

"It fills my heart with joy unspeakable to rise in response to the grand words of welcome given to us by you. I thank you in the name of the most ancient order of monks the world has ever seen, of which Gautama was only a member. I thank you in the name of the Mother of Religions, of which Buddhism and Jainism are but branches; and I thank you, finally, in the name of the millions and millions of Hindu people of all castes and sects. My thanks also to some of the speakers on the platform who have told you that these different men from far-off nations will bear to the different lands the idea of toleration which they may see here. My thanks to them for this idea.

"I am proud to belong to a religion which has taught the world both tolerance and acceptance. We believe not only in universal tolerance, but we accept all religions to be true. I am proud to tell you that I belong to a religion in whose sacred language, the Sanskrit, the word exclusion is untranslatable. [Applause] I am proud to belong to a nation which has sheltered the persecuted and the refugees of all religions and all nations of the earth. I am proud to tell you that we have gathered in our bosom the purest remnant of the Israelites, a remnant of which came to southern India and took refuge with us in the very years in which their holy temple was shattered to pieces by Roman tyranny. I am proud to belong to the religion which has sheltered and is still fostering the remnants of the grand Zoroastrian nation.

"I will quote to you, brothers, a few lines from a hymn which every Hindu

child repeats every day. I feel that the very spirit of this hymn, which I remember to have repeated from my earliest boyhood, which is every day repeated by millions and millions of men in India, has at last come to be realized. "As the different streams, having their sources in different places, all mingle their water in the sea; O Lord, so the different paths which men take through different tendencies, various though they appear, crooked or straight, all lead to Thee." (see note, p.8)

Swami Vivekananda was "undoubtedly the greatest figure in the Parliament of Religions. After hearing him we feel how foolish it is to send missionaries to this learned nation."

*-New York Herald*

"The present convention, which is one of the most august assemblies ever held, is in itself an indication, a declaration to the world of the wonderful doctrine preached in the Gītā [4.11] 'Whosoever comes to me, through whatsoever form I reach him, all are struggling through paths that in the end always lead to me.'"

One record of the speech states: "The applause that had punctuated Swami's talk thundered out at its close. The people had recognized their hero and had taken him to their hearts; thence forth he was the star of the Parliament."

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Religions. After hearing him we feel how foolish it is to send missionaries to this learned nation."

Transcendental spiritual power was acquired by Svāmī Śrī Vivekānanda through deep meditation and concentration of mind (samādhi and dhyāna). He had fully imbibed the essence of the divine Vedic knowledge. He was a great devotee of the Mahāśakti (Supreme Feminine Energy). It is immensely illuminating to recall that, as he stepped forward to address the august assembly, he silently bowed down his head in reverence to the Mother Goddess Sarasvatī (the presiding deity of speech and learning) and prayed for her blessings. No wonder his words got endowed with transcendental spiritual power that electrified the entire audience: Sarasvatī herself spoke through him! What he spoke was the Veda and Vedānta, the most ancient and eternal Truth.

Sister Nivedita and the rest of his devoted, dedicated disciples have attested to this. The vast literature on and by the Svāmījī is full of this phenomenon.

His words were listened to. They were followed too. The reason was he did not preach his own philosophy to the exclusion of any other. Humanism and Universalism were blended so splendidly and deeply in his candid words that the world realized in the clearest possible manner the moral and spiritual grandeur of India's ancient culture and tradition. His was the universal gospel drawn straight from Vedānta and the Vedas, the most ancient treasure of supreme knowledge. The immemorial old age of this ancient cultural heritage of India is evidence to prove - if any