he should rest. I seem to see him just as I saw him in Paris two years ago...the strong man with the large hope, everything large about him.

\* \* \*

I cannot tell you what a great sadness has come. I wish we could see beyond it. Our thoughts are in India with those who are suffering *July 9th 1902*.

It seems to me that nothing is lost and all the great thoughts and work and service and hope remain embodied in and about the place which gave them birth. All our life is but an echo of a few great moments, an echo which reverberates through all time. ... That great soul is released; his heroic deeds on this earth are over. Can we realize what that work has been—how one man did all this? When one is tired it is best that he should sleep, but his deeds and teachings will walk the earth and waken and strengthen.<sup>33</sup>

JADUNATH SARKAR

Ninety-one years ago a boy was born who has turned the lives of millions of us in India into a new channel, and thousands in the West to find their own souls amidst the doubts and distractions of this mechanical civilization. When we calmly reflect on our social scene, we feel bound to admit that the moral revolution not merely preached but actually accomplished by his life and example, is the dominating force of Hindu Society in the 20th century.<sup>34</sup>

JAWAHARLAL NEHRU

Rooted in the past and full of pride in India's prestige, Vivekananda was yet modern in his approach to life's problems and was a kind of bridge between the past of India and her present. ... He was a fine figure of a man, imposing, full of poise

and dignity, sure of himself and his mission, and at the same time full of a dynamic and fiery energy and a passion to push India forward. He came as a tonic to the depressed and demoralized Hindu mind and gave it self-reliance and some roots in the past.<sup>35</sup>

I do not know how many of the younger generation read the speeches and the writings of Swami Vivekananda. But I can tell you that many of my generation were very powerfully influenced by him and I think that it would do a great deal of good to the present generation if they also went through Swami Vivekananda's writings and speeches, and they would learn much from them. That would, perhaps, as some of us did, enable us to catch a glimpse of that fire that raged in Swami Vivekananda's mind and heart and which ultimately consumed him at an early age. Because there was fire in his heart—the fire of a great personality coming out in eloquent and ennobling language—it was no empty talk that he was indulging in. He was putting his heart and soul into the words he uttered. Therefore he became a great orator, not with the orators' flashes and flourishes but with a deep conviction and earnestness of spirit. And so he influenced powerfully the minds of many in India and two or three generations of young men and women have no doubt been influenced by him. ...

Much has happened which perhaps makes some forget those who came before and who prepared India and shaped India in those early and difficult days. If you read Swami Vivekananda's writings and speeches, the curious thing you will find is that they are not old. It was told 56\* years ago, and they are fresh today because, what he wrote or spoke about dealt with certain fundamental matters and aspects of our problems or

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\* Jawaharlal Nehru delivered this speech in 1949.—Editor

the world's problems. Therefore they do not become old. They are fresh even though you read them now.

He gave us something which brings us, if I may use the word, a certain pride in our inheritance. He did not spare us. He talked of our weaknesses and our failings too. He did not wish to hide anything. Indeed he should not. Because we have to correct those failings, he deals with those failings also. Sometimes he strikes hard at us, but sometimes points out the great things for which India stood and which even in the days of India's downfall made her, in some measure, continue to be great.

So what Swamiji has written and said is of interest and must interest us and is likely to influence us for a long time to come. He was no politician in the ordinary sense of the word and yet he was, I think, one of the great founders—if you like, you may use any other word—of the national modern movement of India, and a great number of people who took more or less an active part in that movement in a later date drew their inspiration from Swami Vivekananda. Directly or indirectly he has powerfully influenced the India of today. And I think that our younger generation will take advantage of this fountain of wisdom, of spirit and fire, that flows through Swami Vivekananda.

...Men like Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa, men like Swami Vivekananda and men like Mahatma Gandhi are great unifying forces, great constructive geniuses of the world not only in regard to the particular teachings that they taught, but their approach to the world and their conscious and unconscious influence on it is of the most vital importance to us. ...<sup>36</sup>

JAY PRAKASH NARAYAN

Swami Vivekananda belongs to the class of great seers of Truth. His intellect was great, but greater still was his heart. He once told his disciples at the Belur Math that if a conflict were to

arise between the intellect and the heart, they should reject the intellect and follow the heart. Many a *Mahātmā* has appeared in this land, and some of them understood that to meditate on the soul in the caves of the Himalayas was the correct path to follow. Swami Vivekananda's mind also was influenced by this tradition and there arose a conflict in him early in his career; his intellect advocating the traditional absorption in self-realization and his heart bleeding for the miseries of the people around him. In the end he came to the conclusion that leaving the solitude he would enter into the soul of every being and worship his God by serving them.

...What attracts the poor and lowly to him is this compassionate heart which ever bled for them and exhausted itself in their incessant service in thirty-nine brief years. ... It was this measureless feeling for the spiritual and material poverty and misery of his fellow men, particularly of his fellow countrymen, that drove him round the world like a tornado of moral energy and gave him no rest till the end. His life's campaigns in the East and West, including the founding of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission, were in response to this feeling.

His life was all purity and love; his coming to and going from this world was [were] quick, sudden. But in the short period of thirty-nine years he accomplished so much by way of stirring up and infusing new life and new hope into the people that in the history of our great country we do not find a second to stand equal to him in this, except, perhaps the great Śaṅkarācārya.<sup>37</sup>

KAKASAHEB KALELKAR

To Swami Vivekananda belongs the honour of familiarizing India with the idea of a Parliament of Religions, and of proclaiming to the world that a Parliament of Religions would be

incomplete without Hinduism being represented there as an equal partner. Educated India felt in 1893 that Hinduism had been vindicated and that day Swami Vivekananda's name became with us a name to conjure with. I remember as a child the glowing enthusiasm of my elder brothers discussing the news and giving expression to their wild hopes for the future of Hinduism. Swami Vivekananda's lectures were soon translated into Marathi, my mother tongue, and people read the lectures with avidity. There was nothing new in them for Vedantic India, at least so far as the substance went; but every word therein was instinct with life and hope and self-confidence. The novelty about the Swamiji's presentation of Hinduism was its modern outlook and his application of Vedantic principles to the solution of modern, social and educational problems. The importance of his teachings grew on me as I grew in years and I looked up to the Swami as the high-water mark of Indian culture.<sup>38</sup>

K. M. MUNSHI

Swami Vivekananda, a brilliant product of the *Gītā*, trod the path of yoga. His was not the way of the iconoclast but the architect. He was not an apologist of the existing evils. At the same time he had no illusion about Western culture. He saw Aryan culture in its living greatness, as a spiritual force destined to revolutionize the world. He brought back self-respect to Indians. He also demanded and secured the world's respect for their culture. Due to him educated India felt a glow of a fresh pride in its ever living culture which it had been taught to condemn by Christian missionaries and its social reformers of the Rationalist school. Vivekananda was sanity itself. He declined to found sect and thereby segregate the influence of his Master's teachings. He preferred to emphasize his experiences rather than dwell on his being an *avatāra* – a belief he shared

with some of his co-disciples. In this way he became the voice of Aryan culture itself.<sup>39</sup>

K. M. PANIKKAR

What gave Indian nationalism its dynamism and ultimately enabled it to weld at least the major part of India into one state was the creation of a sense of community among the Hindus to which the credit should to a very large extent go to Swami Vivekananda. This new Śāṅkarācārya may well be claimed to be a unifier of Hindu ideology. Travelling all over India he not only aroused a sense of Hindu feeling but taught the doctrine of a universal Vedanta as the background of the new Hindu reformation. ... The Hindu religious movements before him were local, sectarian and without any all India impact. The Ārya Samāj, the Brāhmo Samāj, the Deva Samāj and other movements, very valuable in themselves, only tended further to emphasize the provincial character of the reform movements. It is Vivekananda who first gave to the Hindu movement its sense of nationalism and provided most of the movements with a common all-India outlook.<sup>40</sup>

LAL BAHADUR SHASTRI

I remember that in my student days I have read the speeches of the Swami and was deeply attracted to it. Its impact on my mind was so great that my perceptions were all changed, and I started to have a different idea about life.

When the nation was in a deep slumber, he created the stir. He talked on the Vedanta; nevertheless, this sage-philosopher aroused the people. India was like an open picture before him. He wanted that the people of our country should embark on work and be active. His Advaitism was not a passivity, and he never directed to await luck or fate. He knew that if the people of the country were not ready for toil and sacrifice, India would

hardly achieve wealth and prosperity. Subjugation of the country deeply troubled him. ... He called everyone to sacrifice for the attainment of a noble goal. Aspirants of wealth and power were deeply despised by him. In a country where millions of people were living in deprivation, individual enjoyments were considered unjust by him. ...His message was to awake, arise and stop not till the goal is reached. He was a seer and a God-commanded entity.<sup>40a</sup>

#### LEO TOLSTOY

Alexander Shifman writes: ‘Among the Indian philosophers of the medieval period he [Tolstoy] studied more thoroughly Śāṅkara and, among the more recent, Ramakrishna Paramahansa and his pupil Swami Vivekananda. ...

‘During his last years Tolstoy did not concern himself with Ramakrishna except selecting from his works passages for inclusion in his new collections of ancient sayings which he had compiled previously. At this time he was considerably more interested in Vivekananda’s teachings. ...

‘Tolstoy’s acquaintance with Vivekananda’s philosophy dates back to September, 1896, when for the first time he noted in his diary that he had read “a charming book on Indian wisdom” which had been sent to him.’<sup>41</sup> This was a series of lectures on ancient Indian philosophy delivered by Vivekananda in New York in the winter of 1895-96. A. K. Datt, the Indian scholar, who sent to Tolstoy this book, wrote to him :

‘You will be pleased to know that your doctrines are in complete agreement with the Indian philosophy at the period of its highest achievement, the most ancient to reach us.’

‘Tolstoy wrote in reply to this letter that he liked the book and he noted with approval the reasoning on what was man’s “self”.’ [*Complete collection of Works of Tolstoy*, Vol. 69, p. 146]\*

‘In Vivekananda’s passionate tirades directed against the contemporary bourgeois civilization, in his affirmations of the priority of the spiritual essence of man over his “material cover”. Tolstoy heard the echoes of the early teachings of the ancient Indians and particularly many motifs of the Vedas which were congenial to him.

‘The second book by Vivekananda which Tolstoy read was a collection of *Speeches and Articles* (in English) sent to him in 1907 by his acquaintance I. F. Nazhivin. When Nazhivin asked him whether he would like to have this book, Tolstoy replied on 7 July 1907 : ‘Please send me the book by the Brahmin. The reading of such books is more than a pleasure, it is a broadening of the soul.’ ’<sup>42</sup>

‘In 1908, I. F. Nazhivin published a collection of articles, *Voices of the Peoples*, which included Vivekananda’s articles “The Hymn of the Peoples” and “God and Man”. The latter article made a strong impression on Tolstoy. “This is unusually good”, he wrote to Nazhivin, after reading it.” ’<sup>43</sup>

‘Once Tolstoy praised Vivekananda for his “excellent polemics with Schopenhauer about God” and he noted the English of the Indian philosopher : “What English has Vivekananda ! He has learnt all its subtleties.” ’<sup>44</sup>

‘In March 1909, preparing a list of new popular books for the people, Tolstoy also included in the plan of publication the Sayings of Ramakrishna and Vivekananda, [*Works of Tolstoy*, Vol. 57, p. 40] and, in April of the same year, he informed the Orientalist N.O. Einhorn : “We are preparing a publication of selected thoughts of Vivekananda whom I appreciate very much.”<sup>45</sup> [*Works of Tolstoy*, Vol. 79, p. 142] But this publication did not materialize.’

