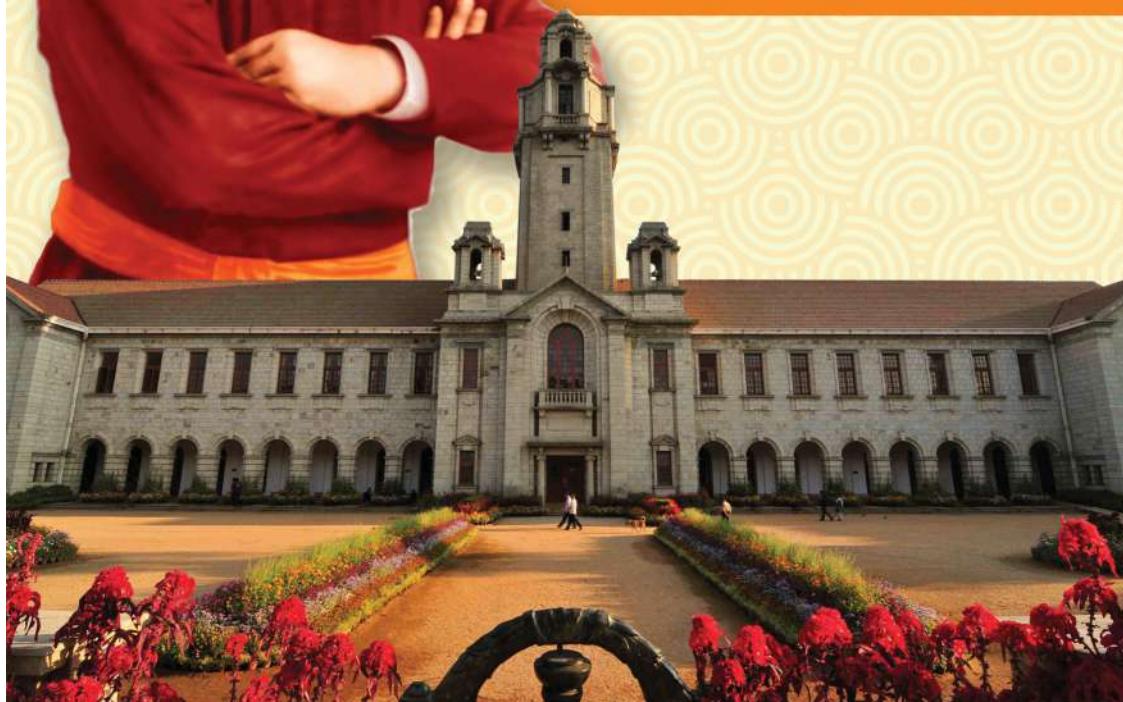


Celebrating 15 Years of
Vivekananda Study Circle
Indian Institute of Science, Bengaluru



Art By: Tushar Dilip Kurne, M. Tech. RBCCPS, IISc



We are not aware if any project at once so opportune and so far-reaching in its beneficent effects was ever mooted in India, as that of the Post-graduate Research University of Mr. Tata. The scheme grasps the vital point of weakness in our national well-being with a clearness of vision and tightness of grip, the masterliness of which is only equalled by the munificence of the gift with which it is ushered to the public. Mr. Tata's scheme paves the path of placing into the hands of Indians this knowledge of Nature—the preserver and the destroyer—that by having the knowledge, they might have power over her and be successful in the struggle for existence. We repeat: No idea more potent for good to the whole nation has seen the light of day in Modern India. Let the whole nation therefore, forgetful of class or sect interests, join in making it a success.

- Swami Swarupananda, Editor, Prabuddha Bharata, April 1899*

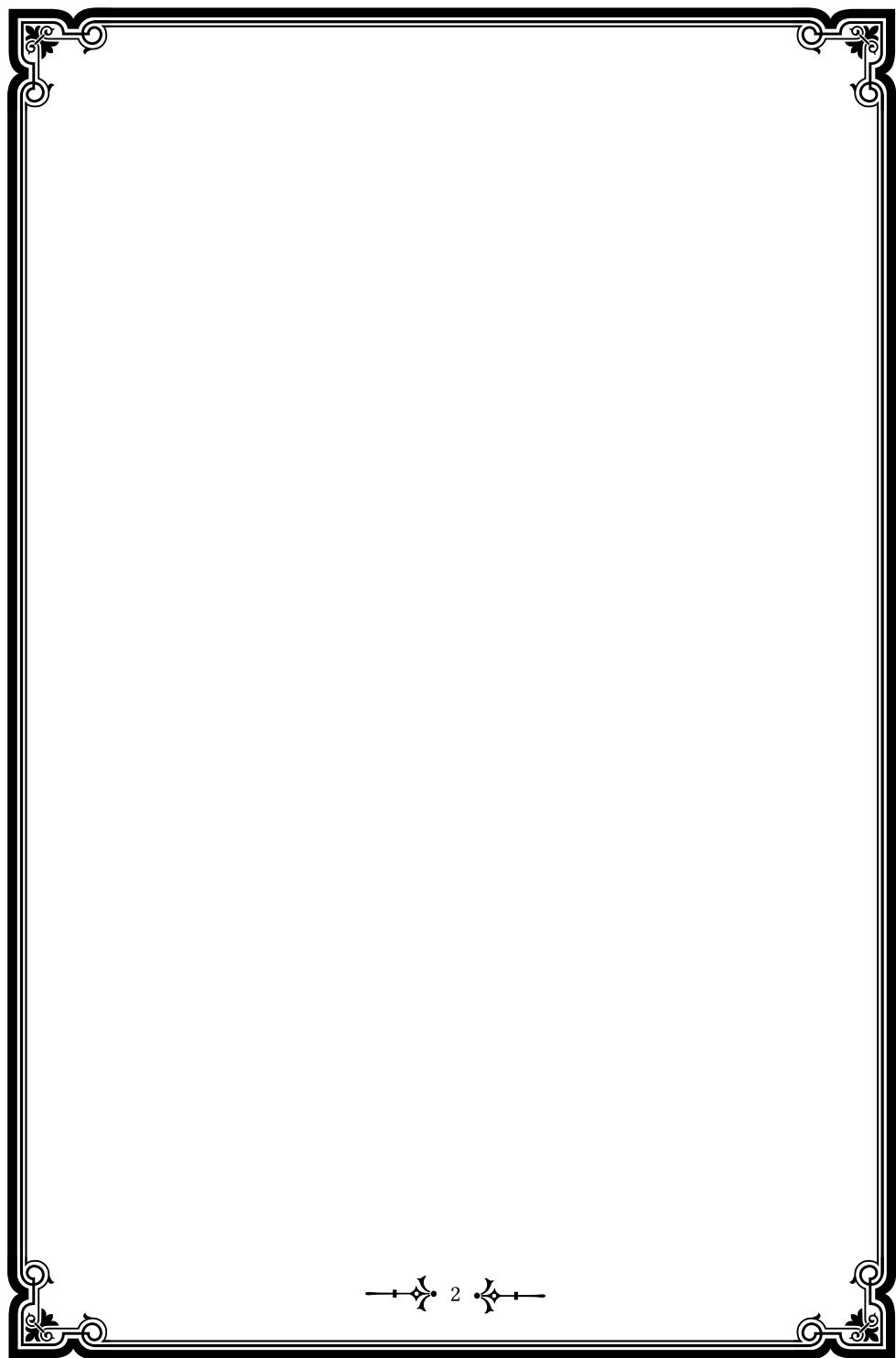
*Prabuddha Bharata - English Journal of The Ramakrishna Order Started By Swami Vivekananda In 1896

VSC Souvenir - 2024

*Celebrating 15 years of the Vedanta
grandeur and counting...*



**Indian Institute of Science,
Bengaluru-560012**



Preface

Swami Vivekananda cherished immense faith in the youth of India, seeing them as the torchbearers of the nation. In a conversation with a representative from the newspaper Madras Times, he expressed his confidence in the youths of India, stating, “My faith is in the younger generation, the modern generation, out of them will come my workers. They will work out the whole problem, like lions. I have formulated the idea and have given my life to it. If I do not achieve success, some better one will come after me to work it out, and I shall be content to struggle.”¹

The pivotal phrase here is “I have formulated the idea.” To understand this idea and the aim of Vivekananda’s life, we can turn to a letter he wrote while in America to a friend in Madras. In this letter, Vivekananda revealed his overarching ambition: “My whole ambition in life is to set in motion a machinery which will bring noble ideas to the door of everybody, and then let men and women settle their own fate. Let them know what our forefathers as well as other nations have thought on the most momentous questions of life. Let them see specially what others are doing now, and then decide. We are to put the chemicals together, the crystallization will be done by nature according to her laws.”²

This vision encapsulates the mission of the Vivekananda Study Circle at the Indian Institute of Science; a mission we have pursued diligently for the past decade. We serve as a catalyst, striving to make noble ideas accessible to all and to help individuals gain a clear understanding of life and its purpose. This empowers youths to live and face life with

¹The Missionary work of the first Hindu Sannyasin to the West and his plan, Interviews (C.W.5.223-7th ed.)

²Epistles,-First Series/VII-(C.W.5.29-7th ed.)



courage, confidence and cheerfulness. By nurturing their growth, we contribute to building a stronger and more enlightened nation.

In essence, we strive to embody Vivekananda's vision by fostering an environment where young minds can explore, learn, and live to their highest potential. This small booklet contains the personal experiences of some youths who have connected with us and found support in various ways.

We would also like to take this opportunity to thank Swami Param-sukhananda Ji, currently the head of the Ramakrishna Mission, Villupuram, Tamil Nadu, who was instrumental in starting Vivekananda Study Circle (VSC), IISc. We extend our heartfelt gratitude to our beloved mentor, Sri Gokulmuthu Narayanaswamy Ji, for his phenomenal guidance over the past decade. We also thank all the past and present volunteers of VSC, whose efforts have made the organization vibrant and lively. Finally, we appreciate and thank everyone who contributed articles to this souvenir and the volunteers who helped compile and proof-read them.

The following souvenir is structured in this way. Chapter 1 contains the wishes of a few monks of the Ramakrishna Order on the occasion of the completion of 15th year of Vivekananda Study Circle (VSC) at IISc. Chapter 2 written by GokulMuthu sir, mentor of VSC-IISc explains the need of such study circles in educational institutions. Chapter 3 contains the experiences and memories of people who were a part of VSC and who attends the VSC classes every week. Chapter 4 contains a few fantastic articles penned by people who are a part of VSC. The articles in these chapters include quotes from the Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda and Sister Nivedita. The proofreading team has diligently tried to provide accurate chapter and page references, based on the Complete Works edition available in the internet archives, to help readers understand the full context of Swami Vivekananda's statements.

Additionally, the souvenir's front and back pages showcase beautiful illustrations created by artists associated with VSC, IISc.

No more weeping, but stand on your feet and be men. It is a man-making religion that we want. It is man-making theories that we want. It is man-making education all round that we want. 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; truth must be strengthening, must be enlightening, must be invigorating. Give up these weakening mysticisms and be strong. 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. The truths of the Upanishads are before you. Take them up, live up to them, and the salvation of India will be at hand.³

Swami Vivekananda

Jai Hind!

Sanchit Gupta,
Ph.D., CNS, IISc

³My plan of Campaign, Lectures from Columbo to Almora (C.W.3.224-9th ed.)

