

Swami Vivekananda

Here is a collection of writings on Swami Vivekananda. If you have an article on himself or his lectures/teachings, please send it for addition.<sup>1</sup>

स्वामी विवेकानन्द Swami Vivekananda

by Kedar Naphade

जानेवारी मासस्य द्वादशः दिवसः श्री विवेकानन्दस्य जन्मदिनः खलु ।

The twelvth day of January is the birth day of Shri Vivekananda.

श्रीविवेकानन्दः मानवधर्मस्य महान् उपदेशकः । अहिंसा एव परमो धर्मः, शान्तिरेव मार्गो, न युद्धं इति धर्मस्य महत् तत्त्वं सः उपदिशति । अनेके पाश्चात्याः तस्य शिष्याः भवन्ति । तेषु भगिनि निवेदितादेवी तस्य परमा शिष्या । अज्ञेषु, पीडितेषु, दीनेषु च विवेकानन्दः अतीव स्निह्यति । नवयुगे मानवधर्मं घोषयति, विश्वेऽस्मिन् भारतं प्रथयति च । सः विवेकानन्दः भारतस्य भूषणं एव । Shri Vivekananda was a great preacher of philanthropy. He advised the great principle that only non-violence was the greatest religion, and peace, not war was the path. Many westerners were his disciples. Among them Sister Nivedita was the principal disciple. Vivekananda had a lot of love for the oppressed, the ignorant and the helpless. He proclaimed the religion of humanism in the new age and made India prominent in this world. That vivekananda is indeed an ornament to India.

स्वामी विवेकानन्दस्मरणं

by Bijoy Misra (bmisra@husc.harvard.edu)  
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<sup>1</sup>Swami Vivekananda was very fluent in Sanskrit. There are few of his letters poems which were written in Sanskrit. The complete works have some of them with translations. These letters would decorate this collection further. If you have access to the second/third volumes of complete works, please work on encoding and proofreading the letters. If you need any help in understanding the encoding scheme or any related item please contact sai@cs.utah.edu or mgiridhar@ucdavis.edu .

पाश्चात्यपञ्जिकामते अद्य स्वामी विवेकानन्दमहाभागस्य एकसतत्रिंशतितमः संवत्सरिकजन्मतिथिः भवति । त्रिसद्य ऊर्ध्वे अष्टाशते एकसहस्रे संवत्सरे तस्य आविर्भावः भारतवर्षे वंगदेशे कालिकतनाम्नि नगरे अभवत् । भूमंडले भारतीयधर्मप्रचारार्थं तस्य बहूनि कार्याणि सर्वेभ्यः अतीव प्रशंसनीयाणि । सुप्तभारते नूतनजागरणनिमित्ते तस्य उद्बोधनानि अद्यापि स्मरितव्यानि । लोकसेवाकांक्षिव्यः तस्य जीवनचरितं आदर्शपूर्णम् । धर्मजिज्ञासुभ्यः तस्य धर्मानुशीलनं सुचारुध्येयम् ।

According to the western calendar, today is the one hundred thirtythird birth anniversary of Swami Vivekananda. He was born in Calcutta in State of Bengal in India in 1863. His work to spread the message of India's philosophic heritage around the world is extremely commendable. His addresses to arouse Indians from their slumbering state is memorable even today. For people who wish to do public service, his life is a cherished ideal. For people who cherish spiritual knowledge, his analysis of religions is well worth the exploration.

स्वामी विवेकानन्दस्य बाल्यनाम नरेन्द्रः आसित् । विद्यालये सः उत्तमः छात्रः अभवत् । अष्टादशवर्षे कौतुककृते सः रामकृष्णपरमहंसं अमिलत् । परमहंसस्य संदर्शने तस्य लौकिकचिन्ता रूपान्तरितवति । परमहंसप्रेरणाय सः भगवत्चिन्तनं अकरोत् । नानाई शास्त्राणि अध्ययित्वा भारतीयसंस्कृतिप्रसंगे सः समुचितज्ञानं प्राप्तवान् । परमहंसस्य परलोकसमये विदेशे वार्ताप्रचारार्थं सः नरेन्द्रं अनिवेदयत् । नरेन्द्रः स्वामी विवेकानन्दनाम नित्वा भारतवर्षे परिव्राजकः अभवत् । तत् पश्चात् शिकागोनगरे विश्वधर्मसम्मेलन्यां हिन्दुधर्मविषये प्राञ्जलानि भाषणानि दत्तवान् । पाश्चात्यदेशे अनेकाः धर्मप्राणिनः तस्य शिष्यः अभवन् । पन्थानः विन्नाः सत्यं एकं इति परमहंसस्य वार्ता स्वामी विवेकानन्दः सर्वत्र प्रचारितवान् ।