EMMA CALVÉ

It has been my good fortune and my joy to know a man who truly ‘walked with God’, a noble being, a saint, a philosopher, and a true friend. His influence upon my spiritual life was profound. He opened up new horizons before me; enlarging and vivifying my religious ideas and ideals; teaching me a broader understanding of truth. My soul will bear him eternal gratitude. This extraordinary man was a Hindu monk of the order of the Vedanta. He was called the Swami Vivekananda, and was widely known in America for his religious teachings.

...With the Swami and some of his friends and followers I went a most remarkable trip, through Turkey, Egypt, and Greece. Our party included the Swami; Father Hyacinthe Loyson; his wife, a Bostonian; Miss MacLeod of Chicago, an ardent Swamist and charming, enthusiastic woman; and myself, the song bird of the troupe. What a pilgrimage it was! Science, philosophy, and history had no secrets from the Swami. I listened with all my ears to the wise and learned discourse that went on around me. I did not attempt to join in their arguments, but I sang on all occasions, as is my custom. The Swami would discuss all sorts of questions with Father Loyson, who was a scholar and a theologian of repute. It was interesting to see that the Swami was able to give the exact text of a document, the date of a Church Council, when Father Loyson himself was not certain.

When we were in Greece, we visited Eleusis. He explained its mysteries to us and led us from altar to altar, from temple to temple, describing the processions that were held in each place, intoning the ancient prayers, showing us the priestly rites. Later, in Egypt, one unforgettable night, he led us again into the past, speaking to us in mystic, moving world, under the shadow of the silent sphinx.

The Swami was always absorbingly interesting, even under ordinary conditions. He fascinated his hearers with his magic tongue. Again and again we would miss our train, sitting calmly in a station waiting-room, enthralled by his discourse and quite oblivious of the lapse of time. Even Miss MacLeod, the most sensible among us, would forget the hour, and we would in consequence find ourselves stranded far from our destination at the most inconvenient times and places.<sup>46</sup>

MOHANDAS KARAMCHAND GANDHI

I have come here [Belur Math] to pay my homage and respect to the revered memory of Swami Vivekananda, whose birthday is being celebrated today [6 February 1921]. I have gone through his works very thoroughly, and after having gone through them, the love that I had for my country became a thousandfold. I ask you, young men, not to go away empty-handed without imbibing something of the spirit of the place where Swami Vivekananda lived and died.<sup>47</sup>

MAHENDRANATH SIRCAR

...Originally an intellectual agnostic with a heart endowed with true seeking and love, Vivekananda saw the living image of Wisdom and Love in Ramakrishna.

...Vivekananda approached religion and philosophy through an analysis of life and psychic experience and he welcomed that as the highest which gave the *finest* idea of freedom. ...Gods, angels and helpers had no fascination for him, for he felt that the bondage was self-created, and should be broken by self-possession. He maintained the heroic attitude in all concerns of life – even in spiritual life.

Vivekananda was the spirit of selflessness incarnated in flesh. He could feel that true knowledge originated from it. It was not an ideal for him. It was his being. He could see that

selfless living was better than mere speculative philosophy, and he accentuated it. This self-giving and self-opening were to him the ways to wisdom. The Vedanta was to him the gospel of life, and not mere philosophy.

...Vivekananda's policy was to bring in social reformation more by the propagation of liberal and humanistic culture rather than by positive frontal attacks. He was anxious to impart the touch of love and life to everybody, but he was equally anxious to see the spirit of self-reformation coming from within. True reformation was reformation by self-education. He concentrated his forces thereon.<sup>48</sup>

#### MANABENDRA NATH ROY

Religious nationalism of the orthodox as well as reformed school had begun to come into evidence in the province of Bengal since the first years of the twentieth century. Although its political philosopher and leader were found subsequently in the persons of Aurobindo Ghosh and Bepin Chandra Pal respectively, its fundamental ideology was conceived by a young intellectual. ... Narendra Nath Datta, subsequently known by the religious nomenclature of Swami Vivekananda. While still a student in the University of Calcutta, Datta felt the rebellious spirit affecting the lower middle class intellectuals. It was in the early nineties. He was moved by the sufferings of the common people. Declassed socially, possessing a keen intellect, he made a spectacular plunge into the philosophical depths of Hindu scripture and discovered in his cult of Vedantism (religious Monism of the Hindus) a sort of socialistic, humanitarian religion. He decried scathingly orthodoxy in religion as well as in social customs. He was the picturesque, and tremendously vigorous embodiment of the old trying to readjust itself to the new. Like Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Datta was also a prophet of

Hindu nationalism. He also was a firm believer in the cultural superiority of the Indian people, and held that on this cultural basis should be built the future Indian nation. But he was not a partisan of orthodoxy in religion : to social conservatism, he was a veritable iconoclast. He had the courageous foresight, or perhaps instinct, which convinced him that if religion was to be saved, it must be given a modern garb; if the priest was still to hold his sway over the millions of Hindu believers, he must modify his old crude way ; if the intellectual aristocracy of the fortunate few was to retain its social predominance, spiritual knowledge must be democratized. The reaction of native culture against the intrusion of Western education ran wild, so to say, in the person of Vivekananda and the cult of Universal Religion he formulated in the name of his preceptor, Ramakrishna Paramahansa. He preached that Hinduism, not Indian nationalism, should be aggressive. His nationalism was a spiritual imperialism. He called on Young India to believe in the spiritual mission of India. ...

This romantic vision of conquering the world by spiritual superiority electrified the young intellectuals. ... The British domination stood in the way as the root of all evils. Thus, an intelligently rebellious element... had to give in to national preoccupations, and contribute itself to a movement for the immediate overthrow of foreign rule. ...<sup>49</sup>

MICHAEL TALBOT

There are many parallel concepts between the ancient philosophies of the East and the emerging philosophies of the West. Certain concepts are so similar that it becomes impossible to discern whether some statements were made by the mystic or the physicist. Esalen Institute Psychologist Lawrence Leshan gives an example of such an indistinguishable statement : ‘The

absolute (is)...everything that exists ...this absolute has become the universe...(as we perceive it) by coming through time, space and causation. This is the central idea of (Minkowski) (Advaita). Time, space and causation are like the glass through which the absolute is seen and when it is seen it appears as the universe. Now we at once gather from this that in the universe there is neither time, space nor causation. ...What we may call causation begins, after, if we may be permitted to say so, the degeneration of the absolute into the phenomenal and not before.’

The remark was originally made by mystic Swami Vivekananda in *Jñāna-yoga*, but the fact that the names of the mathematician who first theorized that space and time are a continuum, Hermann Minkowski, and the greatest of the historical Brahmin sages, Advaita,\* are inter-changeable, demonstrates once again the confluence of mysticism and the new physics.

Vivekananda further expresses a view that has become the backbone of quantum theory : There is no such thing as strict causality. As he states, ‘A stone falls and we ask why. This question is possible only on the supposition that nothing happens without a cause. I request you to make this very clear in your minds, for whenever we ask why anything happens, we are taking for granted that everything that happened must have a why, that is to say, it must have been preceded by something else which acted as the cause. This precedence in succession is what we call the law of causation.’<sup>50</sup>

MUNSHI PREMCHAND

Among the great souls who welcomed the Indian renaissance with sounds of conch shells, Vivekananda deserves

\* The author obviously mistakes Advaita to be a person and not a philosophy.—Editor

the first place. His divine message has a clear pronouncement for spiritual progress—directed not for India alone but the world at large. ...The Swami is no more with us today, but the glow of spirituality he lighted will always illumine the World.<sup>51</sup>

NAGENDRANATH GUPTA

In conversation Vivekananda was brilliant, illuminating, arresting, while the range of his knowledge was exceptionally wide. His country occupied a great deal of his thoughts and his conversation. His deep spiritual experiences were the bedrock of his faith and his luminations expositions are to be found in his lectures, but his patriotism was as deep as his religion. Except those who saw it, few can realize the ascendancy and influence of Swami Vivekananda over his American and English disciples. ...At the sight of this Indian monk wearing a single robe and a pair of rough Indian shoes his disciples from the West, among whom were the Consul General for the United States living in Calcutta, and his wife, would rise with every mark of respect; and when he spoke, he was listened to with the closest and most respectful attention. His slightest wish was a command and was carried out forthwith. And Vivekananda was always his simple and great self, unassuming, straightforward, earnest, and grave. ...His thoughts ranged over every phase of the future of India, and he gave all that was in him to his country and to the world. The world will rank him among the prophets and princes of peace, and his message has been heard in reverence in three continents. For his countrymen he has left priceless heritage of virility, abounding vitality, and invincible strength of will. Swami Vivekananda stands on the threshold of the dawn of a new day for India, an heroic and dauntless figure, the herald and harbinger of the glorious hour when India shall, once again, sweep forward to the van of the nations.<sup>52</sup>

PRAFULLA CHANDRA RAY

It was Swamiji's great principle that the service of *daridra Nārāyaṇa* should be the real service of humanity. ...Swami Vivekananda's great message was that all the low caste people should be taken as our brethren. Not only the right hand of the fellowship should be extended to them, but they should be embraced as a brother embraces his fellow-brother. ...Many things come out of Swami Vivekananda's life. He said that the temples should be thrown open to all the Hindus irrespective of caste distinction. That is a very simple thing. In the eye of God there is no distinction between one man and another. ... The aim of Swami Vivekananda was not only to obliterate all distinctions of caste, but also to uplift the *daridra Nārāyaṇa*. ...Another thing he has done is propounding the principles of Vedanta in foreign countries. We are all the worshippers of the material world. We forget that there is anything good in our own teachings and literature. This is due to our illusion and ignorance. He expounded the principles of Vedanta and created not only a profound impression in the New World, but there were also many converts to it in America. Many of them came out to India, and devoted their time, energy and money to the cause of India. That was not a small service that he rendered.<sup>53</sup>

ROMESH CHANDRA DUTT

Since then I have heard the sad news of Swami Vivekananda's death. I never saw the Swami, I never closely followed his teachings, but you know how sincerely I appreciated and admired his high patriotism, his genuine belief in the greatness of his country, his manly faith in the future of his countrymen if they are true to themselves. That spirit of self-reliance, that determination to work out our own salvation,—that faith in our country and ourselves,—that conviction that our

future rests in our own hands,—are the noblest lessons that we learn from the life of him whose loss we all lament today. India is poorer to-day for the untimely loss of an earnest worker who had faith in himself ; to us in Bengal the loss is more of a personal nature ; to you the bereavement is one which will cast a shadow over all your life. Only the thought of his earnestness and greatness, only the imperishable lessons which his life teaches, may afford some consolation to those who have lost in him a friend, a helper in life, a teacher of the great truths.<sup>54</sup>

RADHAKAMAL MUKERJEE

The fruitful movement of the dialectic of the Indian spirit towards the stress of universality of the human person is embodied in the thought and vision of Swami Vivekananda, the beloved disciple of Ramakrishna, one of the greatest saints of modern India and a living embodiment of the universality and transcendence of Vedantic humanism. Vivekananda gave to modern India the conception of the destitute, suffering and sorrowing God (*ārta* and *daridra Nārāyaṇa*) in man conceived as essentially interpersonal and at the same time ultimately cosmic-transcendent.<sup>55</sup>

RADHAKUMUD MUKERJEE

It was only after his attainment of supreme knowledge that Sri Ramakrishna allowed his pupil to engage in external activities in the life of a teacher.