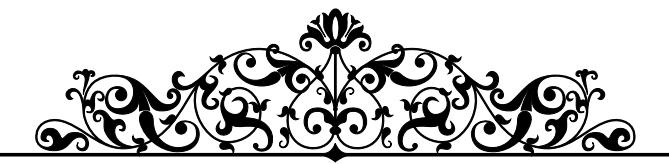


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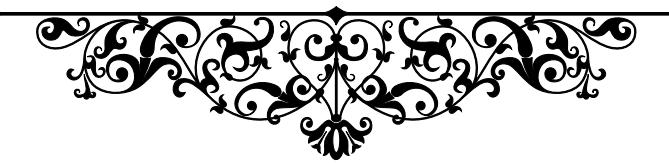


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Blessings of Swamijis



I

VSC: Nurturing Tomorrow's Leaders

*Swami Gautamananda, President,
Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission.*

The Vivekananda Study Circle of IISc Bengaluru, which has completed fifteen long years of fruitful existence, is an attempt by our young students in listening to, discussing and imbibing the grand teachings of Swami Vivekananda which are man-making, character-building and world transforming in their impact. This is a platform for the dissemination of Swami Vivekananda's ideas among the younger generation which will, in course of time, work itself out in unique ways doing good to one and all. Great men and women will be made, great works will be taken up, great deeds will be achieved and the world will be a place greater than what it was and for this, the hope of Swami Vivekananda lies in the younger generation. My sincere prayers to Swami Vivekananda to bless all the youth who are associated with this noble venture, with courage and sincerity, to imbibe his spirit and become great.



Swami Gautamananda

Maharaj

Vivekananda to bless all the youth who are associated with this noble venture, with courage and sincerity, to imbibe his spirit and become great.

Swami Gautamananda

(Swami Gautamananda)

Vice President,

Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna
Mission

This letter was signed by Swamiji before he took charge as President Maharaj.

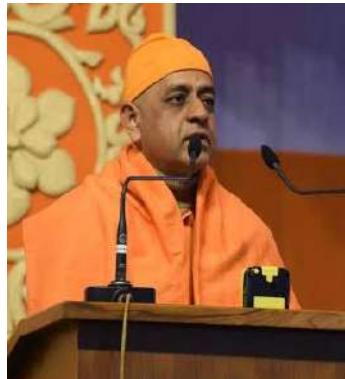
II

A Holistic View of Science - Some Reflections

*Swami Atmashraddhananda, Secretary,
Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, Kanpur*

Science: Outside and Inside

Science is the keyword of modern times. Everyone wants to sound scientific in modern times. Be it an athlete doing his workouts and planning his diet ‘scientifically,’ or a musician doing his practice of music ‘scientifically,’ or a driver going on a long trip with ‘scientific’ preparations. Well, be it cooking a meal or keeping accounts or using one computer or having a health check-up, science is the keyword! We wish to be ‘scientific’. That is the word most people love to use today.



Swami Atmashraddhananda Maharaj

Science is a search for the truth behind things. It is a ‘rigorous, systematic endeavor that builds and organizes knowledge through testable explanation and prediction.’ Among many insightful observations, Swami Vivekananda, one of India’s greatest thinkers and spiritual luminaries, had said many things about ‘Science’. Here is one: ‘Science is nothing but the finding of unity. As soon as science would reach perfect unity, it would stop from further progress, because it would reach the goal. Thus, chemistry could not progress further when it would discover one element out of which all others could be made. Physics would stop when it would be able to

fulfill its services in discovering one energy of which all others are but manifestations...¹

Science is the search for the truth behind things and phenomena in the world ‘outside’ that we perceive through our senses and intellect. But should this search for truth be restricted to senses and intellect (as it is generally understood)? Can’t someone searching for the truth of one’s own being, in its widest sense, be called a scientist? A seeker is still a seeker, be of the truth outside or of the truth inside. This truth was recognized and acknowledged a millennia ago by the Vedic Seers, called Rishis. These Vedic Seers, brave and pure in their pursuit of truth, said that there are two types of knowledge: para and apara.

The Mundaka Upanishad (1.1.4), which points this out, says, प्रैविद्ये वेदितत्वे, are the two types of knowledge. The para vidya is the knowledge of the objective world. It deals with anything we know of this world - Science, technology, computers, digital technology, literature, accounts, grammar, taxation, civil and criminal law, politics, trade, etc. The list can be truly exhaustive. It includes everything we can think of in our day-to-day life. Apara vidya is the knowledge of the knower and enjoyer. It is the science of the inner self, which we all have. This self-knowledge is not just the knowledge we might know about our moods, temperaments, or body. Self-knowledge is the fundamental and ultimate truth about us. Self means what we are essentially, not just our ego, which is illusive and is like a dictator and a bag of complaints, false achievements, and endless stories of hurts, betrayals, and disappointments! We need to go deeper and explore the very depths of our being to know who we are. Self is the Eternal Knower within. It is the Being of our being.

¹Paper on Hinduism, Addresses at The Parliament of Religions (C.W. 1.14-1st ed.)

The Method of Inner Science

But then, every science has its own method of investigation. We must respect the method of each science. Swami Vivekananda says, ‘Each science must have its own methods. I could preach you thousands of sermons, but they would not make you religious, until you practiced the method. These are the truths of the sages of all countries, of all ages, of men pure and unselfish, who had no motive but to do good to the world. They all declare that they have found some truth higher than what the senses can bring to us, and they invite verification. They ask us to take up the method and practice honestly, and then, if we do not find this higher truth, we will have the right to say there is no truth in the claim, but before we have done that, we are not rational in denying the truth of their assertions. So, we must work faithfully using the prescribed methods, and light will come.’²

He further says, ‘Religion deals with the truths of the metaphysical world just as chemistry and the other natural sciences deal with the truths of the physical world. The book one must read to learn chemistry is the book of nature. The book from which to learn religion is your own mind and heart. The sage is often ignorant of physical science because he reads the wrong book—the book within; and the scientist is too often ignorant of religion because he too reads the wrong book—the book without.’³ What one gains by reading ‘the book within’! Reading ‘the book without’ means knowing the truth of things around us. We thus learn the laws of physics and chemistry and develop technology to handle the forces of nature. We can produce electricity, take out oil from the womb of earth, add speed to our travels, have better living conditions, better food, better homes, better many things. Yet, despite all these dis-

²Raja Yoga, Introductory (C.W.1.126-1st ed.)

³Notes of Class Talks and Lectures, Religion and Science (C.W. 6.79-6th ed.)

coveries, we still need to look within us to understand the mystery of life and death and the mystery of Existence. Unless we do this, the fear of death and the sword of misery and pain will continue to hang over us like a domicile's sword!

We need to unearth the truth of our being, says a verse of the celebrated Shvetashvatara Upanishad (6.20), 'Only when men shall roll up the sky like a hide, will there be an end of misery, unless God has first been known.' It is like a challenge before all: just as the sky cannot be rolled like a hide or piece of leather, man cannot find lasting peace and happiness unless he knows the God or the Self within. As a true seeker, one must take up this challenge and try to search the Self within. Where is God or the Self? asks the same Upanishad (1.15), 'As oil in sesame seeds, as butter in milk, as fire in fuel sticks, He resides within us. One who finds in his own self that One (Atman), he sees him through Satya (truthfulness) and Tapas (austerity).' In other words, it is within us. Searching outside, in senses, and the objects of senses do not reveal the inner truth. The inner truth is known only when the mind is pure, calm, and well-disciplined. To make the mind so, one must practice tapas or austerity. Speaking or adhering to truth in one's life is a great tapas or austerity. Austerity is restraining one's speech, senses, and mind from going in a wayward way. It means bringing a sense of balance in whatever one does. Sri Krishna in Bhagavad Gita says one should follow the principle of moderation in eating, working, sleeping, and recreation. One should not overdo or neglect these basic aspects of our life, and then, one becomes a Yogi, overcoming all sorrow.

What makes Science 'Holistic'?

Including the study of the Self (body-mind or Consciousness), along with the studies of science, experiences, worldly enjoyments, and the investigation of the truth of the material world, may be called holistic science. It is an inclusive approach to know and understand the truth

as a whole, which includes understanding both the knowledge and the knower. Science or material sciences become meaningless if no humanistic goal exists. It becomes a journey without a destination. Man, or human good, must be the goal of actions and research, or else what is the use of all efforts to know the truth?

In search of the Self, we look outside. To look outside means to use the senses, observe whatever the senses can perceive, examine the conclusion, and arrive at some discoveries about the material world. The Kathopanishad (2.1.1), another celebrated Upanishad, says looking for the truth outside is normal. That is how we are generally conditioned. But then, some rare mind, imbued with required purity and inwardness, closes his eyes and tries to search for truth through meditation and contemplation. His gaze then observes his mind and what he perceives as ‘Self’ in his present state of development. Through a purified mind for a long time, he develops an inner eye, as it were, to realize his divine Source. Once he realizes this, he becomes free from all fear, complexities, and sorrow. The Upanishad declares that Self-knowledge makes a man strong and morally powerful. One crucial aspect of self-discovery is to restrain the senses from mindless indulgence and follow the moral and ethical principles in life. Not just reading books but preparing oneself for self-realization, is much more than an academic pursuit. It is developing the right focus and orientation to know the Self.

In conclusion, to complete the study of science, spirituality should also be pursued along with studying the material world. In Sanskrit, spirituality is called adhyatmikta, which means ‘towards the Self.’ So, essentially, we need to study ourselves in depth, not just physically or psychologically, but spiritually. It is a study of the man unknown, a study of the science of infinite possibilities hidden in man. ‘Each soul is potentially divine,’ said Swami Vivekananda. He further said, ‘The goal is to manifest this Divinity within, by controlling nature, external and

internal. Do this either by work, worship, psychic control, or philosophy — by one or more or all of these — and be free. This is the whole of religion. Doctrines, dogmas, rituals, books, temples, or forms are but secondary details.⁴ And finally, in the words of the Upanishads, ‘Arise, awake, and stop not till the goal is reached.’ The goal is to discover oneself, an infinite mine of eternal existence, knowledge, and joy.



National Youth Day (2024) celebration with Atmashradhananda Maharaj at IISc

⁴Concentration and its practice, Raja Yoga (C.W. 1.124-1st ed.)

III

Character building along with Nation Building

Swami Bodhaswarupananda, Adhyaksha,

Ramakrishna Math, Halasuru, Bengaluru.

On the completion of the 15th anniversary of Vivekananda Study Circle at IISc Bengaluru, we would like to convey our best wishes and greetings to all members of the Vivekananda Study Circle at IISc Bengaluru. The message of Swami Vivekananda, "They alone live, who live for others...." should be the mantra of the youth of this great nation. Swami Vivekananda states, "Then only will India awake, when hundreds of large-hearted men and women, giving up all desires of enjoying the luxuries of life, will long and exert themselves to their utmost for the wellbeing of the millions of their countrymen."⁵



Swami
Bodhaswarupananda
Maharaj

IISc is the premier institute of this nation, and it was born out of the dream of Swami Vivekananda to have a well-developed nation. We are sure that the great minds in IISc will work towards significant inventions for the benefit of the people of this great nation and take India forward. The motto of Ramakrishna Mission given by Swami Vivekananda, "आत्मनो मोक्षार्थं जगत् हिताय च" . For the salvation of one's being and for the welfare of the world applies to all, particularly members of Vivekananda Study Circle at the Indian Institute of Science, Bengaluru. Character-building and nation-building should be dear to all of us.

As we work towards these objectives, the role of the Vivekananda

⁵Epistles - First Series, LXXIV Honoured Madam (C.W. 5.125-7th ed.)

Study Circle is key to both these objectives. Your activities and the involvement of students in your activities will help students understand the message of Swami Vivekananda for the youth of this great nation. My sincere prayers are for all the youth associated with this circle to understand the messages of Swami Vivekananda and live accordingly.

Best Wishes!

Independence day - Free book distribution (2023)



IV

Vivekananda's Wisdom: The Essential Reads

Swami Sukhatmananda,

Ramakrishna Mutt and Mission, Halasuru.