Swami Vivekananda's childhood name was Narendra. He was a good student in school. At the age of eighteen, for curiosity and fun, he happened to meet Ramakrishna Paramahansa. With such meetings, his worldly thoughts changed and with the encouragement of Sri Ramakrishna he delved more and more into the spiritual realm. He

studied various texts thoroughly and gained knowledge about Indian culture and philosophy. During the time of his death, Ramakrishna Paramahansa requested Narendra to spread the vedantic message in the western world. Narendra took the name of Swami Vivekananda and toured around India. Then he came to attend the World Parliament of religions in Chicago. There he gave eloquent speeches about hindu religion and announced the unity of faith. Many westerners were attracted to him because of his message and became his disciples. He pronounced everywhere Sri Ramakrishna's observation that the paths could be different, but Truth is always One.

भारतवर्षे प्रत्यावर्तनं कृत्वा देशे जनोत्पीडनं दुर्विपाकं च दृष्ट्वा सः अधिरः अभवत् । लोकसेवार्थे सः रामकृष्णसेवाश्रमनाम अनुष्ठानं प्रतिष्ठितवान् । अनेकाः उत्साहिनः युवकाः तस्य आदर्शे अनुप्राणिताः अभवन् । स्वामिनः नेतृत्वे सर्वे जनहितकरकार्ये नियोजितवन्तः । श्रद्धासम्मानित्व स्वचेष्टाय सर्वकार्यसिद्धिः भवितव्यः इति वेदोक्तवार्ता तेभ्यः कृते देशे प्रचारिता । नूतनभारतोन्मेषणे एतद् प्रथमोद्गिराणाम् ।

After returning to India, he became distressed with the grief and tragic life of his countrymen. To do public good, he established the Ramakrishna Mission as a social service organization. Many young men were influenced by his ideals to join him in his movement. Under his leadership, everyone was engaged in public service. The Vedic statement that with faith one can triumph by one's own efforts was the cornerstone of his message. This was the first energizing of Indian psyche after a long period of ineptitude.

द्वे उर्ध्वे नवशते एकसहस्रे संवत्सरे जुलैयां मासि चतुर्दिवसे स्वामी विवेकानन्दः परलोकप्राप्तः । आंग्लभाषाय वंगभाषाय च संस्कृतभाषाय च तस्य बहवः कृतयः अधूना प्रकाशिताः । एतान् पठित्वा सर्वे तस्य भावनीद्विपकप्रकाशे विमोहिताः च उद्बुद्धाः भवन्तु इति प्रार्थयितव्यम् ।

On July 4, 1902, he passed away from earth at the young age of 39. His speeches and writings in English, Bengali and Sanskrit have now been published. Let everyone be

enthralled and regenerated by the illumination and depth of his thoughts is our prayer on this auspicious day.

व्याकरणदोषाः क्षमयिष्याः उक्त्वा एतद् स्वामी विवेकानन्दस्मरणं अद्य पुण्यवासरे भवन्तः रुच्यार्थे प्रेषितम् । विजयमोहनमिश्रेण केंब्रीजनगरे इदं लिखितम् । शुभमस्तु ।

By seeking forgiveness for any grammatical errors, this text on the memory of Swami Vivekanda is being sent. This was written by Bijoy Misra in the city of Cambridge. Let all be well..