What was this Supreme knowledge which Vivekananda had lived to achieve? It was the knowledge of the *ātman*, of Brahman as the soul and supreme reality. He did not care for the half truths and intermediate truths which make up the body of knowledge, for which the modern world stands. He boldly stood for the knowledge of immortality as the only objective to be aimed at by mortals. ...

Vivekananda stood out as an embodiment of a purified Hinduism, a Hinduism purged of its impurities and abuses, which are not of its essences. He was an embodiment of the religion that is founded upon character and not upon mere external forms, rituals and ceremonies. ...His clarion call still instigates in us a fight against illiteracy, untouchability, and other social evils which are eating into the vitals of Hinduism.

We at the modern age are too prone to modernize too much the message of Vivekananda as if he were a mere political leader. It is forgotten that his main strength lay in the depths of his soul. It was his soul force that sustained a life so rich in events and in external *activities*. There is hardly a life in which so much could be packed within its span so restricted. His life was cut short at the age of 39, but it is a priceless possession for India and Humanity.<sup>56</sup>

RAMESH CHANDRA MAJUMDAR

(1)

Vivekananda championed the cause of Hinduism in the Parliament of Religions held at Chicago (USA) in 1893 in connection with the celebration of the 400th anniversary of the discovery of America by Columbus. There, in the presence of the representatives of all the religions from almost all the countries in the world, the young monk from India expounded the principles of Vedanta and the greatness of Hinduism with such persuasive eloquence that from the very first he captivated the hearts of vast audience. It would be hardly an exaggeration to say that Swami Vivekananda made a place for Hinduism in the cultural map of the modern world. The civilized nations of the West had hitherto looked down upon Hinduism as a bundle of superstitions, evil institutions, and immoral customs, unworthy of

serious consideration in the progressive world of today. Now, for the first time, they not only greeted, with hearty approval, the lofty principles of Hinduism as expounded by Vivekananda, but accorded a very high place to it in the cultures and civilizations of the world. The repercussion of this on the vast Hindu community can be easily imagined. The Hindu intelligentsia were always very sensitive to the criticism of the Westerners, particularly the missionaries, regarding the many evils and shortcomings of the Hindu society and religion, as with their rational outlook they could not but admit the force of much of this criticism. They had always to be on the defensive and their attitude was mostly apologetic, whenever there was a comparative estimate of the values of the Hindu and Western culture. They had almost taken for granted the inferiority of their culture *vis-à-vis* that of the West, which was so confidently asserted by the Western scholars. Now, all on a sudden, the table was turned and the representatives of the West joined in a chorus of applause at the hidden virtues of Hinduism which were hitherto unsuspected either by friends or foes. It not only restored the self-confidence of the Hindus in their own culture and civilization, but quickened their sense of national pride and patriotism. This sentiment was echoed and re-echoed in the numerous public addresses which were presented to Swami Vivekananda on his home-coming by the Hindus all over India, almost literally from Cape Comorin to the Himalayas. It was a great contribution to the growing Hindu nationalism.

On his return to India, Swami Vivekananda preached the spiritual basis of Hindu civilization and pointed out in his writings and speeches that the spirituality of India was not less valuable, nor less important for the welfare of humanity, than the much vaunted material greatness of the West which has dazzled our eyes. He was never tired of asking the Indians to turn their eyes,

dazed by the splendour of the West, to their own ideals and institutions. By a comparative estimate of the real values of the Hindu ideals and institutions and those of the West he maintained the superiority of the former and asked his countrymen never to exchange gold for tinsels. ...

But Vivekananda was not prejudiced against the West nor insensible to the value of her achievements. He frankly admitted that Indian culture was neither spotless nor perfect. It has to learn many things from the West, but without sacrificing its true character.

Swami Vivekananda combined in himself the role of a great saint and fervid nationalist. He placed Indian nationalism on the high pedestal of past glory, and it embraced the teeming millions of India both high and low, rich and poor. He devoted his life to the awakening of national consciousness and many of his eloquent appeals would stir the national sentiments of India even today to their very depths. ...

Though an ascetic, Vivekananda was a patriot of patriots. The thought of restoring the pristine glory of India by resuscitating among her people the spiritual vitality which was dormant, but not dead, was always the uppermost thought in his mind. ...

This great *sannyāsin* who had left his hearth and home at the call of his spiritual guru, Sri Ramakrishna, and delved deeply into spiritual mysticism, was never tired of preaching that what India needs today is not so much religion or philosophy, of which she has enough, but food for her hungry millions, social justice for the low classes, strength and energy for her emasculated people and a sense of pride and prestige as a great nation of the world. He made a trumpet call to all Indians to shed fear of all kinds and stand forth as men by imbibing *śakti* (energy and strength), by reminding them that they were the particles of the Divine

according to the eternal truth preached by the Vedanta. The precepts and example of this great *sannyāsin* galvanized the current of national life, infused new hopes and inspirations, and placed the service to the motherland on a religious level. ...

Swami Vivekananda thus gave a spiritual basis to Indian nationalism. The lessons of the Vedanta and *Bhagavad-Gītā* permeated the lives and activities of many nationalists, and many a martyr, inspired by his teachings, endured extreme sufferings and sacrifices with a cheerful heart, fearlessly embraced death, and calmly bore the inhuman tortures, worse than death, which were sometimes inflicted upon them. ...<sup>57</sup>

(2)

He (Vivekananda) was a product of the nineteenth century Renaissance in Bengal, in its initial stage, but it was his genius and personality that moulded it into the shape it finally assumed. ...It was a great achievement on the part of Swamiji to bring about a synthesis between the thesis and antithesis—to use a Hegelian expression— represented by the first two phases of Indian Renaissance. ...The Ideal he placed before the country was an all-round development by imbibing both the spirituality of ancient India and the material culture of the West. Such a synthesis was not only necessary for India but its scope, according to Swamiji, extended to the West also. As a matter of fact Swamiji regarded this synthesis as essential for the whole humanity. ...It would appear that Swami Vivekananda has laid before us the final phase of the Renaissance Movement that is still leading us forward, and India will derive the fullest benefit from it if she follows the path laid down by him.<sup>58</sup>

(3)

His historical knowledge...was both profound and extensive. Although he wrote only one or two short essays on

historical subjects, his penetrating insight into the historical evolution, not only in India but all over the world from ancient to modern times, is revealed in numerous passages scattered throughout his speeches and writings. His comprehensive grasp of the main currents of the world history and the power to express it in simple language is illustrated in his description of the Renaissance [in his book *Prācyā O Pāścātyā*]. He has given an altogether new interpretation of evolution of Indian history through ages which, considering the time in which he wrote, displays an amazing depth of knowledge and critical judgement. He emphasized the truth that ‘in ancient India the centres of national life were always the intellectual and spiritual and not political’, and interpreted on that basis the course of evolution in Indian history right up to the British period. He was also familiar with the scientific and critical method of historical research and modern developments in Archaeology and Ethnology.

...It has been very aptly said the Swami Vivekananda is a commentary on Sri Ramakrishna. But the commentator with his giant intellect and profound understanding made such distinctive contributions that his commentary becomes itself a philosophy just as Śaṅkara’s commentary on the *Vedānta-Sūtra* is by itself a philosophy.<sup>59</sup>

(4)

India has produced numerous saints and religious teachers, but it would be difficult to select in their message an appreciation of the present-day problems of life and a heart bleeding for the suffering millions of India such as we find throughout the writings and speeches of the Swami. Sometimes, he even goes to the length of subordinating religion to other interests of life...Like the most advanced political thinkers, he had no illusion of the past, but dreamt of a glorious future for his motherland.

...Diversity in the personality of the Swami, at first, appears to be somewhat puzzling. But with the advance of years and a closer study of his teachings, one slowly realizes that this apparent plurality is the real key to the proper understanding of his personality. It becomes increasingly clear that the great lesson which the Swami's teaching holds out before us is the indivisibility of a human being, in spite of the multiple manifestations of his emotion and intellect, and the consequent unity of the problem which faces society; for society is, after all, a mere aggregate of individuals and, therefore, partakes of their essential character.

...To him [the Swami] each individual human being is not a mere bundle of different intellectual and emotional attributes, but an organic entity whose diverse component elements are bound up together by one indivisible force. This constitutes the main spring which guides his life and actions, so long as this is not brought under control, all attempts at reform are bound to prove futile.<sup>60</sup>

R. G. PRADHAN

Swami Vivekananda might well be called the father of modern Indian Nationalism; he largely created it and also embodied in his own life its highest and noblest elements.<sup>61</sup>

R. RYBAKOV

### **Vivekananda's Ideas Dear to Soviets**

The people of the Soviet Union observed the 120th anniversary of the birth of the great Indian thinker and public figure Swami Vivekananda, whose fame has twice outlived his short and dramatic life, entirely devoted to the noble cause of awakening India. ...

I have recently been to... Yasnaya Polyana, the house of Leo Tolstoy—the great writer, whose name is equally dear to the peoples of the USSR and India. I saw a group of visitors encircling a large dinner table and my mind conjured up grey-bearded, Tolstoy, reading British newspapers out loud in the light of a kerosene lamp. The British Press was full of reports about Vivekananda's brilliant lectures. Sometimes, there was little truth in them, yet the powerful voice of the Calcutta *sannyāsi* did reach the writer's mind through the filter of the British newspapers. It stirred the writer profoundly and for a while he could not continue reading. He went to the bedroom and read Vivekananda's books all through the night. He remarked in his diary : 'I was reading Vivekananda again. How much there is in common between the thoughts of his and mine.'

### **New Age**

That epoch has long since gone. The people who come to the Tolstoy museum and listen to the guide's story were born in the age of space flights, cinema and television and they do not know what colonialism is. The material culture of that time has disappeared and so have clothes and objects of everyday life. But the spiritual culture which unites all nations is alive and continues to exert powerful influence on our contemporaries. Vivekananda's ideas were dear not only to Tolstoy. They are just as dear to the Soviet people today, primarily, because his life was filled with ardent love for India. Vivekananda had always desired to change the situation in India—the powerful and yet dependent country, fettered by the will of British colonialists, hard vestiges of the centuries-old history and rigid caste conventions and also disintegrated, oppressed and not yet strong to rebel. He had not spared efforts to awaken his countrymen's feeling of national identity, the wish to work for the

national benefit and the faith in India's bright future. Neither had he spared sarcasm to stir up the Indians' feeling of shame for their dependent and oppressed position, the shame, which, to quote Marx's apt remark, 'is already revolution of a kind. Shame is a kind of anger which is turned inward. And if a whole nation really experienced a sense of shame, it would be like a lion, crouching ready to spring'. However reluctant, Vivekananda was to get involved in politics, his entire activities were aimed against imperialism and colonialism and he had played an important role in India's becoming an independent state and a leading power.