I congratulate and bless the students of VSC, IISC for stepping into its 15th year. I recommend the students of VSC IISc to have sessions on the books mentioned below with high priority.

1. My Idea of Education : Swami Vivekananda
2. Swami Vivekananda on India and Her Problems
3. Memoirs of European Travels
4. The East and The West
5. Thoughts on the Gita : Swami Vivekananda
6. Raja Yoga
7. RKM emblem designed by Swamiji

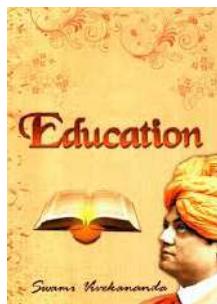


Swami Sukhatmanandaji

A summary of the topics dealt with in sequence is as follows:

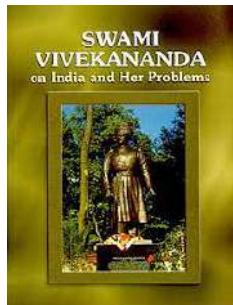
Thoughts on Education : Swami Vivekananda

A traditional aphorism on education explains education as the one which helps you get liberated. It goes as "विद्या ददाति विनयम्" (Learning leads to humility), "विद्या विमर्श रूपिणी" (Learning gives the Power of Discrimination), "विद्या शीला वृत्ति" (Learning frames the Character); "सा विद्या यः विमुक्तये" (Education is the one which one removes all vigna - obstacles and



one can become free of any bondage). Regarding religion and spirituality, according to the Swamiji Clarion Call, “Each Soul is Potentially Divine” describes the realization (traits) of a spiritual person.⁶ He defines education as the manifestation of the perfection already in man. Perfection has to be there in all the three faculty-head (thoughts), heart (word), and hand (work). We aspire to encounter a person who exhibits a balanced and harmonious development. This individual should possess a great heart and an acute mind and demonstrate commendable actions.

Swami Vivekananda on India and Her Problems



Ideas concerning India’s problems and situation then and even now, and how to deal with it, to inculcate Patriotism (Love of Country), and train youth to become enlightened citizens of the mother land are dealt with in this book.

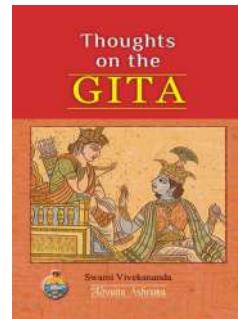
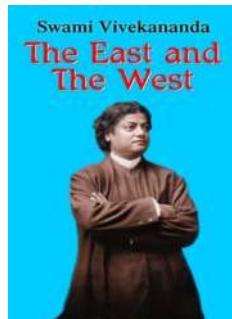
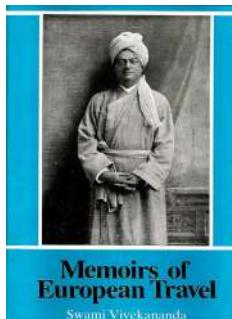
Memoirs of European Travels

Presentation of new ideas in engaging, educational, informative, and humorous ways, in which visual presentations of some events can sometimes animate, could be made as an activity and discussed.

The East and The West

The book presents the Western (Occidental) and Eastern (Oriental) concepts of ideals and ideas to achieve mastery of nature, by forces, physical, and intellectual means or gain mastery of knowledge. It talks about knowing the Perennial Truth of the World (Nature), Individual Person, and the Supreme Power (termed as GOD).

⁶Concentration and its practice, Raja Yoga (C.W. 1.124-1st ed.)

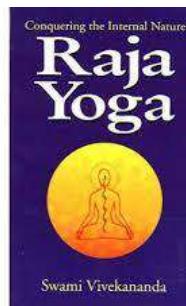


Thoughts on the Gita : Swami Vivekananda

Here, Swamiji extolls the message of human excellence. The book helps us grasp the message and its import, and the true spirit of the Gita.

Raja Yoga

In this book, Swamiji talks in detail about knowledge and its origin. The book deals with a significant study of the mind. It is the humanity's only telescope, for access to Knowledge -its Origin, Phenomenon (practical or functional truth), and The Absolute.



RKM emblem designed by Swamiji



Symbol	Representation
Sun	Knowledge
Wavy Water	Work
Lotus	Devotion
Snake	Concentration

Swamiji designed the emblem for the organization to express and define its ideas and ideals. In particular, the emblem covers all of the above

topics. Its practical application is for the aim of realizing in one's own and others' lives too, which is a classic illustration of an all-comprehensive example that covers all the above topics and much more.

Swami Vivekananda emphasized Man's Development and Progress in the Art of Living through the process of - "Watch your thoughts before you act - Watch your **actions** before they become a habit - Watch your **habits** before it becomes your character - Watch your **character** before it becomes your **personality** - and finally before what you opt for in Life **SHREYAS** (knowing the truth) or **PREYAS** (comfortable life) as the Upanishads declare."

The above content summarizes the topics discussed by Swamiji for the regeneration of man, country, and humanity at large, with additional ideas covered in his Complete Works spread over TEN Volumes. We should present all these ideas as a lesson for those who approach the study of Swami Vivekananda in the True Spirit.

Best Wishes!!

Independence day - Free book distribution at IISc(2022)



V

Spirituality and Modern Science

Swami Anilayananda,

Ramakrishna Mutt and Mission, Basavanagudi.

After all, wisdom has no bars! It is a great moment of celebration that the Vivekananda Study Circle (VSC), at the Indian Institute of Science (IISc), Bengaluru, now completes 15 years of active existence! IISc, a symbol of knowledge, evolution, and dignity, embodies the dream of two great personalities – Swami Vivekananda and Late Jamshedji Tata.

Hence, it holds a very strong position in rebuilding our nation and society. It is also quite unique that its establishment was triggered by a spontaneous and informal exchange between two stalwarts, one a spiritual leader and the other an entrepreneur, over a ship-bound journey. This has led to a glorious era of scientific research in India through this institute. “After all, wisdom has no bars.”

**Swami Anilayananda
Maharaj**

Historically, we can find many such unusual incidents that triggered political and social impact. An insignificant boy was taken to the heights of an emperor by a brilliant teacher, Chanakya, who understood the boy’s inner potential. Another example is the highly qualified Monk Sri Vidyaranya, who created the wealthiest empire in the history of the Human race with the help of the brave Harihara and Bukkaraya. Swamiji was very pointed and assertive in preaching the potential divinity in man, particularly as he was completely aware of the happenings while spreading this ancient message of the Upanishads. It was an era of great turmoil in our history then: on one hand, prominence was given to men of science and tech-



nology, although the religious world did not condone this. The Orient was in a confused state: whether to hold on to its ancient wisdom or to respond to the materialistic way of life positively, whereas the Occident was busy displaying the arrogance of its inventions and revolutions in the scientific world.

It was as if the human race, caught in the storm of uncertainty, was seeking some extraordinary help. And it is a wonder that this help came to the human race in the form of Swami Vivekananda. A man of true spirituality with gigantic intellect and a compassionate heart – the true lover of mankind. Swamiji embodied a unique combination in his personality – being a man of religion, he was completely dedicated to practicing the broader application of religious principles, absolutely without opposing but being friendly with scientific inventions. He never found any difference between religious principles and scientific rules.

In one of his lectures in 1896, Swamiji said, “Take anything before you, the most material thing – take one of the most material sciences, as chemistry or physics, astronomy or biology - study it, push the study forward, and the gross forms will begin to melt and become finer and finer, until they come to a point where you are bound to make a tremendous leap from these material things into the immaterial.” He also said, “Science and religion will meet and shake hands. Poetry and philosophy will become friends. This will be the religion of the future, and if we can work it out, we may be sure that it will be for all times and peoples.”⁷

The world has never seen such an extraordinary expression of practical wisdom before. Religion and Modern science do look like absolute opposites, but they are two sides of the same coin - that is, infinite knowledge. Swamiji’s views are truly eye-openers for the people of both sides, only there is a need for some patience and open-mindedness, to accept the facts instead of carrying prejudices against each other. We

⁷The Absolute and Manifestation, Jnana Yoga (C.W.2.140-14th ed.)

must remember here that Swamiji was a hearty seeker of Truth who was ready to sacrifice anything and everything, anytime, for the sake of Truth. He was very certain that the Truth, dwelling in each and every creature, nay, every particle of this creation, can be realized, and that realization alone contains the Supreme Peace, for which we are struggling every moment. While mentioning the path to reach the goal of life or Eternal Truth, Swamiji believed in the path of penance, which, again, he describes very interestingly. He says, “Each soul is potentially divine. The goal is to manifest this divinity within, by controlling nature, external and internal. Do this either by work or worship or psychic control, or philosophy – by one or more, or all of these - and be free.”⁸

Here, we need to understand that when Swamiji mentions “controlling nature, external and internal,” he expects that external control of nature is possible in a much benign way through modern scientific methods, whereas “internal control” can be achieved through various spiritual disciplines. As a result, an evolved Mankind will come into reality and lead this planet towards a bright and peaceful world. Swamiji’s views must be the subject of our critical thinking if we want to survive longer and overcome the peculiar challenges, whether on socio-political levels or on controversies between religion and modern science. Swamiji has solutions for almost all of them. It was possible for Swamiji, due to his direct experience of Eternal Truth and his passion, to preach these life-giving principles among the masses without any discrimination of caste, creed, gender, etc. He is a true prophet who understood the sufferings of humanity.

This assimilation of ancient spiritual principles and ideas with modern scientific concepts should be the backbone of our education. Otherwise, as we are experiencing today, education will remain only the process of collecting materialistic information. The great biologist Ju-

⁸Concentration and its practice, Raja Yoga (C.W. 1.124-1st ed.)

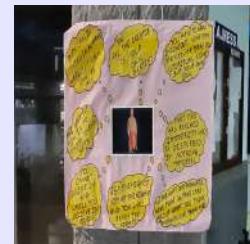
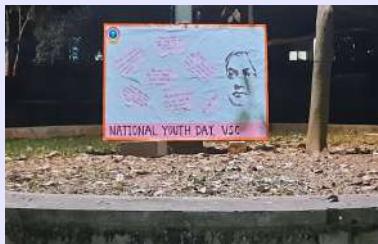
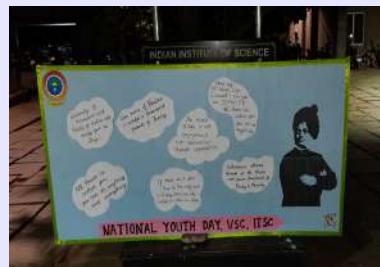
lian Huxley, in an essay on ‘Emergence of Darwinism,’ writes: “Man’s most comprehensive aim is seen not as mere survival, not as numerical increase, not as increased complexity of organization or increased control over his environment, but as greater fulfillment - the fuller realization of more possibilities by the human species collectively and more of its component members individually.” Swamiji says, “The training by which the current and expression of will are brought under control and become fruitful is called education.”

Are we going to think a little about this idea of Swami Vivekananda? If yes, then we will be able to understand his efforts to bring spirituality and modern science together for the advancement of humanity, though apparently, these are two different worlds. The man who is established in the Supreme knowledge can only dare this to happen because, for him, both worlds are nothing but different expressions on the same surface of knowledge, which is pervasive and one without a second. In conclusion, we can say that any visionary of truth and lover of mankind, a man of self-respect and self-confidence, can shape these kinds of tasks with great dedication within no time, without bothering about the circumstances. We pay tribute to this great personality on this grand occasion!

Swami Anilayananda ji Maharaj on National Youth Day (NYD)
celebrations at IISc-2023



NYD celebration at IISc with posters made by VSC volunteers



VI

Man-making to Nation-making : The Nivedita Way

Swami Mayadipananda,

Ramakrishna Mutt and Mission, Basavanagudi.

