

proof were needed - that it is eternal. It is everlasting. The Vedānta of Svāmi Vivekānanda was Advaita, Non-dualism, Monism. All is Brahman. Truth is One. God is Truth. Therefore, God is One.

The Vedas and Upaniṣads and their epitome *Bhagavadgītā* were constantly flowing through his blood. Here, there and everywhere one could hear in his talk—private or public—the echoes and reverberations of the vast oceans of the Vedic lore he had imbibed and assimilated in his spirit. He brought to his listeners—in secluded forests as well as assembly halls—the divine, eternal, sublime, supreme and sustaining holy message of Vedānta and the Vedas.

Svāmi Vivekānanda had mastered the English language and spoke it as if it were his mother tongue. He was a perfect orator. This is another reason why he moved the entire audience to the core of their heart, why and how his words generated such a profound and lasting influence on his listeners everywhere. He was a mahāyogī, not for his own self but for all humankind.

World's Parliament of Religions was only a side show. The main event was the Columbian Exposition, celebrating the 400th anniversary of the "discovery" of America by Columbus in 1492.

Someone in the crowd aptly remarked that Columbus discovered the soil of America for the Americans, but Vivekānanda discovered the soul of America for the Americans. He taught them and the world at large that man cannot live on bread alone. He has to develop dedicated devotion for the Great Power that provides bread for all.

A human being devoid of spiritual life is no better than a beast.

Svāmi Vivekānanda was a worthy disciple of a great guru, Śrī Rāmakṣṇa Paramahansa. He imbibed all the knowledge taught by his teacher and, through his own viveka, realized parama Ānanda (summum bonum).

What is Viveka? It is true knowledge, discretion, right judgment, the faculty of distinguishing and classifying things according to their real properties. In Vedānta it means the power of separating the Invisible Spirit from the visible world; or spirit from matter, truth from untruth, reality from semblance or illusion (māya).

He did not preach his own philosophy to the exclusion of any other.

What is Ānanda? Parama Brahma is Sat-Cit-Ānanda. Ānanda is the last component of the Almighty God. It is Supreme Joy, Eternal Bliss. One who has realized Ānanda does not need anything else. It is the Ultimate Objective, the Final Goal.

Svāmi Vivekānanda was a sincere, devoted friend of all living beings. In His *Bhagavadgītā*, Śrī Kṛṣṇa Himself says: "Suhṛdam sarvabhūtānām." ("Regard me as a friend of all beings.") Vivekānanda wished to be addressed in the West as "Eastern Brother."

Great sages, saints, savants, scholars, statesmen, scientists, poets and writers have purified themselves by showering

glorifying flowers of praise and adoration on the life, work and works of Svāmi Śrī Vivekānanda. Mahatma Gandhi acknowledged his debt to Svāmījī, saying:

"I have come here (Belur Math) to pay my homage and respect to the revered memory of Svāmi Vivekānanda ... the love that I had for my country became a thousand fold."

Yogīrāja Śrī Aurobindo said:

"The going forth of Vivekānanda, marked out by the Master as the heroic soul destined to take the world between two hands and change it, was the first visible sign to the world that India was awake not only to survive but to conquer."

Vivekānanda did not live even a full 40 years. He was born on Jan. 12, 1863. It was the holy day of Makara Sankrānti, Uttarāyaṇa. His body died on July 4, 1902 - America's day of deliverance from the tyranny of British Imperialism. However, he himself said that he had already worked for 1,500 years. Jagad-guru Ādya Śrī Śaṅkarācārya lived only 32 years. Short life, long work! Great Souls don't stay on the earth too long. They come, work and disappear.

To write on the glory and grandeur of Svāmī Śrī Vivekānanda in a few pages is to try to fill the ocean in a jar! Then why even attempt it? Just to purify one's own self and to become a man, because man-making was a great mission of Svāmī Śrī Vivekānanda's life.☉

Based on "Vivekananda: A comprehensive study" by Swami Jyotimayananda, Madras 1993.