The essence of Vivekananda's religion is the service to people. 'I do not believe in God or religion which cannot wipe the widow's tears or bring a piece of bread to the orphan's mouth,' he said. His doctrine was focussed on man. Everything for the good of man—how consonant this idea is with Maxim Gorky's words spoken at about the same time : 'The name of Man rings proud.' Centring his attention on the Indian reality, Vivekananda explained the national degradation by the indifference of the propertied classes to the people's needs and by the poverty and ignorance of the population. 'Contempt for the masses is a grave national sin,' he said.

Vivekananda had uncovered yet another cause of India's decline, namely, the country's isolated status. It is only natural that the voice of the man who asserted the idea of equality of all religions and the international fraternity of liberated peoples deeply moved the delegates of the world religious council in Chicago. He was not afraid of reason and relied on it.

### **National Sin**

'It is better that mankind should become atheist through following reason, than blindly believe in 200 million gods on the

authority of anybody.’ The supernatural and miracles did not bother him and he refused to accept miracles ascribed to his teacher Ramakrishna. Isn’t it a miracle, however that he had heard the roaring of the coming social and political events of the 20th century in the slow and serene life of 19th century Europe and had aptly foreseen that the liberation would come from Russia.

That epoch is unreachably far away. Things and kingdoms have disappeared and practically the entire colonial system has collapsed. They say there are old gramophone records of Vivekananda’s ardent voice still to be found in India. His voice was admired by Ramakrishna and it produced a tremendous impression on the Chicago religious congress. Those records have not been played for a long time already, for there are no gramophones to play them on.

Still, Vivekananda’s voice keeps ringing. Celebrating the 120th anniversary of his birth, we recall Rabindranath Tagore’s words : ‘If you want to know India, read Vivekananda.’<sup>62</sup>

#### RATNAMUTHU SUGATHAN

It was Swami Vivekananda who made us aware of our subjugation, and inspired for achieving the national freedom. This all, curiously enough, was done through his speeches and talks pertaining to religious and spiritual matters. It was he who first vociferously declared the impossibility of getting freedom without eradicating casteism, poverty and illiteracy among the masses.

When in Kerala, Swami Vivekananda had witnessed all and his expression was — ‘This is a lunatic asylum.’ He added that here we had only one wise man, and that was the Chattampi Swami. The stalwarts of untouchability were shaken to their

cores by the Swami's reverberating voice. ...The Hindus of Kerala were fragmented in innumerable castes and tribes, and on that social ruins comfortably sat were the high caste peoples — who, as a consequence of prolonged observance of local traditions and practices and its resultant bragging, had their souls eroding with rusts.

On his way to Kerala Vivekananda met Dr Palpu, who narrated to the Swami about Kerala's inhuman casteism, perpetual exploitation and insult of the lower class Hindus by their upper class counterparts. Learning this entire, the Swami told Dr Palpu, 'Find out a good *sannyāsin* within the country and community you belong to, and try to unite the lower class people around him and work for their uplift. Fight against untouchability, the lower class people has to undertake this task. None will come out to save the exploited and the suppressed. They have to do it for themselves. Following this, Dr Palpu went back to his State Travancore, discovered Sri Narayana Guru, and the inception of *Aruvippuram Kṣetra Yogam* was followed.

All the subsequent social, cultural and political movements [in Kerala] to eradicate the cumulative debris of injustice and unjustness had in its centre the meeting of Dr. Palpu with Swami Vivekananda. ...Sri Kumaran Asan, the first editor-director of *Vivekodayam* and the spokes-person of *Śrī Nārāyaṇa Dharma Paripālana Yogam* (S. N. D. P.) while writing an obituary on Swami Chaitanya has narrated about Dr Palpu's encounter and discussion with Swami Vivekananda.<sup>63</sup>

RABINDRANATH TAGORE

কিছুদিন আগে বিবেকানন্দ বলেছিলেন, প্রত্যেক মানুষের মধ্যে ব্রহ্মের শক্তি। বলেছিলেন, দরিদ্রের মধ্যে দিয়ে নারায়ণ আমাদের সেবা পেতে চান।

একে বলি বাণী। এই বাণী স্বার্থবোধের সীমার বাইরে মানুষের আত্মবোধকে অসীম মুক্তির পথ দেখালে। এ তো কোনও বিশেষ আচারের উপদেশ নয়, ব্যবহারিক সঙ্কীর্ণ অনুশাসন নয়। ছুঁৎমাগের বিরুদ্ধতা এর মধ্যে আপনিই এসে পড়েছে। তার দ্বারা রাস্ট্রিক স্বাতন্ত্র্যের সুযোগ হতে পারে বলে নয়, তার দ্বারা মানুষের অপমান দূর হবে বলে। সেই অপমানে আমাদের প্রত্যেকের আত্মাবমাননা।

বিবেকানন্দের এই বাণী সম্পূর্ণ মানুষের উদ্বোধন বলেই কর্মের মধ্যে দিয়ে ত্যাগের মধ্যে দিয়ে মুক্তির বিচিত্র পথে আমাদের যুবকদেরকে প্রবৃত্ত করেচে।<sup>64</sup>

(Some time ago Vivekananda said that there was the power of Brahman in every man, that Nārāyaṇa [i.e. God] wanted to have our service through the poor. This is what I call real gospel. This gospel showed the path of infinite freedom from man's tiny egocentric self beyond the limits of all selfishness. This was no sermon relating to a particular ritual, nor was it a narrow injunction to be imposed upon one's external life. This naturally contained in it protest against untouchability—not because that would make for political freedom, but because that would do away with the humiliation of man—a curse which in fact puts to shame the self of us all.

Vivekananda's gospel marked the awakening of man in his fullness and that is why it inspired our youth to the diverse courses of liberation through work and sacrifice.)

আধুনিক কালের ভারতবর্ষে বিবেকানন্দই একটি মহৎ বাণী প্রচার করেছিলেন, সেটি কোনও আচারগত নয়। তিনি দেশের সকলকে ডেকে বলেছিলেন, তোমাদের সকলের মধ্যে ব্রহ্মের শক্তি, —দরিদ্রের মধ্যে দেবতা তোমাদের সেবা চান। এই কথাটা যুবকদের চিত্তকে সমগ্রভাবে জাগিয়েছে। তাই এই বাণীর ফল দেশের সেবায় আজ বিচিত্রভাবে বিচিত্র ত্যাগে ফলছে। তাঁর বাণী মানুষকে যখনই সম্মান দিয়েছে তখনই শক্তি দিয়েছে। সেই শক্তির পথ কেবল একঝাঁক নয়, তা কোনও দৈহিক প্রক্রিয়ার পুনরাবৃত্তির মধ্যে পর্যবসিত নয়, তা মানুষের প্রাণমনকে বিচিত্রভাবে প্রাণবান করেছে। বাংলাদেশের যুবকদের মধ্যে যেসব দুঃসাহসিক অধ্যবসায়ের পরিচয় পাই তার মূলে আছে বিবেকানন্দের সেই বাণী যা মানুষের আত্মাকে ডেকেছে, আঙুলকে নয়।<sup>65</sup>

### विज्ञानम्

किञ्चिद्दिनं आत्मे विज्ञानम्  
 एतद्विज्ञानं, अत्रैकं मानुषं  
 मध्ये प्रकृतं सति; एतद्विज्ञानं  
 मूर्तिप्रकृतं मध्ये दिने नान्यथा  
 आत्मानं नरात् अत्रैकं एव।  
 अत्रैकं एव एतन्नी ~~एतन्नी~~ <sup>एतन्नी</sup> मीमांस  
~~एतन्नी~~ <sup>एतन्नी</sup> मानुषं ~~मानुषं~~ <sup>मानुषं</sup>  
 अस्मिन् मूर्तिप्रकृतं नरात् एतन्नी।  
<sup>एतन्नी</sup> एतन्नी <sup>एतन्नी</sup> मानुषं  
 एतन्नी <sup>एतन्नी</sup> मानुषं, एतन्नी <sup>एतन्नी</sup> मानुषं  
 नरात्। एतन्नी <sup>एतन्नी</sup> मानुषं विज्ञानं एतन्नी  
 मध्ये ~~एतन्नी~~ <sup>एतन्नी</sup> मानुषं एतन्नी  
 एतन्नी, - एतन्नी <sup>एतन्नी</sup> मानुषं  
 एतन्नी <sup>एतन्नी</sup> मानुषं एतन्नी  
 एतन्नी, एतन्नी <sup>एतन्नी</sup> मानुषं

ਮਨਮਾਨ ਕੁੰਡ ਹਰੇ ਹਰੇ, ਮੇਰੇ  
 ਮਨਮਾਨ ਮਨਮਾਨ ਮਨਮਾਨ  
 ਮਨਮਾਨ ਮਨਮਾਨ ਮਨਮਾਨ। ਮਨਮਾਨ-  
 ਮਨਮਾਨ ਮੇਰੇ ਮਨਮਾਨ ਮਨਮਾਨ  
 ਮਨਮਾਨ ਮਨਮਾਨ ਮਨਮਾਨ ਮਨਮਾਨ

ਮਨਮਾਨ ਮਨਮਾਨ

(In India of modern times, it was Vivekananda alone who preached a great message which is not tied to any do's and don'ts. Addressing one and all in the nation, he said : In every one of you there is the power of Brahman (God); the God in the poor desires you to serve Him. This message has roused the heart of the youths in a most pervasive way. That is why this message has borne fruit in the service of the nation in diverse ways and in diverse forms of sacrifice. This message has, at one and the same time, imparted dignity and respect to man along with energy and power. The strength that this message has imparted to man is not confined to a particular point; nor is it limited to repetitions of some physical movements. It has, indeed, invested his life with a wonderful dynamism in various spheres. There at the source of the adventurous activities of today's youth of Bengal is the message of Vivekananda—which calls the soul of man, not his fingers.)

RAJENDRA PRASAD

Men who lead their fellow beings in any sphere of life are rare and those that lead their leaders are rarer still. These super-guides come not very often upon this earth to uplift the sinking section of humanity. Swami Vivekananda was one of these super souls.

It was he who could set the sceptic mind of the West at the rest in the spiritual arena. Ambassadors of spiritual missions had risen before him in the East, but none could speak to the West as he did with that voice of conviction, keeping audiences spellbound and enthralled. The worthy disciple of the worthy Master rose to the pinnacle of spiritual eminence, preaching the gospel of the innate oneness of the human race, and preaching universal love and the affinity of all human souls.

Not only Indians but Westerners too stand indebted to Swami Vivekananda for the bequest of *viveka* (wisdom) to posterity.<sup>66</sup>

The ideal he stood for made universal brotherhood of man an understandable proposition to a world which was wedded to colour prejudice, having its route in the slavery of man. His spiritual approach roused the conscience of the thinking section of the human community all over the world and he succeeded in bringing home to the West the greatness of the Vedic civilization.