In his letter of 7th June 1896, Swami Vivekananda wrote to Sister Nivedita (then Margaret Noble), “My ideal indeed can be put into a few words and that is: to preach unto mankind their divinity, and how to make it manifest in every movement of life.”⁹ This was the lifeline for Miss Margaret Nobel, our Sister Nivedita, who was in search of a plan of work after meeting Swami Vivekananda for the second time in London. If we go through the life and work of Nivedita, we clearly find that her life was the practical demonstration of the above-written lines by Swami Vivekananda. She accepted these ideas wholeheartedly, practiced them sincerely, and lived these ideas, discharging them among all. In fact, Nivedita’s life was truly an extension of Swami Vivekananda’s life and teachings.



Swami Mayadipananda
Maharaj

According to Swami Vivekananda, “Each soul is potentially divine,”¹⁰ and “Education is the manifestation of perfection already in man.” Swamiji knew that once this divinity is awakened at individual levels, that will be the foundation of further development. Nivedita found the fulfillment of this awakened divinity at collective levels. She infused this wonderful

⁹Sister Nivedita, Pg 17

¹⁰Concentration and its practice, Raja Yoga (C.W. 1.124-1st ed.)

idea into every step of an individual's life and transformed it into nation-making. Man-making and character-building were Swamiji's principal tasks. This idea was too vast and deep. Therefore, it was necessary to make this unfathomable idea of Swamiji more concrete. She transformed Swamiji's man-making into nation-making. She said, "Swami is the only person I know of, who goes to the root of the matter of National man making and I don't know if Swami formulates all these other."¹¹ Nation, nation-making, nationality - these words became the keynotes of her thinking, writing, and speaking. Therefore, Nivedita's idea of education and its implementation always centered on national interest.



Sister Nivedita

According to Nivedita, 'Unless we train the feelings and the choice, our man is not educated.'¹² Once these two aspects are awakened in a child, knowledge dawns. Then, 'There stands a man, there stands a mind.'¹³ Her focus was always to channel this individual awakening to the right direction. What was the right direction? In her own words, "... the development of the child for the good, not of himself, but of jana-dharma..."¹⁴ - the people, the country

and the national ideal. She explains this in a beautiful way, "Why are you going to school?" says the mother to her little one at the moment of

¹¹Letters of Sister Nivedita,(Complete works of Sister Nivedita -Vol4, Pg-436-5th ed.)

¹²Hints on National Education in India, (Complete works of Sister Nivedita -Vol4, Pg-344-5th ed.)

¹³Ibid., Pg-344

¹⁴Ibid., Pg-346

parting. And the child answers in some form or other, growing clearer and more eager with growing age and knowledge, ‘That I may learn to be a MAN and HELP!’¹⁵. This longing to serve, the burning desire to serve mankind, this unselfish motive will advance our man for lifting the whole - the nation. All of her writings and speeches echo this absolute unselfishness. She says, “The center of gravity must be for them outside the family. We must demand from them sacrifices for India, bhakti for India, learning for India. The ideal for its own sake. India for the sake of India.”¹⁶ According to her, each and every student should ask himself/herself as to what the nation expects from them, not what they expect from the nation.

Nivedita’s idea of education, with national idealism, did not only concentrate on the basic levels of education. She dealt with the higher level of education with the same fervor. On the one hand, we find her tremendous zeal to disseminate the need for primary education for the people in the then Indian society, where people were almost unaware of the necessity for it. On the other hand, we find her earnestness to promote the ideal of higher education. In her early days in Kolkata, we find Nivedita going door to door, appealing to people to send their children to school for formal education. Also, during her stay in London, we see her writing articles, bringing out circulars, meeting leading world thinkers, campaigning for signatures and collecting public opinion for the Tata’s scheme of a Research Institute for Science in India. In both places, her enthusiasm was indomitable. Despite a lot of adversity, in both cases, she succeeded. As a result of her efforts for primary education, ‘Sister Nivedita Girls School (in Kolkata), one of the foremost schools for girls, came into existence and still stands with its brilliant success. In the second case, due to her uncompromising endeavor, she ensured the establishment of a unique institution for science and technology for In-

¹⁵Ibid., Pg-346

¹⁶Ibid., Pg-348

dia, today's Indian Institute of Science, which was the dream project of two great personalities: Swami Vivekananda, her Guru and the world-renowned businessman, Sir Jamshedji Tata.

Nivedita's contribution to today's Indian Institute of Science is immense, but unfortunately it is forgotten by most of us. She left no stone unturned for this noble cause. What was the secret behind her unflinching enthusiasm? Even though one can think that her association with educational institutions right from her childhood could have made her realise the necessity of education at the primary stage and at a higher level, the main reason for her contribution is her identity with India - in all aspects.

Through her deeds, she became more Indian than many born in India. To her, always, Nation was first. She never uttered 'India's need', 'India's women'. She always said '**our need, our women**'. To Nivedita, India was one living reality, a mother, and Her problems were also her own. Taking the rosary in hand, she literally used to recite to herself, 'Bhāratvarsha', 'Bhāratvarsha'. And she transmitted this sense of oneness with the nation to all whose lives she touched with her dynamic personality. She wanted our young generation to learn, train themselves with the idea of Science, Philosophy, and Technology, and dedicate those for the sake of the nation. "The whole task now is to give the word 'Nationality' to India in all its breadth and meaning. The rest will do itself. India must be obsessed by this great conception. ... It means a final understanding of the fact that the political process and economic disaster are only side issues - that the one essential fact is realisation of its own nationality by the Nation."¹⁷

On this auspicious occasion of the completion of 15 years of the Vivekananda Study Circle (VSC) at the Indian Institute of Science (IISc), let us strive hard to fulfill the dream of Swami Vivekananda, the bea-

¹⁷ Complete works of Sister Nivedita -Vol4, Pg-381-5th ed.

con of new hope; Sir Jamshedji Tata, who bathed in that light and Sister Nivedita, who carried the light of hope forward for the future of India.

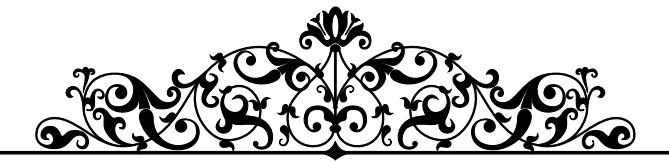
“Let us realise all that our country has done for us-how she has given us birth and food and friends, our beloved ones, and our faith itself. Is she not indeed our mother?”¹⁸ Dedicate some part of every puja to this thought of Mother who is Swadesh. Lay a few flowers before Her, pour out little water in Her name. It is the only requisite that we should kneel down and adore the common Mother. So loving, so praising, we shall accomplish all else by implication. Do we not long to see Her once more, as Mahabharata?”¹⁹

Students making poster for NYD celebrations at IISc-2023

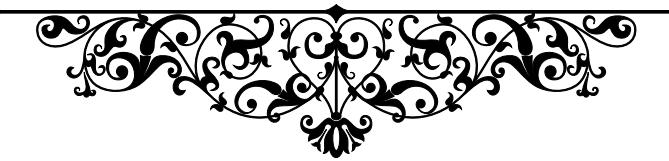


¹⁸My India My People, Pg-58

¹⁹Ibid., Pg-58



Mentor's note



I

Need of Vivekananda Study Circles in Educational Institutions

Mr. Gokulmuthu Narayanaswamy

M.Sc.(Engg), CSA, IISc Alumnus(1997)

Director - Product Development, Itron India.



**Mr. Gokulmuthu
Narayanaswamy**

Swami Vivekananda has a special significance in the Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore, because Jamshedji Tata started the Institute with inspiration from Swami Vivekananda. A letter from Tata [refer Fig 2.1] requesting Swami Vivekananda to guide the Institute as the first Director is available. The disciples of Swami Vivekananda played a major role in arguing in the British Parliament against some of the British administrators who had appealed that starting such an institute was not in the interest of the colonial government.

As enquirers of science and as thinking individuals in general, the faculty and students in the Institute are expected to do some thinking on fundamental questions like “What is the purpose of life?”, “What is success?”, “What is the real nature of Existence?” “What is the purpose of human beings to the Universe?” “What is the basis of morality?” etc. While various cultures across the world have tried to come up with answers to these fundamental questions, the Indian culture has unique rational answers. Healthy debates and practical applications of these ideas have been the hallmarks of Indian culture for several millennia. Towering intellectuals have populated Indian history through all times and expounded these lines of thought within India and the rest of the

world.

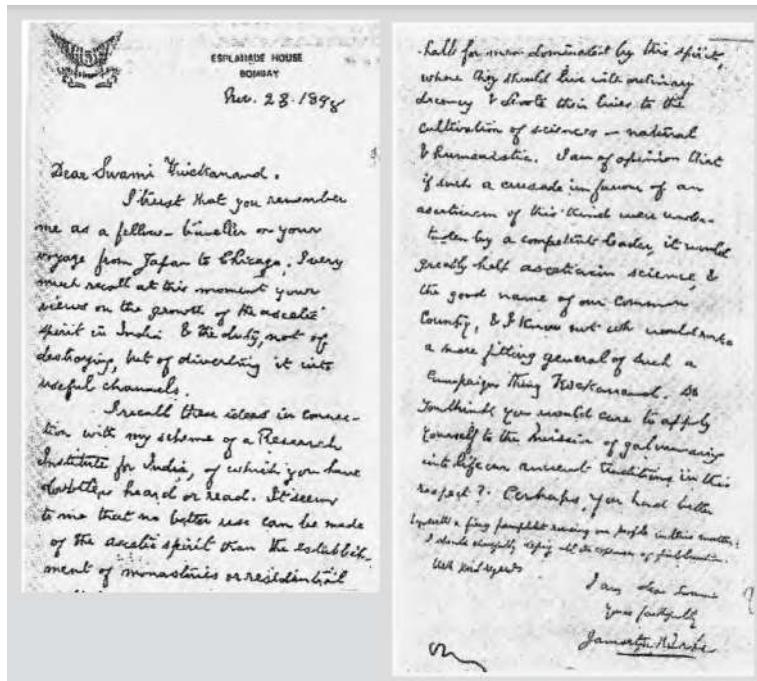


Figure 2.1: Facsimile of the Original Letter of Jamsetji Tata to Swami Vivekananda

Swami Vivekananda is one of the greatest recent figures in this long history. Swami Vivekananda was a profound scholar in both Eastern and Western thought. John Henry Wright, a Harvard professor who gave the letter of recommendation to the Parliament of Religions, wrote, "He is more learned than all our learned professors put together." Swami Vivekananda had conversations and written communications with the top Western thinkers of that time, like the scientist Nikola Tesla, psychologist William James, mathematician John Venn, and many others. Big names of the Western world like Leo Tolstoy, J.D. Salinger, Aldous Huxley, Henry Miller, Joseph Campbell, Romain Rolland, and Carl Jung

were influenced by his works and have paid rich tributes to him.

As most of Swami Vivekananda's lectures and writings were addressed to Western audiences, they very well appeal to the students of science, which is predominantly based on the Western way of thinking. The language, the idioms, and the style of persuasion of Swami Vivekananda align with any modern book on popular science or philosophy. Swami Vivekananda gives the Indian answer to the fundamental questions of life in a Western language, which is easily accessible to the students. Still, Swami Vivekananda does not dilute the topic. He treats all these topics with the same vigor as does tradition. This way, Swami Vivekananda is an effective bridge between tradition and modernity. He is a window of Indian culture, tradition, and thought to the modern students.