From: THE DISCOVERY OF INDIA  
by: Jawaharlal Nehru

About the same period as Swami Dayananda, a different type of person lived in Bengal and his life influenced many of the new English-educated classes. He was Shri Ramakrishna Paramahansa, a simple man, no scholar but a man of faith, and not interested in social reform as such. He was in a direct line with Chaitanya and other Indian saints. Essentially religious and yet broad-minded, in his search for self-realization he went to Moslem and Christian mystics and lived with them for years, following their strict routines. He settled down at Dakshineswar near Calcutta, and his extraordinary personality and character gradually attracted attention. People who went to visit him, and some who were even inclined to scoff at this simple man of faith, were powerfully influenced, and many who had been completely westernized felt that here was something they had missed. Stressing the essentials of religious faith, he linked up the various aspects of the Hindu religion and philosophy and seemed to represent all of them in his own person. Indeed he brought within his fold other religions also. Opposed to all sectarianism, he emphasized that all roads lead to truth. He was like some of the saints we read about in the past records of Asia and Europe; difficult to understand in the context of modern life, and yet fitting into India's many-colored pattern and accepted and revered by man of her people as a man with a touch of the divine fire about him. His personality impressed itself on all who saw him, and many who never saw him have been influenced by

the story of his life. Among these latter is Romain Rolland, who has written a story of his life and that of his chief disciple, Swami Vivekananda. Vivekananda, together with his brother disciples, founded the nonsectarian Ramakrishna Mission of service. Rooted in the past and full of pride in India's heritage, 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 powerful orator in Bengali and English and a graceful writer of Bengali prose and poetry. 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. He attended the Parliament of Religions in Chicago in 1893, spent over a year in the U.S.A., traveled across Europe going as far as Athens and Constantinople, and visited Egypt, China, and Japan. Wherever he went, he created a minor sensation not only by his presence but by what he said and how he said it. Having seen this Hindu sanyasin once, it was difficult to forget him or his message. In America he was called the "cyclonic Hindu." He was himself greatly influenced by his travels in Western countries; he admired British perseverance, and the vitality and spirit of equality of the American people. "America is the best field in the world to carry on any idea," he wrote to a friend in India. But he was not impressed by the manifestations of religion in the West, and his faith in the Indian philosophical and spiritual background became firmer. India, in spite of her degradation, still represented to him the Light. He preached the monism of the Advaita philosophy of the Vedanta, and was convinced that only this could be the future religion of thinking humanity. For the Vedanta was not only spiritual but rational and in harmony with scientific investigations of external nature. "This universe has not been created by any extra-cosmic God, nor is it the work of any outside genius. It is self-creating, self-dissolving, self-manifesting, One Infinite Existence, the Brahma." The Vedanta ideal was of the solidarity of man and his inborn divine nature; to see God in man

is the real Godvision; man is the greatest of all beings. But the abstract Vedanta must become living-poetic-in everyday life; out of hopelessly intricate mythology must come concrete moral forms; and out of bewildering Yogi-ism must come the most scientific and practical psychology." India had fallen because she had narrowed herself, gone into her shell and lost touch with other nations, and thus sunk into a state of "mummified" and "crystallized" civilization. Caste, which was necessary and desirable in its early forms, and meant to develop individuality and freedom, had become a monstrous degradation, the opposite of what it was meant to be, and had crushed the masses. Caste was a form of social organization which was and should be kept separate from religion. Social organizations should change with the changing times. Passionately Vivekananda condemned the meaningless metaphysical discussions and arguments about ceremonials, and especially the touch-me-notism of the upper castes. "Our religion is in the kitchen. Our God is the cooking-pot, and our religion is: 'don't touch me, I am holy.'" He kept away from politics and disapproved of the politicians of his day. But again and again he laid stress on the necessity for liberty and equality and the raising of the masses. "Liberty of thought and action is the only condition of life, of growth and well-being. Where it does not exist, the man, the race, the nation must go." "The only hope of India is from the masses. The upper classes are physically and morally dead." He wanted to combine Western progress with India's spiritual background: "Make a European society with India's religion. . . . Become an Occidental of occidentals in your spirit of equality, freedom, work and energy, and at the same time a Hindu to the very backbone in religious culture and instincts." Progressively Vivekananda grew more international in outlook: "Even in Politics and Sociology, problems that were only national twenty years ago can no longer be solved on national grounds only. They are assuming huge proportions, gigantic shapes. They can only be solved when looked at in the broader light of international grounds. International organizations, international combinations, international laws are the cry of the day. That shows solidarity. In science, every day