The great disciple of the great Master immortalized the fame and prestige of the land of his birth in a way which remains unrivalled even in the annals of Indian spiritualism in modern times. The sceptical youth with the intrepid spirit rose to be the ablest and wisest heir to the legacy of spiritual wealth of the great enlightened one.<sup>67</sup>

ROMAIN ROLLAND

He [Vivekananda] was energy personified, and action was his message to men. For him, as for Beethoven, it was the root of all the virtues. ...

His pre-eminent characteristic was kingliness. He was a born king and nobody ever came near him either in India or America without paying homage to his majesty.

When this quite unknown young man of thirty appeared in Chicago at the inaugural meeting of the Parliament of Religions, opened in September 1893, by Cardinal Gibbons, all his fellow members were forgotten in his commanding presence. His strength and beauty, the grace and dignity of his bearing, the dark light of his eyes, his imposing appearance, and from the moment he began to speak, the splendid music of his rich deep voice enthralled the vast audience of American Anglo-Saxons, previously prejudiced against him on account of his colour. The thought of this warrior prophet of India left a deep mark upon the United States.

It was impossible to imagine him in the second place. Wherever he went he was the first. ...Everybody recognized in him at sight the leader, the anointed of God, the man marked with the stamp of the power to command. A traveller who crossed his path in the Himalayas without knowing who he was, stopped in amazement, and cried, 'Śiva !...'

It was as if his chosen God had imprinted His name upon his forehead. ...

He was less than forty years of age when the athlete lay stretched upon the pyre. ...

But the flame of that pyre is still alight today. From his ashes, like those of the Phoenix of old, has sprung anew the conscience of India—the magic bird—faith in her unity and in the Great Message, brooded over from Vedic times by the dreaming spirit of his ancient race—the message for which it must render account to the rest of mankind.

\* \* \*

Moving as were his [Vivekananda's] lectures at Colombo, and the preaching to the people of Rameswaram—it was for Madras that he reserved his greatest efforts. Madras had been expecting him for weeks in a kind of passionate delirium...

He replied to the frenzied expectancy of the people by his Message to India, a conch sounding the resurrection of the land of Rāma, of Śiva, of Kṛṣṇa, and calling the heroic Spirit, the immortal *ātman*, to march to war. He was a general, explaining his *Plan of Campaign*, and calling his people to rise en masse :

'My India, arise !' ...

'For the next fifty years... let all other vain Gods disappear for that time from our minds. This is the only God that is awake, our own race—everywhere His hands, everywhere His feet, everywhere His ears, He covers everything. All other Gods are

sleeping. What vain Gods shall we go after and yet cannot worship the God that we see all round us, the *Virāt*?... The first of all worship is the worship of the *Virāt*—of those all around us. ... These are all our Gods—men and animals, and the first Gods we have to worship are our own countrymen. ...’

Imagine the thunderous reverberations of these words!...

The storm passed ; it scattered its cataracts of water and fire over the plain, and its formidable appeal to the Force of the Soul, to the God sleeping in man and His illimitable possibilities ! I can see the Mage erect, his arm raised, like Jesus above the tomb of Lazarus in Rembrandt’s engraving : with energy flowing from his gesture of command to raise the dead and bring him to life. ...

Did the dead arise ? Did India, thrilling to the sound of his words, reply to the hope of her herald? Was her noisy enthusiasm translated into deeds? At the time nearly all this flame seemed to have been lost in smoke. Two years afterwards Vivekananda declared bitterly that the harvests of young men necessary for his army had not come from India. It is impossible to change in a moment the habits of a people buried in a Dream, enslaved by prejudice, and allowing themselves to fail under the weight of the slightest effort. But the Master’s rough scourge made her turn for the first time in her sleep, and for the first time the heroic trumpet sounded in the midst of her dream the Forward March of India, conscious of her God. She never forgot it. From that day the awakening of the torpid Colossus began. If the generation that followed, saw, three years after Vivekananda’s death, the revolt of Bengal, the prelude to the great movement of Tilak and Gandhi, if India today has definitely taken part in the collective action of organized masses, it is due to the initial shock, to the mighty ‘Lazarus, come forth;’ of the message from Madras.

This message of energy had a double meaning : a national and a universal. Although, for the great monk of the Advaita, it was the universal meaning that predominated, it was the other that revived the sinews of India.

\* \* \*

His words are great music, phrases in the style of Beethoven, stirring rhythms like the march of Handel choruses. I cannot touch these sayings of his, scattered as they are through the pages of books at thirty years' distance, without receiving a thrill through my body like an electric shock. And what shocks, what transports must have been produced when in burning words they issued from the lips of the hero !

\* \* \*

India was hauled out of the shifting sands of barren speculation wherein she had been engulfed for centuries, by the hand of one of her own *sannyāsins*; and the result was that the whole reservoir of mysticism, sleeping beneath, broke its bounds and spread by a series of great ripples into action. The West ought to be aware of the tremendous energies liberated by these means.

The world finds itself face to face with an awakening India. Its huge prostrate body, lying along the whole length of the immense peninsula, is stretching its limbs and collecting its scattered forces. Whatever the part played in this reawakening by the three generations of trumpeters during the previous century—(the greatest of whom we salute, the genial Precursor : Rammohun Roy), the decisive call was the trumpet blast of the lectures delivered at Colombo and Madras.

And the magic watchword was Unity. Unity of every Indian man and woman (and world-unity as well) ; of all the powers of the spirit—dream and action ; reason, love, and work. Unity of

the hundred races of India with their hundred different tongues and hundred thousand gods springing from the same religious centre, the core of present and future reconstruction. Unity of the thousand sects of Hinduism. Unity within the vast Ocean of all religious thought and all rivers past and present, Western and Eastern. For—and herein lies the difference between the awakening of Ramakrishna and Vivekananda and that of Rammohun Roy and the Brāhmo Samāj—in these days India refuses allegiance to the imperious civilization of the West, she defends her own ideas, she has stepped into her age-long heritage with the firm intention not to sacrifice any part of it, but to allow the rest of the world to profit by it, and to receive in return the intellectual conquests of the West. The time is past for the pre-eminence of one incomplete and partial civilization. Asia and Europe, the two giants, are standing face to face as equals for the first time. If they are wise they will work together, and the fruit of their labours will be for all.

This ‘greater India’, this new India—whose growth politicians and learned men have, ostrich fashion, hidden from us and whose striking effects are now apparent—is impregnated with the soul of Ramakrishna. The twin star of the Paramahansa and the hero who translated his thoughts into action, dominates and guides her present destinies. Its warm radiance is the leaven working within the soil of India and fertilizing it. The present leaders of India : the king of thinkers, the king of poets, and the *Mahātmā*—Aurobindo Ghosh, Tagore, and Gandhi—have grown, flowered, and borne fruit under the double constellation of the Swan and the Eagle—a fact publicly acknowledged by Aurobindo and Gandhi. ...

As for Tagore, whose Goethe-like genius stands at the junction of all the rivers of India, it is permissible to presume that in him are united and harmonized the two currents of the Brāhmo

Samāj (transmitted to him by his father, the Maharshi) and of the new Vedantism of Ramakrishna and Vivekananda. Rich in both, free in both, he has serenely wedded the West and the East in his own spirit. From the social and national point of view his only public announcement of his ideas was, if I am not mistaken, about 1906 at the beginning of the *Swadeśī* movement, four years after Vivekananda's death. There is no doubt that the breath of such a Forerunner must have played some part in his evolution.

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I was glad to hear Gandhi's voice quite recently—in spite of the fact that his temperament is the antithesis of Ramakrishna's or Vivekananda's—remind his brethren of the International Fellowships, whose pious zeal disposed them to evangelize, of the great universal principle of religious 'Acceptation', the same preached by Vivekananda. ...

At this stage of human evolution, wherein both blind and conscious forces are driving all natures to draw together for 'co-operation or death', it is absolutely essential that the human consciousness should be impregnated with it, until this indispensable principle becomes an axiom : that every faith has an equal right to live, and that there is an equal duty incumbent upon every man to respect that which his neighbour respects. In my opinion Gandhi, when he stated it so frankly, showed himself to be the heir of Ramakrishna.

There is no single one of us who cannot take this lesson to heart. The writer of these lines—he has vaguely aspired to this wide comprehension all through his life—feels only too deeply at this moment how many are his shortcomings in spite of his aspirations; and he is grateful for Gandhi's great lesson—the same lesson that was preached by Vivekananda, and still more by Ramakrishna—to help him to achieve it.<sup>68</sup>

SARVEPALLI RADHAKRISHNAN

When I was a student in the early years of this century, a student in high school and college classes, we used to read Swami Vivekananda's speeches and letters which were then passing from hand to hand in manuscript form, and they used to stir us a great deal and make us feel proud of our ancient culture. Though our externals were broken down, the spirit of our country is there and is everlastingly real—that was the message which we gathered from his speeches and writings when I was a young student.

There is nothing higher than humanity. But so far as we are concerned, a human individual is a lamp of Spirit on earth, the most concrete living embodiment of Spirit. ... By standing up for the great ideals of Hindu religion, the great ideals that alone can save humanity, by standing up for them, Swami Vivekananda tried to lead humanity to a nobler and better path than that which it found itself in. ... If you really believe in the divine spark in man, do not for a moment hesitate to accept the great tradition which has come to us, of which Swami Vivekananda was the greatest exponent.<sup>69</sup>

\* \* \*

We are today at a critical period not merely in the history of our country but in the history of the world. There are many people who think we are on the edge of an abyss. There is distortion of values, there is lowering of standards, there is widespread escapism, a good deal of mass hysteria, and people think of it and collapse in despair, frustration, hopelessness. These are the only things which are open to us. Such a kind of lack of faith in the spirit of man is a treason to the dignity of man. It is an insult to human nature. It is human nature that has brought about all the great changes that have taken place in this world.