Swami Vivekananda was not an armchair philosopher. He traveled extensively within India. He lived in the poor's huts and the kings' palaces. He had a very accurate sense of the pulse of the country. He knew exactly what the problems of India and her people were. He had ideas to solve many of the problems. Thankfully, some of the problems like abject poverty, infant mortality, child marriage, low longevity, access to modern education, revival of industry, general health and nutrition, untouchability, caste discrimination, status of women, political bondage, absence of democracy, and poor national image have been solved to a large extent by now.

Still, there are many problems like lack of self-confidence, lack of patriotism, corruption, lethargy, lack of civic sense, not enough charity, lack of discipline, dishonesty, lack of civilizational pride, selfishness, superstition, exploitation of the weak, caste discrimination in some places, unemployability, and lack of connection with Indian culture, which has solutions within the pages of the legacy of Swami Vivekananda. Reading Swami Vivekananda will sensitize the students towards India's prob-

lems, develop love for India and her people, and give ideas and inspiration to solve the problems.

The motto Swami Vivekananda coined for the Ramakrishna Mission that he founded, आत्मनो मोक्षार्थं जगद्‌हिताय च – “for the freedom of the individual and the welfare of the world,” summarizes his message. There are two primary noble pursuits of man-

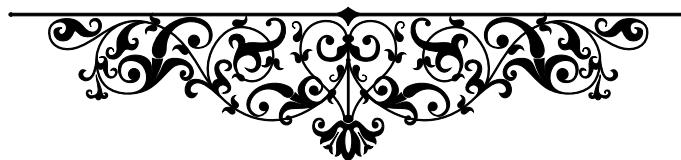
1. Striving for freedom from psychological defects like lust, anger, greed, delusion, arrogance, jealousy, ignorance, anxiety, guilt, regret, lethargy, and hatred.
2. Striving for the world’s welfare, like universal access to food, living, health, education, employment, dignity, culture, and technology. These are called moksha and dharma. These are like two wings of a human being.

They reinforce and complement each other. By working both in tandem, a person can live a peaceful and prosperous life. When people strive for these, the society and country will also be peaceful and prosperous.

Vivekananda Study Circles are functioning in almost all the premier Institutes across the country. In many of the IITs and IIMs, it is an official student body recognized and promoted by the Institution. The Study Circles give students access to this huge body of knowledge, making them better citizens of the country and the world. It is commendable that IISc also has a Vivekananda Study Circle that has been functioning continuously for fifteen years with the support of students and faculty members. I wish this initiative continues to serve the students and faculty for many more years. One specialty of the students of IISc is that many take up teaching positions in various colleges and universities in different parts of India after graduation. I earnestly appeal to them to start and promote Vivekananda Study Circles in the institutions that they serve.



Memories at VSC and Alumni Experiences, IISc



I

VSC: Nurturing Minds, Inspiring Souls

Bhabani Mukherjee

The 15th year since the inception of the Vivekananda Study Circle (VSC) at IISc is a special occasion for us all. I had the privilege of attending the weekly classes during 2011-12. Sitting with the students



and their mentor, Sri Gokulmuthuji, I learned a lot during the discussions that ensued. Some materials under study were the Letters of Swami Vivekananda, Srimad Bhagavad Gita, and Advaita Vedanta. Students would ask many discerning and persuasive questions, which were answered at length (often giving suitable life examples) by Gokulmuthuji. As a result, students develop a clear understanding of leading an intelligent, empathetic, and spiritual life. These classes lay a strong foundation for following the high ideals of Swamiji: of renunciation and service for the well-being of society while striving to reach perfection both within and without.

I express my great indebtedness to Gokulmuthuji and the students for this period of learning and growing. Through the Study Circle, IISc also got a wonderful opportunity to listen to many eminent speakers from different fields, some of whom were Monks and Sisters. The formation of VSC is, I believe, one of the best things that has happened to the IISc student community. I pray that more and more students join in the years to come and benefit from it.

II

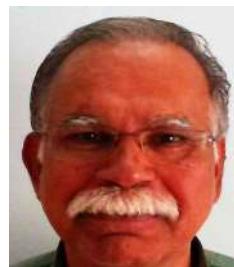
Science meets Vedanta: My experience with Vivekananda Study Circle, IISc

N R Govinda Sharma,

SDM Institute for Management Development, Mysore, Retired Professor

In November 2021, Swami Sarvapriyananda, the minister and spiritual leader of the Vedanta Society of New York was to address the Indian Institute of Science (IISc), Bengaluru. Attendance was by invitation, so I went about getting an invite. A student from IISc who completed his doctorate in management from IISc introduced me to the Vivekananda Study Circle (VSC) at IISc. Thus, I began my association with VSC via Swami Sarvapriyanandaji!

Every Tuesday, a mail from Mr. Sangeeth P, the student coordinating the VSC meet at IISc, reminds us, sweetly, "*The VSC session will be held in person and online mode today from 6.30–8.30 pm at the Warden room, first floor of A block hostel (near the hall above A mess).....!*" The program starts promptly at 6:30 pm with an invocation and reading from the Bhagavad Gita. Then, a text from the works of Swami Vivekananda is taken up for reading and discussion.



Dr. Govind Sharma

We are privileged to have Sri Gokulmuthu Narayanaswamy as the mentor who, in his characteristic humorous way, clarifies any doubt that one may have. Indeed, his blog, "Practical Philosophy",¹ is a treasure trove for truth seekers. Students from IISc, most of them doctoral

¹<https://practicalphilosophy.in/about/gokulmuthu-narayanaswamy/>

students, raise queries and answer each other's questions. Well, it is two hours of "Science meets Vedanta!" On the day I managed to attend the VSC meeting in person, Sangeerth and his friends invited me to dinner in their mess; didn't Swamiji say, 'Spirituality cannot be taught on an empty stomach!'² (Mention of*near the hall above mess A* is not totally out of context!) So, this is the response to the divide between science and Vedanta that some rationalists and scientists talk of.

Swami Vivekananda provides rational reply through his works for those who denounce religion in comparison to science. The works of Swami Vivekananda, dealing with Jnana Yoga, Karma Yoga, and other topics, are discussed in the study circle classes. Science is not a bundle of facts, as many believe, but is a constant search for truth, often negating the currently accepted apparent truth. A typical and oft-cited example is that of the Newtonian concepts making way for the theory of relativity by Einstein. Vedanta, too, takes the same path of "Neti, Neti.." ("Not this, Not this..") till one arrives at the fundamental truth.

During one of the VSC meetings, I put up a question - "How have the discussions in this forum, VSC, helped you in your scientific research?" some of the thoughts were as follows:

1. Scientific Research methods may have many options, some in tune with universal value systems such as Ahimsa (non-harming, physically, emotionally, or vocally) or non-covetousness (not desiring something that does not belong to one). Training in Vedanta hones Viveka (discernment), and Viveka will help the researcher choose the best option for the universal values.
2. The value of 'Acceptance' of reality, without coveting the reality to be what one desires, is strengthened with the knowledge of Vedanta, and this leads to working on scientific issues with a

²Epistles - Second Series, XLI Shashi(C.W. 6.254)

higher objectivity.

Next time you drive a Tesla car, remember Swami Vivekananda. Swamiji wrote in the year 1895 to an English friend, “Mr. (Nikola) Tesla thinks he can demonstrate mathematically that force and matter are reducible to potential energy. I will see him next week to get this new mathematical demonstration. In that case, the Vedantic cosmology will be placed on the surest of foundations. I am working a good deal now upon the cosmology and eschatology of the Vedanta. I clearly see their perfect union with modern science, and the elucidation of the one will be followed by that of the other.”³ It is another matter that Tesla could not prove this, but the task was left to Einstein to confirm it later.

Let me conclude that the best of human glory is attained by the union of science and Vedanta by quoting the words of D V Gundappa:

“Union of new shoots and old roots gives the tree its beauty,
New skills combined with old philosophy is Dharma,
If science and art unite with the teachings of the seers,
it will be glory for human life.”⁴

Original Kannada verse is as follows:

ಕ್ರೋಸ ಚಿಗುರು ಹಳೆ ಬೇರು ಕೂಡಿರಲು ಮರಸೊಬಗು ।
ಕ್ರೋಸಯುಕ್ತ ಹಳೆತತ್ತ್ವದೊಡಗೂಡೆ ಧರ್ಮ ॥
ಎಮಿವಾಕ್ಯದೊಡನೆ ಪಿಜ್ಞಾನ ಕಲೆ ಹೇಳಿಸಿ ।
ಜಸಪ್ರ ಜನರ್ವಿವನಕೆ — ಮಂಕುತಿಮ್ಮ ॥

³Epistles - First Series/LVII Blessed and Beloved(C.W. 5.101-7th ed.)

⁴Pp 218, verse 523, “Foggy Fool’s Farrago” by Malathi Rangaswamy and Hari Ravikumar

III

A quick peek into VSC-IISc

Rajasekhar,

Ph.D., Dept of Aerospace Engg., IISc, 2019 alumni.

Almost all of us have a lot of erroneous perceptions about different aspects of life, like relationships, careers, compulsive emotions, etc. These errors confuse us, and confusion fails us in decision-making, leading to self-sabotage, guilt, or regret. Unfortunately, our schools and colleges don't educate us in this direction. VSC-IISc did that job for me.



Dr. Rajasekhar When I came to IISc, I was so confused. I just wanted answers or, rather, solutions for these. I can say with full conviction that these have been wiped off with the mentorship at VSC-IISc. Beauty is that VSc-IISc made this happen without any prescribed practice or ritual. I got the dish but was never told how to eat it. I just attended the classes regularly and can say that I absolutely have no confusion with life today. This is an important leap for anyone because once you are free of confusion, you can live life to its fullest.

The tutelage at VSc-IISc made me understand philosophy, psychology, culture, religion, existence, etc., but also, the discussions many times were about science, career, India, etc.; it made me develop an all-around personality. Apart from learning the tenets of the lofty Advaita philosophy, I also learned a lot of practical rules of life. To give an example, I would like to list out a small number of them:

- It's better to wear out than rust out.
- You will never lose by giving.

- To have a successful relationship, always be on the giving side.
- The world is a school and not a garden.

The list is a very huge one and needs much time for one to imbibe. Patiently, I have been taught, and all my intense debates were attended not just by giving logical explanations but also with selfless love. Apart from contributing to my evolution, VSC-IISc also gave me many brothers, a bond I will always cherish. They were there like a family in all the difficult times of my life, and my family members can't match the selfless love I got from them.

If anything good happens because of me, I completely owe it to my tutelage at VSC-IISc, where a powerful words of Vivekananda has shaped my life. VSC-IISc has the power to convert every person from a consumer to a contributor. I am sure VSC-IISc will produce great leaders in every field. Glory to Gokulmuthu Sir and Glory to VSc-IISc!!

Swami Nithyananda ji Maharaj at IISc



IV

My Personal Growth and Learnings through VSC

Sagar Ghorai,

Int. Ph.D., Chemistry Dept, IISc, 2021 alumni,

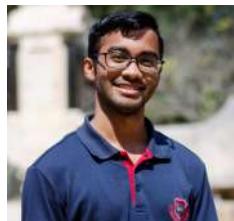
Post Doc., Dept of Chemical Engg, IISc, 2021-2023.

My extended stay at IISc was remarkably peaceful. A large thanks to VSC being the thermostat. In the realm of molecular simulation, the thermostat's role is pivotal—it regulates excessive energy when molecules act erratically and provides energy when molecules are stagnant, facilitating accurate dynamics. I beg your pardon for delving into scientific terms here!