they are coming to a similar broad view of matter.” And again: “There cannot be any progress without the whole world following in the wake, and it is becoming every day clearer that the solution of any problem can never be attained on racial, or national, or narrow grounds. Every idea has to become broad till it covers the whole of this world, every aspiration must go on increasing till it has engulfed the whole of humanity, nay the whole of life, within its scope.” All this fitted in with Vivekananda’s view of the Vedanta philosophy, and he preached this from end to end of India. “I am thoroughly convinced that no individual or nation can live by holding itself apart from the community of others, and wherever such an attempt has been made under false ideas of greatness, policy or holiness-the result has always been disastrous to the secluding one. . . . The fact of our isolation from all the other nations of the world is the cause of our degeneration and its only remedy is getting back into the current of the rest of the world. Motion is the sign of life.” He once wrote: “I am a socialist not because I think it is a perfect system, but half a loaf is better than no bread. The other systems have been tried and found wanting. Let this one be tried, if for nothing else, for the novelty of the thing.” Vivekananda spoke of many things, but the one constant refrain of his speech and writing was abhaya - be fearless, be strong. For him man was no miserable sinner but a part of divinity; why should he be afraid of anything? “If there is a sin in the world it is weakness; avoid all weakness, weakness is sin, weakness is death.” That had been the great lesson of the Upanishads. Fear breeds evil and weeping and wailing. There had been enough of that, enough of softness. What our country now wants are muscles of iron and nerves of steel, gigantic wills which nothing can resist, which can penetrate into the mysteries and the secrets of the universe, and will accomplish their purpose in any fashion, even if it meant going down to the bottom of the ocean and meeting death face to face.” He condemned occultism, and mysticism . . . these creepy things; there may be great truths in them, but they have nearly destroyed us. . . . And here is the test of truth - anything that makes you weak physically, intellectually and spiritually, reject as poison, there is no life in it, it

cannot be true. Truth is strengthening. Truth is purity, truth is all-knowledge. . . . These mysticisms, in spite of some grains of truth in them, are generally weakening. . . . Go back to your Upanishads, the shining, the strengthening, the bright philosophy, and part from all these mysterious things, all these weakening things. Take up this philosophy; the greatest truths are the simplest things in the world, simple as your own existence.” And beware of superstition. “I would rather see everyone of you rank atheists than superstitious fools, for the atheist is alive, and you can make something of him. But if superstition enters, the brain is gone, the brain is softening, degradation has seized upon the life. . . . Mystery mongering and superstition are always signs of weakness.”<sup>2</sup> So Vivekananda thundered from Cape Comorin on the southern tip of India to the Himalayas, and he wore himself out in the process, dying in 1902 when he was thirtynine years of age.

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<sup>2</sup>Most of these extracts have been taken from Lectures from Colombo to Almora by Swami Vivekananda (1933) and Letters of Swami Vivekananda (1942) , both published by the Advaita Ashrama, Mayavati, Almora, Himalayas. In the Letters, P-390, there is a remarkable letter written by Vivekananda to a Moslem friend. In the course of this he says:

“Whether we call it Vedantism or any ism, the truth is that Advaitism is the last word of religion and thought and the only position from which one can look upon all religions and sects with love. We believe it is the religion of the future enlightened humanity. The Hindus may get the credit of arriving at it earlier than other races, they being an older race than either the Hebrew or the Arab; yet practical Advaitism, which looks upon and behaves to all mankind as one’s own soul, is yet to be developed among the Hindus universally.

“On the other hand our experience is that if ever the followers of any religion approach to this equality in an appreciable degree in the plane of practical work-a-day life-it may be quite unconscious generally of the deeper meaning and the underlying principle of such conduct, which the Hindus as a rule so clearly perceive - it is those of Islam and Islam alone. . . .

“For our own motherland a junction of the two great systems, Hinduism and Islam.-Vedanta brain and Islam body-is the only hope.

“I see in my mind’s eye the future perfect India rising out of this chaos and strife, glorious and invincible, with Vedanta brain and Islam body.” This letter is dated Almora, 10th June, 1898.