And if there is any call which Vivekananda made to us, it is to rely on our own spiritual resources. ... Man has inexhaustible spiritual resources. His spirit is supreme, man is unique. There is nothing inevitable in this world, and we can ward off the worst dangers and worst disabilities by which we are faced. Only we should not lose hope. He gave us fortitude in suffering, he gave us hope in distress, he gave us courage in despair. He told us : ‘Do not be led away by the appearances. Deep down there is a providential will, there is a purpose in this universe. You must try to co-operate with that purpose and try to achieve it.’<sup>70</sup>

SATYENDRA NATH BOSE

The immeasurable force having its source within him [Vivekananda], had ceaselessly strived to have emanation. Throughout his life this irrepressible force had moved him around the world. And wherever he went, people who had his contact could experience this life-force and were, consequently, rejuvenated. There hardly was anyone more capable than him to arouse the people of our country from their deep illusory slumber. ...It was our misfortune that like the great Vedantist Śaṅkarācārya, he had an early demise. But as the Śaṅkarācārya in his short life had moved around India for umpteen times and tried to inject a new life force among the Indians, so also was the Swami during the nineteenth century stormed around India and the Western countries and preached Sri Ramakrishna’s message of inter-religious harmony.<sup>71</sup>

SHYAMA PRASAD MOOKERJEE

Nineteenth century had witnessed the birth of several spirited men in different corners of India. Swami Vivekananda was the greatest among them. The message of the Swami still resonates in the Indian hearts. Only in his chalked out path India

can achieve absolute national rejuvenation. As the great ideals of Divine Buddha has their culmination in Emperor Aśoka's proactive stance for his subjects, such were the spiritual tenets of Divine Sri Ramakrishna manifested through the life's work of Swami Vivekananda. Behind Aśoka's emissaries of peace was the political enormity of a King, but, on the other hand, Vivekananda's *Karma-yoga* had nothing except love and sacrifice behind its sustenance. ...To build the country and the nation, it is imperative that we must adopt the ideal of Swami. ...People can never live without an ideal. Within the Swami's life and message are found such timely element and ideal resorting to which we can build a strong nation and a great country.<sup>72</sup>

SRI AUROBINDO

### **'The awakening soul of India'**

It was in religion first that the soul of India awoke and triumphed. There were always indications, always great forerunners, but it was when the flower of the educated youth of Calcutta bowed down at the feet of an illiterate Hindu ascetic, a self-illuminated ecstatic and 'mystic' without a single trace or touch of the alien thought or education upon him that the battle was won. The going forth of Vivekananda, marked out by the Master as the heroic soul destined to take the world between his two hands and change it, was the first visible sign to the world that India was awake not only to survive but to conquer. ... Once the soul of the nation was awake in religion, it was only a matter of time and opportunity for it to throw itself on all spiritual and intellectual activities in the national existence and take possession of them.<sup>73</sup>

Vivekananda was a soul of puissance if ever there was one, a very lion among men, but the definite work he has left behind is

quite incommensurate with our impression of his creative might and energy. We perceive his influence still working gigantically, we know not well how, we know not well where, in something that is not yet formed, something leonine, grand, intuitive, upheaving that has entered the soul of India and we say, ‘Behold, Vivekananda still lives in the soul of his Mother and in the souls of her children.’<sup>74</sup>

The visit of Swami Vivekananda to America and the subsequent work of those who followed him did more for India than a hundred London Congresses could effect. That is the true way of awakening sympathy,—by showing ourselves to the nations as a people with a great past and ancient civilization who still possess something of the genius and character of our forefathers, have still something to give the world and therefore deserve freedom,—by proof of our manliness and fitness, not by mendicancy.<sup>75</sup>

SUBHAS CHANDRA BOSE

In the eighties of the last century, two prominent religious personalities appeared before the public who were destined to have a great influence on the future course of the new awakening. They were Ramakrishna Paramahansa, the saint, and his disciple Swami Vivekananda. ... Ramakrishna preached the gospel of the unity of all religions and urged the cessation of inter-religious strife. ... Before he died, he charged his disciple with the task of propagating his religious teachings in India and abroad and of bringing about and awakening among his countrymen. Swami Vivekananda therefore founded the Ramakrishna Mission, an order of monks, to live and preach the Hindu religion in its purest form in India and abroad, especially in America, and he took an active part in inspiring every form of healthy national activity. With him religion was the inspirer of

nationalism. He tried to infuse into the new generation a sense of pride in India's past, of faith in India's future and a spirit of self-confidence and self-respect. Though the Swami never gave any political message, every one who came into contact with him or his writings developed a spirit of patriotism and a political mentality. So far at least as Bengal is concerned, Swami Vivekananda may be regarded as the spiritual father of the modern nationalist movement. He died very young in 1902, but since his death his influence has been even greater.<sup>76</sup>

I cannot write about Vivekananda without going into raptures. Few indeed could comprehend or fathom him—even among those who had the privilege of becoming intimate with him. His personality was rich, profound and complex and it was this personality—as distinct from his teachings and writings—which accounts for the wonderful influence he has exerted on his countrymen and particularly on Bengalees. This is the type of manhood which appeals to the Bengalee as probably none other. Reckless in his sacrifice, unceasing in his activity, boundless in his love, profound and versatile in his wisdom, exuberant in his emotions, merciless in his attacks but yet simple as a child—he was a rare personality in this world of ours. ...

Swamiji was a full-blooded masculine personality—and a fighter to the core of his being. He was consequently a worshipper of *Śakti* and gave a practical interpretation to the Vedanta for the uplift of his countrymen. ... I can go on for hours and yet fail to do the slightest justice to that great man. He was so great, so profound, so complex. A yogi of the highest spiritual level in direct communion with the truth who had for the time being consecrated his whole life to the moral and spiritual uplift of his nation and of humanity, that is how I would describe him. If he had been alive, I would have been at his feet. Modern Bengal is his creation—if I err not.<sup>77</sup>

শ্রীরামকৃষ্ণ ও স্বামী বিবেকানন্দের নিকট আমি যে কত ঋণী তাহা ভাষায় কি করিয়া প্রকাশ করিব? তাঁহাদের পুণ্য প্রভাবে আমার জীবনের প্রথম উন্মেষ। নিবেদিতার মতো আমিও মনে করি যে, রামকৃষ্ণ ও বিবেকানন্দ একটা অখণ্ড ব্যক্তিত্বের দুই রূপ। আজ যদি স্বামীজী জীবিত থাকিতেন তিনি নিশ্চয়ই আমার গুরু হইতেন—অর্থাৎ তাঁকে নিশ্চয়ই আমি গুরুরূপে বরণ করিতাম। যাহা হউক, যতদিন জীবিত থাকিব, ততদিন রামকৃষ্ণ-বিবেকানন্দের একান্ত অনুগত ও অনুরক্ত থাকিব, একথা বলাই বাহুল্য।<sup>78</sup>

(How shall I express in words my indebtedness to Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda? It is under their sacred influence that my life got first awakened. Like Nivedita I also regard Ramakrishna and Vivekananda as two aspects of one indivisible personality. If Swamiji had been alive today, he would have been my My guru, that is to say, I would have accepted him as my Master. It is needless to add, however, that as long as I live, I shall be absolutely loyal and devoted to Ramakrishna-Vivekananda.)

স্বামী বিবেকানন্দের বহুমুখী প্রতিভার ব্যাখ্যা করা বড় কঠিন। আমাদের সময়ের ছাত্রসমাজ স্বামীজীর রচনা ও বক্তৃতার দ্বারা যেরূপ প্রভাবিত হইয়াছিল, সেরূপ আর কাহারও দ্বারা হয় নাই—তিনি যেন সম্পূর্ণভাবে তাহাদের আশা ও আকাঙ্ক্ষাকে ব্যক্ত করিয়াছিলেন।

শ্রীশ্রীপরমহংসদেবের সহিত একযোগে না দেখিলে স্বামীজীকে যথার্থভাবে বিচার করা যাইবে না। স্বামীজীর বাণীর মধ্য দিয়াই বর্তমানের মুক্তি-আন্দোলনের ভিত্তি গঠিত হইয়াছে। ভারতবর্ষকে যদি স্বাধীন হইতে হয়, তবে তাহাকে হিন্দুধর্ম বা ইসলামের বিশেষ আবাসভূমি হইলে চলিবে না—তাহাকে জাতীয়তার আদর্শে অনুপ্রাণিত বিভিন্ন ধর্মসম্প্রদায়ের একত্র বাসভূমি হইতে হইবে। রামকৃষ্ণ-বিবেকানন্দের যে বাণী—ধর্মসম্বন্ধ—তাহা ভারতবাসীকে সর্বান্তঃকরণে গ্রহণ করিতে হইবে।...

স্বামীজী প্রাচ্য ও পাশ্চাত্যের, ধর্ম ও বিজ্ঞানের, অতীত ও বর্তমানের সম্বন্ধ করিয়াছিলেন, তাই তিনি মহৎ। তাঁহার শিক্ষায় দেশবাসী অভূতপূর্ব আত্মসম্মান, আত্মবিশ্বাস এবং আত্মপ্রতিষ্ঠার বোধ লাভ করিয়াছে।<sup>79</sup>

(It is very difficult to explain the versatile genius of Swami Vivekananda. The impact Swami Vivekananda made on the

students of our time by his works and speeches far outweighed that made by any other leader of the country. He, as it were, expressed fully their hopes and aspirations. [But] Swamiji cannot be appreciated properly if he is not studied along with Sri Sri Paramahansa Deva. The foundation of the present freedom movement owes its origin to Swamiji's message. If India is to be free, it cannot be a land specially of Hinduism or of Islam—it must be one united land of different religious communities inspired by the ideal of nationalism. [And for that] Indians must accept wholeheartedly the gospel of harmony of religions which is the gospel of Ramakrishna-Vivekananda. ...

Swamiji harmonized East and West, religion and science, past and present. And that is why he is great. Our countrymen have gained unprecedented self-respect, self-confidence and self-assertion from his teachings.)

রামকৃষ্ণ পরমহংস নিজের জীবনের সাধনার ভিতর দিয়া সর্বধর্মের যে সমন্বয় করিতে পারিয়াছিলেন, তাহাই স্বামীজীর জীবনের মূলমন্ত্র ছিল এবং তাহাই ভবিষ্যৎ ভারতের জাতীয়তার মূল ভিত্তি। এই সর্বধর্ম সমন্বয় ও সকল-মত সহিষ্ণুতার প্রতিষ্ঠা না হইলে আমাদের এই বৈচিত্রপূর্ণ দেশে জাতীয়তাবোধ নির্মিত হইতে পারিত না।...

রামমোহনের যুগ হইতে বিভিন্ন আন্দোলনের ভিতর দিয়া ভারতের মুক্তির আকাঙ্ক্ষা ক্রমশঃ প্রকটিত হইয়া আসিতেছে। ঊনবিংশ শতাব্দীতে এই আকাঙ্ক্ষা চিন্তারাজ্যে ও সমাজের মধ্যে দেখা দিয়াছিল, কিন্তু রপ্তীয় ক্ষেত্রে তখনও দেখা দেয় নাই—কারণ তখনও ভারতবাসী পরাধীনতার মোহনিদ্রায় নিমগ্ন থাকিয়া মনে করিতেছিল যে, ইংরাজের ভারতবিজয় একটা দৈব ঘটনা বা Divine Dispensation। ঊনবিংশ শতাব্দীর শেষ দিকে এবং বিংশ শতাব্দীর প্রারম্ভে স্বাধীনতার অখণ্ডরূপের আভাস রামকৃষ্ণ-বিবেকানন্দের মধ্যে পাওয়া যায়। 'Freedom, freedom is the song of the Soul'—এই বাকী যখন স্বামীজীর অন্তরের রুদ্ধদুয়ার ভেদ করিয়া নির্গত হয়, তখন তাহা সমগ্র দেশবাসীকে মুগ্ধ ও উন্মত্ত প্রায় করিয়া তোলে। তাঁহার সাধনার ভিতর দিয়া, আচরণের ভিতর দিয়া, কথা ও বক্তৃতার ভিতর দিয়া এই সত্যই বাহির হইয়াছিল।

স্বামী বিবেকানন্দ মানুষকে যাবতীয় বন্ধন হইতে মুক্ত হইয়া খাঁটি মানুষ হইতে বলেন এবং অপরদিকে সর্বধর্ম সমন্বয়ের প্রচারে ভারতের জাতীয়তার ভিত্তি স্থাপন করেন।<sup>80</sup>

(The harmony of all religions which Ramakrishna Paramahansa accomplished in his life's endeavour, was the keynote of Swamiji's life. And this ideal again is the bed-rock of the nationalism of Future India. Without this concept of harmony of religions and toleration of all creeds, the spirit of national consciousness could not have been build up in this country of ours full of diversities.