Moreover, the invaluable life lessons learned from Swamiji's literature and other profound scriptural texts and discussions with group members, particularly Gomu Sir, were instrumental in maintaining a balanced perspective during my tenure at IISc. Born and raised in a rural village, I never had the privilege of engaging in group discussions on profound life

Dr. Sagar Ghorai questions or exploring books beyond the prescribed syllabus. However, my undergraduate years at Ramakrishna Mission V.C. College did afford me glimpses into the extraordinary lives of monks and their associates, from whom I imbibed invaluable values. It was at VSC, though, where I truly comprehended these remarkable individual core principles and values, which I aspired to integrate into my own life.

VSC inspired me, nudging me towards a life characterized by a spirit of contribution. It encouraged me to participate actively in various voluntary activities, fostering a community of friends bound by unconditional love—an indispensable element for inner peace. Additionally, it



connected me closely with the Ramakrishna Mission (Halasuru) and its resident monks. Their unconditional love, teachings, and the opportunity to engage in small volunteering activities on weekends were truly rejuvenating. Most significantly, through the assistance of one of my dearest friends, I encountered my Guru and made my life a blessed one. My affiliation with VSC enabled me to perceive life as it is and discover a new dimension, profoundly impacting my perspective.

Swami Medhananada ji Maharaj at IISc



V

VSC-IISC – Torchbearer of Swami Vivekananda’s vision and Message

Sumanjay Dutta,

Ph.D. Student, Dept. of Management Studies, IISc.

Vivekananda Study Circle (VSC) at IISc has a twofold objective. Firstly, it aims to introduce newcomers to Swami Vivekananda's literature by providing a general overview of his teachings, which will be explored in detail later. Secondly, it serves as a platform for engaging in discussions on Swamiji's literature for those who have already delved into the original texts. Additionally, VSC emphasizes seva (spiritual service) in order to implement Swamiji's teachings which Swami Vivekananda calls "Practical Vedanta". Students have access to scriptures based on traditional Sanskrit texts like Vivekachudamani, and Tattvabodha, along with regular discussions on works such as the *Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* and *Sri Sri Ramakrishna Lilaprasanga*.

Mr. Sumanjay Dutta

These activities strive to strike a delicate balance, which helps to foster an understanding of the Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS) and to put such understanding of Vedantic wisdom in our daily lives. Celebrating its fifteenth year, VSC stands as a beacon of hope within the academic community.

On a personal note, my journey with VSC began in 2019 when, as a Ph.D. candidate, I connected with a VSC member. Weekly classes on the Upanishads and Bhagavad Gita, led by Pujya Swami Dayatmananda ji,

left a lasting impact. His unique teaching style, blending traditional wisdom with modern insights, emphasized viewing Vedanta as not an intellectual pursuit but practising Vedantic Wisdom in every pursuit of life. Pravrajika Divyanandaprana Mataji further enriched our understanding through online Vedanta classes during the COVID-19 lockdown. The association with VSC provided sath-sanga, connecting us with devoted lives dedicated to God, Guru, and the nation.

VSC serves as a catalyst for transforming lives, guiding individuals from mundane existence to the Life Divine. May Thakur, Ma, and Swamiji continue to bless VSC IISc in its mission to steer youth toward a holistic way of life.

Swami Satwasthananda ji Maharaj at IISc



VI

My Experience in VSC

Sudarshan R,

MS, Dept. of Sustainability Studies, IISc, 2023 alumni

भूमा तत्सुखं नाल्पे सुखं [The Vast is itself Happiness. There is none in the meager] - Chandogya Upanishad[7.23.1]

The necessity of a greater purpose, a higher goal, and a superior ambition is what every human aspires to have. And only a few make up their mind to pursue it, even if they get one. Vivekananda Study Circle (VSC), at IISc is one rare such instance where I met people who had both a higher purpose as well as the zeal to work towards it. To encapsulate in a single line, I truly was blessed to have, in the words of Shri Adi Shankaracharya, “नेयं सज्जन सङ्गे चित्तं” [carry my mind in the company of good people].⁵



Mr. R Sudarshan

I came to know of VSC purely by chance, and perhaps grace, some would say, through a program this humble, modest team of inspired, energized youth had arranged- Swami Sarvapriyananda's talk at IISc. I, like most millions of his fans, wanted to listen to him in person. His intellectually delightful lectures on YouTube, often sprinkled with humour, interjected by thought-provoking sophisticated philosophical questions, I would devour me from lunch and binge on holidays. When I heard his keynote speech in IISc, I was speechless. There was a congre-

⁵Bhaja Govindam, 27

gation of 1000+ audience, auditorium fully packed, people standing on aisles, at the doors. I wondered who it was that could manage such a big audience so well. I immediately noticed a few volunteers running briskly about, on their toes, inviting guests and people, arranging for snacks and food, getting the sound system sorted, rehearsing the welcome address, and engaging soulfully in other preparations. There was no sign of stress or distress, completely decentralized and totally dedicated. It was love at first sight. I knew these were the people that I had to “carry my mind with.”

Over a 1000 participants at Tata Auditorium, IISc



It has been a year and a half since. I signed up and started attending the weekly Bhagavad Gita classes. I truly enjoyed the discussions and questions amongst my dear peers Sangeerth, Sanchit, Harish, Nikhilesh(s) (pun-intended as there are 2 Nikhilesh), Sagar, Chandan, Kaustubh, Ratnangshu, etc., drew motivation from mentor Shri Gokulmuthu Narayanaswamy. Every moment spent was worth it, I sincerely believe. From Veda Mantra chanting to the sumptuous dinner, they would treat me and everyone who attended the class with great hon-

our, it was all fascinating. I also was bestowed the chance to volunteer for a couple of programs too. I feel both ecstatic for such wonderful company and at the same time, regretful that I didn't know of this earlier: I was already in the winding-up stages of my post-graduate stay at IISc when I joined VSC.

Given enough support from the Institute, it is only a matter of time before VSC becomes well-known and popular as the go-to club for ALL spiritual seekers. I emphasize ALL because it is only Advaita lineages that are the most accommodating of all sects or philosophies. It is only in the paths first carved by Shri Adi Shankaracharya and further same Truth being presented for the modern age by Swami Vivekananda that India, that is Bharat, still has survived and managed to maintain peace, harmony, and sanity amidst a land as diverse as this.

Educational Institutes reek of academic pressure and, under the radar, of substance usage. Is there a remedy? I postulate there is- VSC. Institutional Administrators must note that even the Premiere Institutes of India have VSC. It is a safety valve, a haven for spirituality and philosophy, an outlet for questions and curiosities, a motivator, and a loving community.

Humans feel the most connected when their higher aspirations resonate or at least when they can express and share them. This gives them the most intellectual joy, greater than perhaps even the joy of a Eureka moment. To feel 'belonged,' to feel 'accepted,' to feel 'together' on the spiritual journey is the best thing that can happen to a seeker. Even if a person is an atheist, an agnostic, a theist, a skeptic, a cynic, a ritualist, a devotee, a scientist, or a philosopher, he/she has a place here, with one qualification alone- 'Sincerity'.

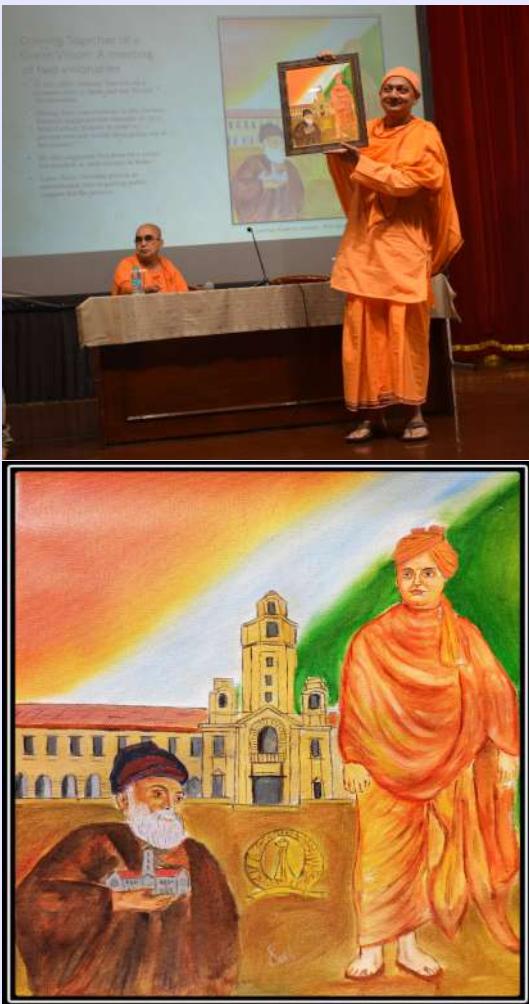
Nature endows the human creature in its adolescence, youth, and early adulthood with energy unparalleled and unreplenishable. In this

meager span between 15-40 years of age, health is at its best, responsibilities least, intellect at its sharpest, and emotions available. Without directing this surcharge of energy into either achieving the full potential of the ‘self’ or into serving the ‘other,’ it inevitably gets discharged into lower animal planes of activity – sex and masturbation, drugs and parties, protests and politics, sleep, and stupor. All of us are victims of one or more of these. There is nothing morally wrong, only a practical waste.

Build the self and build the other. Social work, intellectual stimulation, and emotional expression all consume this surplus, and come dusk, one feels utterly tired and sleeps like a log; he will have no more energy for the lower activities. Really, it is just a wise investment with a decent Return on Investment (ROI). Does it mean one can redirect all this energy overnight? ‘Objects (I would add ‘and habits’) tend to be in their natural state of rest or motion.’ Or that once determined, there will be no relapses? Most certainly not. But every small success in transforming this energy is commendable, I tell myself, and akin to an SIP. Let us all keep our spirits up and try, no matter a thousand failures.

It is my dream that VSC be formed in every institute and university. May we, the Youth, be prudent and expand this life energy towards self-realization, gradually progressing up Maslow’s pyramid and not regret it later.

Swami Sarvapriyananda ji maharaj at IISc



The painting which Sarvapriyananda ji is holding, was drawn and gifted by Subrata Das, a student from IISc.

VII

Empowering Researchers: VSC-IISc's Role

Dr. Abheek Bardan,

Ph.D., Dept. of Material Research Center, IISc, 2018 alumni

Relevance of VSC-IISc in Propagating Swami Vivekananda's Teachings for Today's Researchers "Infinite patience, infinite purity, and infinite perseverance are the secret of success in a good cause"⁶ writes Swami Vivekananda to his beloved disciple Alasinga Perumal from New York on 14th May 1895. If research is a "good cause" at all, then this great teaching is equally applicable to today's researchers.



Dr. Abheek Bardan

A higher purpose behind work is always beneficial for the individual and society. A purpose becomes even more important for the researcher community as their work shapes the future of mankind. Some consider the research work as a means of their survival. For some others, it's a means of acquiring name-fame-power. Some approach the research work with a patriotic or philanthropic

outlook. However, irrespective of their underlying motivation a researcher faces various challenges in executing the research work. There can be inadequacies in the researcher himself/herself. There are possibilities of inadequate resources for performing the research. The social environment in the family and/or workplace (supervisor, student, collaborator, etc.) may pose a great obstacle to achieving the desired goal.

As a result of such challenging situations there are various types of responses, depending upon the individual. Some may choose the

⁶Epistles - First Series, XLI, Alasinga(C.W.5.84-7th ed.)

path that compromises the basic research ethics. Some may run away without finishing the work. Some may become a victim of sadness, anxiety, and depression and, therefore, may take various paths of self-destruction (nowadays, in India, incidents related to self-destructive behavior are not uncommon in higher education institutions). And then, a few look for an effective strategy of “fight or flight.” For this section of the research community, the study of Vivekananda’s ideas and life is most useful.

Today’s world is full of activities. Unfortunately, no amount of technological advancement could guarantee rest and peace of mind for modern society. The more gadgets are being invented to ease our lives, the more our pressure is increasing to maintain those gadgets. Additionally, the “competitive” environment also poses a great challenge. This problem of heightened stress needs to be addressed effectively, especially for the researcher community. As these stresses are inevitable in professional, social, or family environments, it is better to be equipped as early as possible in one’s life. The “Karma Yoga,” as explained by Swami Vivekananda, is a great guidance for developing the correct attitude towards work in our day-to-day life. The proper attitude saves us from many difficulties and prepares us to face the challenges thrown upon us.

In today’s world of distractions, it becomes more and more difficult to focus one’s energies on developing such an attitude. A sustained effort and a supporting environment are always necessary to nurture resilience in character. At this juncture student forums like VSC-IISc become relevant in supporting an individual to build the strength to face the inner and outer challenges. The study of Swami Vivekananda’s literature, deep reflection, critical observation of the mind, evaluating various philosophies in the light of Swami Vivekananda’s teachings, familiarising people with Swami Vivekananda’s literature, conducting

programs on relevant subjects, etc., are the activities of VSC-IISc. Evolution of the individual and the benefit of society- this dual goal, as envisioned by Swami Vivekananda, is indeed the purpose of this student body. For the last 15 years the group has been active in developing the outlook of the researcher/student community in IISc. Many more people will be benefited from this group in the future as well.

Swami Vireshananda ji Maharaj at IISc



VIII

VSC – How it helped me

Sanhita Das,

Ph.D., Dept. of Civil Engg, IISc, 2022 alumni

For the most part of our lives, we labor nonstop. We strive for good marks to please our parents and friends during our time in school and college.

As adults, we strive to achieve our professional objectives, visit our favorite destinations, raise our children, support our families, and look after our ageing parents. Our insatiable wants for things like money, property, fame, pleasure, and fulfillment, or our duty to fulfill our responsibilities as contributing members of society, frequently leads us to work incessantly.

As people age and their requirements get more complex, the daily grind can become unpleasant and stressful if one lacks emotional maturity and mental self-control. Spirituality shows us the way to remain afloat from such unpleasant situations. Furthermore, the incessant desire for worldly goods fades and is replaced by gratitude for a grounded, simpler existence filled with necessities that give our lives purpose. Spirituality pushes us far away from the surface-level existence riddled with glitter, peer pressure, and other distractions and brings us closer to the ultimate reality. It helps us relate to all living things, not just humans, who are our fellow travelers on the way to realizing our ultimate potential as divine beings. It also draws us closer to nature. It fosters creativity in worldly pursuits, encourages us to pursue the Ultimate Goal of Life - “Self-Knowledge”,



Dr. Sanhita Das

rather than focusing only on Material Living, Name and Fame or such lowly aspirations of Life. The everyday grind becomes a means to reach our one and only goal—the realization of God—the pursuit of knowledge and the ultimate reality.

Without a guide (Guru), a like-minded community with the same pursuit (Satsang), understanding and implementing spirituality in our daily lives is impossible. A Guru and a Satsang aid Scriptural interpretation and understanding. They help us in the correct understanding of the Scriptural Truth. Guru and such Satsanga, handhold us to understand the substratum behind the world that we see, and make this knowledge our own.

This is where the Gomu Sir-led Vivekananda Study Circle at IISc Bangalore came to my aid. They enabled me to walk on the path outlined by Thakur, Ma, and Swamiji and to have a deep faith in them during a time when I was seething under pressure from academia, personal development, and society. Through conversations and lectures, VSC helped me understand the value of morality, independence, and generosity. It also provided me the courage to live a moral life despite social pressure. The Bhagavad Gita, the Thakur Gospel, and Ma became the literature that guided my life's decisions because of VSC. I sincerely thank Gokulmuthu Sir and VSC for their assistance in putting me on my spiritual path. I wish VSC all the best. May it continue to guide students for years to come.

IX

The Importance of Study Circles in Educational Institutions

Dhananjay Kulkarni

I happened to join one certificate course on Environmental Management at IISc, and while at IISc, I attended one of the VSC classes on Vedanta involving readings from Complete Works on Swami Vivekananda and related topics, with exchange of ideas between the group participants. It was wonderful in the sense of being new to the group. Group was open for all, and participants had great amount of understanding on the topics discussed. The devotion of the group towards understanding Vedanta is phenomenal. The feasibility of joining weekly sessions online from any part of the world and the utmost dedication that VSC puts into understanding the valuable lessons from Vedanta is the most urgent necessity of today's time.



Mr. Dhananjay Kulkarni
The study circles are excellent opportunities for anyone to get learned

Educational institutes being at the core of creating a healthy, thinking society, the Vivekananda study groups are contributing a lot to this valuable task. There is one wonderful Sanskrit shloka about learning:

आचायर्तुं पादमादते पादं शिष्यः स्वमेधया । पादं सब्रह्माचारिभ्यः पादं कालक्रमेण च ॥ The meaning is: We get one-fourth knowledge

from the teacher, one-fourth from our

own intelligence, one-fourth from classmates, and one-fourth only with

time.

teachers and co-learners. Such study circle helps in making the pursuit of life clearer, and in taking-up all worldly pursuits effortlessly, untouched and efficiently. I am grateful for the VSC and wish more and more youth to join this study circle and transform themselves.

National Youth Day free book distribution at IISc (2022)



X

Wishes to VSC

Suraj

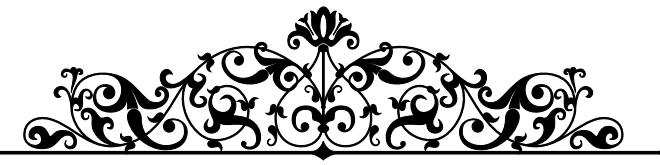
I remember attending VSC sessions in 2008-09 when VSC first started at IISc, with Gokulmuthu ji driving into our campus to lead sessions with a prayer, followed by reading passages from Swamiji's writings. It used to be something I looked forward to each week.

I'm pleased to know VSC continues to thrive strongly after 15 years. Here's wishing VSC many more years of success in inspiring IISc students in Vedanta and Swami Vivekananda's ideals.

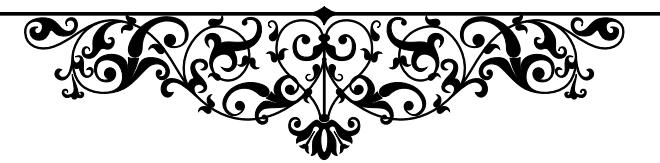
National Youth Day celebration-2022

(The posters were made by the students)





Eclectic Collections



I

Vedanta, Emptiness and a Coffee Break

Parikshit Chakraborty

Often amid chaos, a silent, familiar, and unassuming thought emerges, cutting through all the rubble - **Go, get a coffee break.** A thought capable of such a heroic effort deserves a little more consideration. So what is this coffee break act?



On the surface, this would consist of pausing all previous engagement threads, preparing the wonderful beverage, proceeding to the balcony with it, and slowly settling down in the familiar chair. We will come back to what happens next a little later. The stage is all set for now, and nothing more is needed, so let's run a small analysis of the act.

The first analysis would be the obvious one, i.e., examining the conventional truth of this act. This truth interprets a quiet solo coffee break as an act of recommendation and well-being at best, as it helps to slow down the momentum of activity and recharge the individual. But there is a catch. Conventional truth does not place intrinsic value on the "coffee break act" itself. It is seen only as a mild enabler and rejuvenation agent for higher-value pursuits like building a software product, writing a book, directing a movie, pursuing a business deal, or making a meal for the family. Conventional truth is clear and precise about the real deal - seeking achievement, realizing fulfillment, and finding security. Models of this truth have persisted unchanged since the beginning of recorded history to the extent of being permanently ingrained in human DNA. Naturally, today's "coffee break act" hardly stands a chance

of high independent valuation in the order of priorities and remains invisible in the shadows of its towering superiors. There might be more to it (than meets the eye or mind), so let's dig deeper into the matter and call upon the verdict of a few chosen dispassionate enquirers and systems of thought in reverse chronological order. J Krishnamurthy (J.K.), a big proponent of cultivating deep (in his words - choiceless) awareness of oneself as the answer to everything, was born in Madanapalle of Tamil Nadu state in India and gave most of his talks within the country and abroad in the 1940s, and 1950s.

An exciting aspect common and evident in all his writings was the complete absence of the usage of proper nouns. For example, if he were being driven in the German countryside, he would describe the nature of the roads, rivers, trees, and snow without naming any of them like so and so country, city, or riverside. This event gives an insight into how he felt about the tangled net of ideas and labels. Therefore when presented with the slice of "coffee-break-act" for analysis and commentary, J.K.'s style of inquiry would be to observe closely within oneself what the coffee-break-experience offers, what makes it uplifting, and why not extend the cause of this upliftment to every other act, and not just a coffee-break. This leads to further inquiries about why an external act is necessary to deliver this experience, and so on and so forth. To summarize in one sentence, the essence of J.K.'s line of inquiry would have led to the convergence of every external human act as a time-limited utility until the time choiceless awareness takes over permanently, delivering the stillness of the coffee break experience. And so, to conclude, the coffee break continues forever without ever having to call upon another one.

Ramana Maharshi was a sage of few words from Tamil Nadu in India in the early 1900s; self-inquiry was the only thing he ever needed. His favorite way of communicating was through his strikingly radiant and

benevolent gaze, and words held little meaning for him. On great insistence from his followers, Ulladu Narpadu or Forty-verses-on-Existence was one of the very few texts he ever wrote. Dive into yourself to see where the ‘I’ originates - these are all the words to sum up his life and teachings. To him, that was the most profound line of inquiry and effort any human could undertake in a lifetime and ultimately be rewarded with the fundamental convergence and dissolution of all attributes, including the effort itself. Hence, it is very likely that his model of truth insists on self-inquiry and would regard the ‘coffee-break-act’ as an excellent training ground to begin this incredible inward journey and seize back the trophies held by the highly regarded activities of conventional truth discussed earlier.

We now turn away from prominent individual inquiries and spiritual explorers towards more formally established philosophy and thought systems - Mahayana Buddhism and Vedic Upanishads. Shakyamuni Buddha set in motion the mechanics of inner transformation of the self by turning the First Wheel of Dharma in Deer Park, Sarnath, situated in northern India around 200 B.C. In his initial discourses, he spoke about the truth of the existence of suffering (through the Four Noble Truths) and, subsequently, the means for cessation of that suffering (through the Eightfold Path). But here, we will focus on the turning of the Second Wheel of Dharma by Buddha in Vulture Park, Rajgir, also in northern India, where he emphasized recognizing the Emptiness of all phenomena. This second series of teachings was much later documented and formalized as the Mahayana school of Buddhism. The Heart Sutra is the primary Mahayana text which declares, ‘Form is Emptiness, and Emptiness is Form,’ implying that everything in the phenomenal world has no independent or intrinsic existence and rises and falls as part of a tremendous common dependency, just as much as Emptiness, has no inherent existence and is only an aspect of form. Hence, Mayahana Buddhism would easily relegate all activities, achievements, tribulations, and attributes,

including the coffee-break-act of conventional truth, to the same level field as one big dependency arising with no particular significance to any of them and recognizing that inherent Emptiness is the only common factor in all of them.

And finally, let's look at the earliest Indian philosophy from around 500 BC - the Advaita Vedanta, for yet another perspective of truth. The central theme of the Upanishads is the recognition of the ultimate oneness, which binds not only all forms but also the non-form or unmanifested cause. This theme is characterized again and again in the Upanishadic texts like तत्त्वमसि, meaning "Thou art that," and एकमेवाद्वितीयं ब्रह्म meaning Brahman is one, without a second, and this message of oneness later went on to form the Advaita Vedanta philosophy or absolute non-dualism. So, it will not be difficult to infer that the interpretation of the "coffee-break-act" here would mash up all the ingredients involved - the person, the coffee, the break, and the act as a singular consciousness expanding to create the high-level illusion of a coffee break.