The aspiration for freedom manifested itself in various movements since the time of Rammohun Roy. This aspiration was witnessed in the realm of thought and in social reforms during the nineteenth century, but it was never expressed in the political sphere. This was because the people of India still remained sunk in the stupor of subjugation and thought that the conquest of India by the British was an act of Divine Dispensation. The idea of complete freedom is manifest only in Ramakrishna-Vivekananda towards the end of the nineteenth century. 'Freedom, freedom is the song of the Soul'—this was the message that burst forth from the inner recesses of Swamiji's heart and captivated and almost maddened the entire nation. This truth was embodied in his works, life, conversations, and speeches.

Swami Vivekananda, on the one hand, called man to be real man freed from all fetters and, on the other, laid the foundation for true nationalism in India by preaching the gospel of the harmony of religions.)

#### SUBRAHMANYA BHARATI

To the Bengal politicians Madras was the dark State, yet this very Madras discovered in Vivekananda the luminous light which later would throw its brilliance all over the world. Vivekananda gave birth to radical neo-Hinduism. The Tamils first accepted Vivekananda; afterwards Bengal and

Maharashtra realized his greatness. ...It was Swami Vivekananda by whom the [Indian] movements for 'Swarāj' and independence were first had its foundation. ...He was the great inspirer of patriotism, and the fundamental power behind rousing love for the country. ...Sri Ramakrishna had shaped Swami Vivekananda and he was the foremost among the creators of modern India. ...

The very moment the Swami had reached Japan on his way to America for preaching the Vedanta religion, the mother power of India, akin to the Vedic supremacy, blessed him with the wings of ultimate wisdom. His letters from Japan were the heralds of new radiance. The fires of neo-Hinduism, as if, were dancing within his heart. It was the Divine design that at the end of the nineteenth century the triumphant flag of neo-Hinduism would be planted in America, the very country which was the ideal of the European civilization. And Vivekananda was the man chosen for that task.<sup>81</sup>

SUNITI KUMAR CHATTERJI

Vivekananda appeared to me immediately to be a man who was intensely moved by the sufferings of Humanity, and particularly of Humanity in India. Some of his tirades against middle class and upper class societies in this matter moved us to the depths of our being. He discovered for us the greatness of Man, and particularly of men in the humbler walks of life who were the despised and the denied in our Indian society. At the same time, he brought home to us the value of Indian thought at its highest and pristine best, as in the Vedanta. He was able to convince us that what our ancestors had left in the Vedanta Philosophy was of permanent value, not only for us in India but also for the rest of Humanity. This put heart in us, and made us feel a new kind of elation as members of a people who have

always had a mission and a sacred task to serve Humanity. The Hindus as a race were losing their nerve, and it was Vivekananda who helped us to regain this nerve which we were losing. There was a lot of unthinking and unsympathetic criticism of our ways and our life, particularly from among Christian missionaries of the older type, and this was demolished by Vivekananda. All this made us hold him very close to our heart, and to think of him as a great master and as a new kind of incarnation who came down to earth to lead us into the good life and the life of the strong man.

Vivekananda, in the first instance, knocked off a lot of nonsense in our Hindu social life, and drew our attention to the Eternal Verities and not to the ephemeral accidentals—social usages and such like—in our life. He was a sworn enemy of what we now call in India *Casteism*. *Untouchability* was something which he abhorred both as a *sannyāsin* and as a lay Hindu. He coined the word which is very commonly used in our Indian English—‘don’t touchism’. His heart overflowed with love and sympathy for the masses, whom he wanted to serve with religious zeal—serve as a believer in the Vedanta which sees God in all life. He coined a new word for our Indian languages—*daridra-Nārāyaṇa* or a ‘God in the poor and the lowly’. This word has been accepted by the whole of India, and in a way it brings in a sense of responsibility for the average man. He has to look upon the poor and the humble, the suffering ones and the frustrated ones of society, as if they were deities incarnate or fragments of God, to serve whom was to serve God. Mahatma Gandhi’s revival of the old expression which was used in Gujarati by the Vaiṣṇava poets of Gujarat, namely, *Harijana* or ‘the Men of God’ was a very fine expression ; but *daridra-Nārāyaṇa* implied or brought in an element of a sense

of duty which was enjoined upon man to serve the poor if they wanted to serve God.

Swami Vivekananda is looked upon as a great religious teacher, and indeed he made a definite contribution to the study of both Hindu religion and philosophy, and also in spreading a knowledge and appreciation of this philosophy and religion. His great works on aspects of Vedanta in theory and practice still inspire hundreds and thousands of enquirers all over the world. But it has also been said that he was more a philanthropist, one who dedicated himself to the service of man, than a religious theorist or preacher. One need not seek to analyse Vivekananda's personality in this way. It is best to take the service of man as a form of serving God, for, from the point of view of all practical religion, God and Man are the obverse and reverse of the same medal. Vivekananda may be said to have been an innovator in two matters. As his great disciple Sister Nivedita suggested—he was the first to formulate the basic character of Hinduism as a system of thought and as a way of life in the modern age. This is the first great thing we as Indians may note about Vivekananda. Secondly, Vivekananda may be said to have brought before the Western World a new point of view in religious thinking—a new approach to the problems of faith—which they needed very badly. To this also might be added as a pendant that Vivekananda, as one of the thought-leaders of modern India, gave the tone to modern Indian culture. He conceived of an integration of all human religion and culture into one entity claiming the homage of all and sundry.

I consider, and many agree with me also, that Swami Vivekananda's participation and his magisterial and at the same time sweet and reasonable pronouncements at the International Congress of Religions at Chicago in 1893 form a very important event in the intellectual history of modern man. There he

proclaimed for the first time the necessity for a new and an enlightened kind of religious understanding and toleration, and this was particularly necessary in an America which was advancing so rapidly in science and technology, and in wealth and power, which were not, however, divorced from altruistic aspirations and achievements. But apart from a few of the most outstanding figures, particularly in the New England orbit of the United States, generally the religious background was crude and primitive. It had pinned itself down to a literal interpretation of the Bible, and accepted all the dogmas with a conviction which was pathetic in its combination of sincerity and fanatic faith, of credulity and crudity. This very primitive kind of religion was not satisfying to those who were actuated by the spirit of enquiry in a higher and more cultured plane, and for them Vivekananda's message came like rain on a thirsty soil. ...So in this way, we might say that quite a new type of spiritual conversion has taken place in the mind of a considerable portion of intelligent men and women in the West, beginning with America ; and here we see the leaven of Vedanta working through Vivekananda. In a novel on Mexican life by D. H. Lawrence—*The Plumed Serpent*—where we have the picture of a revival of the pre-Catholic Aztec religion among a section of political workers in Mexico, the mentality displayed by some of the leaders of this movement is something astoundingly modern. Many of the views expressed by one of the characters in this novel, the hero Ramon talking to the Roman Catholic Bishop, might have been taken over bodily from the writings of Vivekananda. In this way, although the ordinary run of people are not conscious of it, the message which was given out by Vivekananda to America and the Western World at Chicago in 1893, and subsequently to people in America, England and India, has been an effective force in the liberalization of the human spirit in its religious approach.

The first point in Vivekananda which I mentioned above, namely, his giving before the world a definition of Hinduism in its essence, was a service which was done not only to India but also in another way to Humanity. ...

Vivekananda was the lover of all those who had suffered through the injustice of others, and he tried his best to restore them to a sense of human dignity. ...It is remarkable how in India in her days of political submission and spiritual inanity, when everything seemed hopeless, and the people had lost all confidence in themselves, a spirit calling us to action like Swami Vivekananda could come into being. That such a person could come at a time when the prospect was bleak, when we seemed to have lost all hope, indicated that God in His mercy never forsakes His people, and this in a way bears out the great idea behind this oft-quoted verse of the *Gītā* that whenever righteousness is on the decline and unrighteousness is in the ascendant, God creates Himself as a great *avatāra* or Incarnation—as a Leader to guide men to the right path of salvation. And in that sense Vivekananda was an *avatāra*, a divinely inspired and God-appointed Leader, not only for Man in India, but also for the whole of Humanity in the present age.<sup>82</sup>

U THANT

Swami Vivekananda was the greatest spiritual ambassador of India, if I may say, in the history of India. And for that matter, the history of Asia. The main purpose of his historic visit to the United States ... was to find a synthesis, if I can interpret and assess his activities in this country. He was very keen to bring about this synthesis between India and the United States, between Asia and the West. To understand Swami Vivekananda it is very important to understand the cultural and spiritual background of India, and for that matter, the cultural and spiritual background of Asia.

I think if we attempt to analyse the main purpose of Swami Vivekananda's mission to this country—my interpretation is he wanted to find a harmony, a kind of a synthesis between the Eastern concept of culture and civilization and the Western concept of culture and civilization. ... What we need today is not to neglect or ignore the oral and spiritual qualities of mankind left by centuries of tradition, and which is the key of all religion.

Another aspect of Vivekananda's mission ... is the need of tolerance in human relations. Not only religious tolerance but also tolerance in all spheres of activity. ... A few centuries ago there was no such thing as religious tolerance. Religious tolerance was unthinkable. ... Now in the twentieth century... there is religious tolerance.

Swami Vivekananda ... had this very significant and very pertinent message for these tense times. He said : 'In this country I do not come to convert you to a new belief. ... I want to make the Methodist a better Methodist, the Presbyterian a better Presbyterian, the Unitarian a better Unitarian.' These are very wise words and, friends, on this auspicious occasion when we are doing honour to one of the greatest men of all times, let us dedicate ourselves anew to this pledge : to make Christians better Christians, Hindus better Hindus, Muslims better Muslims, Buddhists better Buddhists, and Jews better Jews.<sup>83</sup>

VINCENT SHEEAN

The most ancient tradition [in India] has been one in which the good work done for the assistance of the fellow man does not necessarily have anything to do with metaphysical contemplation. As far as we know, Vivekananda was the first in India of any social influence to declare that these two things should go together. He wanted his fellow monks of the Ramakrishna Mission, not only to read Sanskrit and

contemplate higher reality, but also to work in such things as famines and floods, and in the eternal poverty of the Indian cities. If you read Vivekananda you will find some excoriating remarks about those who devote themselves entirely to their own spiritual welfare and forget the existence of their fellow creatures. He introduced into the monastic system of India this principle of the assistance to those who needed it most, that principle which was never so expressed before. And so on my first trip [to India], in 1947, before I had ever been to Belur or Dakshineswar, I found monks of the Ramakrishna Mission taking care of the wounded and the refugees in the tremendous upheaval which followed the partition of India. Monks of the Ramakrishna Mission were doing that work in all parts of the country and on a very considerable scale, as they do in ordinary times with their schools, hospitals, and refectories.

This principle, which is implicit in everything Ramakrishna said, everything of which we have record, he was not himself fitted to carry out. It was not his quality, his nature, but it was eminently the quality of Swami Vivekananda. He was able, possibly because of his visits to the West, to introduce that element into the Mission, of which it has borne the imprint ever since and from which very great good has resulted for the most miserable of the peoples of India.<sup>84</sup>

VINOBA BHAVE

Vivekananda not only made us conscious of our strength, he also pointed out our defects and drawbacks. ...India was then steeped in *tamas* (ignorance and unwisdom) and mistook weakness for non-attachment and peace. That is why Vivekananda went so far as to say that criminality was preferable to lethargy and indolence. He made people conscious of the *tāmasika* state they were in, of the need to

break out of it and stand erect so that they might realize in their own lives the power of the Vedanta. Speaking of those who enjoyed the luxury of studying philosophy and the scriptures in the smugness of their retired life, he said football-playing was better than that type of indulgence. Through a series of *obiter dicta*, he rehabilitated the prestige of India's soul force and pointed out to the *tamoguṇa* (unwisdom) that had eclipsed her. He taught us : 'The same Soul resides in each and all. If you are convinced of this, it is your duty to treat all as brothers and serve mankind.' People were inclined to hold that, though all had equal right to the *tattva-jñāna* (knowledge of the Spirit), the difference of high and low should be maintained in the day-to-day dealings and relations. Swamiji made us see the truth that *tattva-jñāna*, which had no place in our everyday relationship with our fellow beings, and in our activities was useless and inane. He, therefore, advised us to dedicate ourselves to the service of *daridra-Nārāyaṇa* (God manifested in the hungry, destitute millions) to their uplift and edification. The word *daridra-Nārāyaṇa* was coined by Vivekananda and popularized by Gandhiji.<sup>85</sup>

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... Indians had totally become slaves to the English people and considered themselves as inferiors. The entire world, as a result, began to look upon the Indians as substandard in all parameters. ... At this very juncture Vivekananda had stepped in, and reminded the Indians of their spiritual power. Influenced by materialism we had reached such a pit that a sense of overall degradation prevailed in every sphere of life. India was in a stupor with thoughts as if our sociology was bad, we knew nothing of politics, and, even, our religion was imperfect. But every country has its own speciality, its own power – and India

was no exception to this. The only thing was we were unaware of it. ...When India was in such a state, Vivekananda went to America, and there he preached the message of Vedanta to the world. He also told everyone about India's supreme spiritual power. And his speech over there showered elixir throughout India. Indian people could find strength to stand with their head high. It was the consequence of Vivekananda's speech that the Indians were able to realize that they also had power and, moreover, their spirit would remain ever free even if the country were conquered by external force. The peoples of distant lands could furthermore learn about India's long historical ancestry and they realized that the distinctive power of the land is worth assimilation.<sup>86</sup>

WILL DURANT

He [Swami Vivekananda] preached to his countrymen a more virile creed than any Hindu had offered them since Vedic days :

It is a man-making religion that we want. ... Give up these weakening mysticisms, and be strong. ... For the next fifty years... let all other, vain gods disappear from our minds. This is the only God that is awake, our own race, everywhere His hands, everywhere His feet, everywhere His ears; He covers everything. ... The first of all worship is the worship of those all around us.... These are all our gods—men and animals; and the first gods we have to worship are our own countrymen.

It was but a step from this to Gandhi.<sup>87</sup>

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The most vivid of [the followers of Ramakrishna] was a proud young Kṣatriya, Narendranath Datta, who full of Spencer and Darwin, first presented himself to Ramakrishna as an

atheist, unhappy in his atheism, but scornful of the myths and superstitions with which he identified religion. Conquered by Ramakrishna's patient kindness, Naren became the young master's most ardent disciple. He redefined God as 'the totality of all souls' and called upon his fellow-men to practise religion not through vain asceticism and meditation, but through absolute devotion to [mankind].<sup>88</sup>

WILLIAM ERNEST HOCKING

... We all carry about with us unsolved problems of adjustment to this many-angled world—without formulating questions, we are living quests, unless by some rare chance our philosophy of life is entirely settled. And to meet some person may resolve a quest wholly without his knowledge; it may be simply *mode of being* that brings the release.

This was in some measure the story of my first encounter with Swami Vivekananda, though I was only one of an immense audience. ...I was a casual visitor at the [1893 Chicago World's] Fair, just turning twenty, interested in a dozen exhibits on the Midway. ...But aside from all this, I had a quietly rankling problem of my own.

I had been reading Herbert Spencer, all I could get of his works. ...I was convinced by him;...but it was somehow a vital injury to think of man as of the animals—birth, growth, mating, death—and nothing more—finis. I had had my religion—Methodism—an experience of conversion with a strange enlightenment which gave me three days of what felt like a new vision of things, strangely lifted up; Spencer had explained that all away as an emotional flurry—the world must be faced with a steady objective eye. The Christian cosmology was fancy.

But still, Christianity was not the only religion. There were to be speakers from other traditions [at the Parliament of Religions]. They might have some insight that would relieve the

tension. I would go for an hour and listen. I didn't know the programme. It happened to be Vivekananda's period.

... He spoke not as arguing from a tradition, or from a book, but as from an experience and certitude of his own. I do not recall the steps of his address. But there was a passage toward the end, in which I can still hear the ring of his voice, and feel the silence of the crowd—almost as if shocked. The audience was well-mixed, but could be taken as one in assuming that there had been a 'Fall of man' resulting in a state of 'original sin', such that 'All men have sinned and come short of the glory of God.' But what is the speaker saying? I hear his emphatic rebuke: 'Call men sinners? It is a SIN to call men sinners!'

...Through the silence I felt something like a gasp running through the hall as the audience waited for the affirmation which must follow this blow. What his following words were I cannot recall with the same verbal clarity: they carried the message that in all men there is that divine essence, undivided and eternal reality is One, and that One, which is Brahman, constitutes the central being of each one of us.

For me, this doctrine was a startling departure from anything which my scientific psychology could then recognize. One must live with these ideas and consider how one's inner experience could entertain them. But what I could feel and understand was that this man was speaking from what he *knew*, not from what he had been told. He was well aware of the books; but he was more immediately aware of his own experience and his own status in the world; and what he said would have to be taken into account in any final world-view. I began to realize that Spencer could not be allowed the last word. And furthermore, that this religious experience of mine, which Spencer would dismiss as a psychological flurry, was very akin to the grounds of Vivekananda's own certitude.<sup>89</sup>

WILLIAM JAMES

The paragon of all monistic systems is the Vedanta philosophy of Hindusthan, and the paragon of Vedantist missionaries was the late Swami Vivekananda who visited our land some years ago. The method of Vedantism is the mystical method. You do not reason, but after going through a certain discipline *you see*, and having seen, you can report the truth. Vivekananda thus reports the truth in one of his lectures here :

Where is there any more misery for him who sees this Oneness in the universe, this Oneness of life, Oneness of everything ?... This separation between man and man, man and woman, man and child, nation from nation, earth from moon, moon from sun, this separation between atom and atom is the cause really of all the misery, and the Vedanta says this separation does not exist, it is not real. It is merely apparent, on the surface. In the heart of things there is unity still. If you go inside you find that unity between man and man, women and children, races and races, high and low, rich and poor, the gods and men: all are One, and animals too, if you go deep enough, and he who has attained to that has no more delusion. ... Where is there any more delusion for him ? What can delude him ? He knows the reality of everything, the secret of everything. Where is there any more misery for him ? What does he desire ? He has traced the reality of everything unto the Lord, that centre, that Unity of everything, and that is Eternal Bliss, Eternal Knowledge, Eternal Existence. Neither death nor disease nor sorrow nor misery nor discontent is There. ... In the centre, the reality, there is no one to be mourned for, no one to be sorry for. He has penetrated everything, the Pure One, the Formless, the Bodiless, the Stainless, He the Knower, He the great Poet, the Self-Existent, He who is giving to everyone what he deserves.

Observe how radical the character of the monism here is. Separation is not simply overcome by the One, it is denied to exist. There is no many. We are not parts of the One; It has no parts; and since in a sense we undeniably *are*, it must be that each of us *is* the One, indivisibly and totally. An *Absolute One, and I that One*,—surely we have here a religion which, emotionally considered, has a high pragmatic value; it imparts a perfect sumptuousness of security. As our Swami says in another place :

When man has seen himself as One with the Infinite Being of the universe, when all separateness has ceased, when all men, all women, all angels, all gods, all animals, all plants, the whole universe has been melted into that oneness, then all fear disappears. Whom to fear ? Can I hurt myself ? Can I kill myself ? Can I injure myself ? Do you fear yourself ? Then will all sorrow disappear. What can cause me sorrow ? I am the One Existence of the universe. Then all jealousies will disappear; of whom to be jealous ? Of myself ? Then all bad feelings disappear. Against whom shall I have this bad feeling ? Against myself ? There is none in the universe but me. ... Kill out this differentiation, kill out this superstition that there are many. 'He who, in this world of many, sees that One; he who, in this mass of insentiency, sees that One Sentient Being ; he who in this world of shadow, catches that Reality, unto him belongs eternal peace, unto none else, unto none else.'<sup>90</sup>

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He [Vivekananda] ... is a man of genius, even though his Absolute be not the truth. ... 'I have been reading some of Vivekananda's addresses. ... that man is simply a wonder of oratorical power. As for the doctrine of the One. I began to have some talk with that most interesting Miss Noble [Sister

Nivedita] about it, but it was cut short, and I confess that my difficulties have never yet been cleared up. But the Swami is an honour to humanity in any case.<sup>91</sup>

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by Professor Chuan was presented by him to Swami Lokeswarananda, the then Secretary of Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture, Gol Park, on 7 January, 1980.

Professor Chuan also wrote a book in Chinese on Swami Vivekananda, which was published from Beijing in May 1979. An autographed copy of the book was presented by the author to the Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture on 7 January 1980. Professor Chuan presented a copy of the book to Mr Nirmal Bose, Minister for Co-operatives, Government of West Bengal. He observed: 'We in China do not consider Swami Vivekananda just a religious leader. We consider him one of the greatest social reformers of modern India. It is on record that in India he was the first to speak of socialism. He remained a source of inspiration for many revolutionaries in India.' (*The Statesman*, Tuesday, 8 November, 1983, p.9) Incidentally, this copy of the book has also been presented by Mr Nirmal Bose to Swami Lokeswarananda, editor of this book.

The book, entitled *The Modern Indian Philosopher Vivekananda : A Study*, contains six chapters dealing with the conditions in India prevailing at that time, Swamiji's life and works, his religious and philosophical thoughts, his social and political theories, his views on China, and his contribution to the Indian liberation movement. There are some extracts from some of the important writings of Swami Vivekananda. In the appendix there is one chapter dealing in brief with the life, philosophy, and social thoughts of Sri Ramakrishna.

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