Having done this analysis, it seems fair to conclude that there can be no versions of truth but just one. **The differences between systems of philosophy or spirituality go only as far as their way of explaining themselves or the symbolisms used to communicate, with the core remaining unaltered, as it should be.** In other words, the choiceless awareness of J Krishnamurthy is no different than the journey of self-inquiry or pursuing the "I" of Ramana Maharishi. The Emptiness of Buddhism is no other than the oneness of Upanishads, meaning that nothing ever exists on its own, and everything is interconnected. The hope remains that this oneness of experience is recognized more often and expressed liberally in our daily interactions. Rest assured, the truth always finds its way home through a coffee break.

II

Importance of Swami Vivekananda's life and his teachings in Education

N. Sai Prashanthi

Modern-day teachers in the light of Swamiji's philosophy:

"Education is the manifestation of perfection already within man."¹ said Swami Vivekananda, one of India's great visionary and patriotic monks. He was born in 1863 in Calcutta and was named Narendranath Dutta. His father was a lawyer and was so kind that he spent much of his money on charity. His mother taught young Narendra many stories, which developed his personality. Swamiji's life inspires students, from elementary school to university, to learn and apply many things. For this to be effective, the teachers must first know Swamiji's biography and teachings to pass them on to the students. During his visits to various parts of India, he highlighted the importance of education, which makes children stand independently with courage and strength.

Lessons from Swami Vivekananda's life: *Strength*:

As a young boy, Swami Vivekananda had a lot of courage and strength to face any situation. He used to exercise in the morning and participate in debates and could also concentrate on any subject. Since childhood, a teacher must encourage children to be attentive in studies and extracurricular activities because these activities will improve the students' skills, such as team management, communication, and others. Teachers must teach children about physical fitness and encourage exercises from the beginning. They must teach them how to focus on various subjects through different games and activities, as it will improve their concentration. Later, when Swamiji became well known, he used to say,

¹Writings, Prose and Poems, What we believe in, (C.W.4.358)

“Do you think you can teach even a child? You cannot. The child teaches himself. Your duty is to afford opportunities and to remove obstacles. A plant grows. Do you make the plant grow? Your duty is to put a hedge round it and see that no animal eats up the plant, and there your duty ends. The plant grows of itself. So it is in regard to the spiritual growth of every man. None can teach you; none can make a spiritual man of you. You have to teach yourself; your growth must come from inside.”²

Thirst for knowledge:

Swami Vivekananda used to participate in discussions and ask questions actively and thus gained proficiency in different topics; from science, philosophy, history, literature, and sports to music. Teachers must take this as an example of how a child excels at multiple things. How can a person become a multifaceted genius? This is only possible through immense love for knowledge and a concentrated mind. As a teacher, they must be an ideal to the children and create interest in subjects. Teachers must encourage children to gain knowledge to perform well in the examinations rather than relying on their rote memory. As a student, Swami Vivekananda read many books beyond the syllabus and exams. Teachers must teach children how to improve concentration by different methods. One incident stands out in the life of Swamiji. When he was wandering across India, he went to a particular library and studied many books within a short period. The library officer was shocked and asked him questions from these books, and to his surprise, Swamiji answered all of them.³ This might amaze many people. Swamiji himself said, “I did have a power and this is it — never once in my life did I allow myself to have even one sexual thought. I trained my mind, my thinking, and the powers that man usually uses along that line I put into

²Practical Vedanta and other lectures, The Ideal of a Universal Religion, (C.W.5.385-7th ed.)

³My India, The India Eternal, Memorable events in the life of S.V., Pg-163

a higher channel, and it developed a force so strong that nothing could resist it.”⁴ Concentration is essential to gaining knowledge, so teachers must teach children these values and the ability to develop a pure mind. They must show the examples of great people who were committed to their cause and gained the highest wisdom. Such great scientists, scholars, and philosophers had great control over their minds. Teachers must give examples of great leaders along with subject knowledge. Children should be encouraged to participate in debates on various issues in the country to understand the importance of service to society. It will change the child’s thought process to do something for the nation and inculcate patriotism.

Moral values: Our system educates children in different subjects, but day by day, there is a problem of dehumanization and loss of moral values due to modernization. The system teaches children from childhood to obtain marks in subjects, but they are not trained in moral values. Since childhood, Swami Vivekananda was truthful and devoted. A country’s future depends on the character of its children. A teacher must teach the importance of truth, purity, and perseverance through examples. Such teachings, once imparted, will give rise to great personalities in this country.

Being Courageous: As a young student, Swamiji faced many terrible situations because of his father’s demise. Though brave and intelligent, yet, he needed a proper job for his family’s livelihood. He used to roam from one office to the other for a job. Though he did not get a job, he did not become weak; he faced that terrible situation with courage. Nowadays, children become restless for pitiful things. The classroom discussions should include real-life examples of Swamiji-like personalities; it will inspire them to face adverse situations and achieve their goals.

⁴Sayings and Utterances,37 (C.W.9)

Teachers must teach them about courage, strength, and determination. This can be done through various activities such as drama, monologue, and fancy-dress competitions; teachers must make them understand the greatness of our leaders. Make them recite notable speeches and teachings on special occasions, inculcating interest in moral values and life skills. Swami Vivekananda has often pointed out that we must teach children with love because their minds are so gentle. We must give them strength in many ways, and they will stand on their own feet and do wonderful things for the nation. He had a great team of brother monks and disciples whom he loved. Even though he was meticulous in following the truth, he was always gentle and humble with others. We must teach children to respect others and to be humble and kind. Teachers must involve children in shramdaan (hard-working) and other service-oriented activities to instill humility.

Swami Vivekananda is a great personality who inspired many people and still inspires the younger generation to achieve the highest goals. His teachings provide guidelines for classroom discussions and learning in general. The teachers shoulder the grave responsibility of inculcating morality in students along with the subjective knowledge of the world. This will help us achieve Swamiji's dream of making our nation a Viswa-guru Bharath. Swamiji once said, "We want that education by which character is formed, strength of mind is increased, intellect is expanded, and one can stand on one's own feet."⁵

⁵The Loss of Shraddha in India, Shri Surendra Nath Sen, IV, (C.W.5.342-7th ed.)

III

My Tryst with Sri Ramakrishna

G.L. Krishna

Ayurveda physician and Homi Bhabha Fellow; Visiting Scholar, IISc

“Water does not stick to these leaves!” I remember having gleefully wondered during my first visit to Bengaluru’s Ramakrishna Math as an eight year-old kid. The small water garden in front of the main shrine, with its lilies and lotuses, was the cynosure of my eyes back then.

Years passed and I chanced to visit the Math again as a teenager. Annual youth meets are a regular feature at the Math and I volunteered to represent our school at one such meet with a few like-minded friends. This time though, the impact of the Math’s commanding serenity on my adolescent psyche was deep. I vividly recollect my tense face relaxing to its natural poise in response to the soothing smile of a senior monk there. After buying a few booklets from the stall, I finished this second visit with a vague sense that the place had a lasting relevance for me.



Although temperamentally quite cheerful, I grew up into a young adult with an understanding that life, as it is ordinarily lived, has little fulfilment to offer. This understanding alongside its concomitant quest for transcendence made me look for a degree course that taught Vedanta.

Ayurveda appeared promising and I enrolled myself as a student at the Ayurveda College in Bengaluru. My modest scores in the pre-university exams only facilitated this!

The first year course had a major paper on Indian philosophy and this is where the publications of the Ramakrishna Math came in handy. The *Sankhya Karika*, the *Yoga Sutras*, and some of Vivekananda's lectures were among the first books I browsed through as a new undergraduate student. Vivekananda became attractive. His radiant face, self-confident demeanour, and courageous rashness were all qualities I romanticised. He appeared dashing in contrast to what I then saw as the dull introversion of his master!

By this time, I had become a regular at the evening bhajan meetings of the Math. Slowly but surely, Ramakrishna had started creeping in. I yielded to his silent intimations and decided to have a tryst. With a hundred rupees as gift from my grandmother, I bought the first volume of *Ramakrishna Vachanaveda*, the Kannada translation of the Bengali classic *Kathamrita*.

Vachanaveda was not a mere book; it was Ramakrishna himself in lyrical form. I began spending evening after evening in the living presence of that "mad brahmin". His divine madness felt good and deeply comforting. He seemed to speak playfully from a plane of truth that was at once native and awe-inspiring. Its nativeness made him my friend, the awe it inspired made him my god!

The last days of Ramakrishna is an episode etched deeply in my mind. The pain that metastasising cancer brings is too excruciating to be described. But this frail old man responded to that pain with ever-increasing ecstatic godliness. *Vachanaveda* records that Ramakrishna's room during those days was a mart of joy! The more he suffered, the more godliness he seemed to exude.

Having seen this sage of Dakshineshwar, I now know why water does not stick to some blessed leaves.

Invited talk of Dr. GL Krishna at VSC, IISc



IV

Vivekananda's Quest for a Rational Religion

G.L. Krishna

Ayurveda physician and Homi Bhabha Fellow; Visiting Scholar, IISc

Having seen his guru Ramakrishna Paramahansa live a life of divine felicity, the young Narendranath became deeply convinced of the truth of religious experience. His modern education, on the other hand, had proved beyond doubt the epistemic value of rationality. The challenge before the young mind under the sway of these seemingly contrary forces was to achieve their reconciliation.



Dr. G.L.Krishna

After the guru's demise, Narendranath sought the guidance of Pramadadasa Mitra, a well-known Varanasi-based scholar, to see if scriptures could help him achieve this momentous reconciliation. He exchanged several letters in which he candidly laid bare the doubts haunting his eager mind. His discomfort with scriptural authority becomes amply clear in one of those letters. "In whom are we to put our faith? Everybody seems to be mad about establishing his own view; if, according to Vyasa, even the great Muni Kapila is deeply involved in error, then is there a guarantee that Vyasa may not be so involved in a greater measure?"⁶ he pointedly asks.

Expectedly, no easy answers were available. The problem of scriptural authority versus rationality continued to bother him. Later in life, he made attempts in a few of his books, like *Raja Yoga*, to solve it. He tried to provide a scientifically tenable basis for yogic philosophies, and in the process, advanced several speculations, some of which

⁶Epistles-Second Series(C.W.6.212-6th Ed.)

were overtly baseless.

The sharpness and sincerity of his mind, however, would not let these flaws go unacknowledged. Writing to his young disciple Alasinga, Swamiji, with his characteristic frankness, admitted: “My speculations, of course, are awfully bold; a good deal of them will ever remain meaningless...Nevertheless, I am quite satisfied with the result. Let them talk badly of me if they please, but let them talk!”⁷

The tenacity of his commitment to rationality had its roots in his quest for a universal religion. Truth had to be universal. He knew well that universality sans rationality is oxymoronic. He once made a memorably sweeping statement on this matter: “Is religion to justify itself by the discoveries of reason, through which every other science justifies itself? Are the same methods of investigation that we apply to sciences and knowledge outside, to be applied to science of religion? In my opinion this must be so...If a religion is destroyed by such investigations, it was then all the time useless, unworthy superstition, and the sooner it goes the better. I am thoroughly convinced that its destruction would be the best thing that could happen. All that is dross will be taken off, no doubt, but the essential parts of religion will emerge triumphant out of this investigation.”⁸

Although Vivekananda had a strong intuitive grasp of the Vedantic truth, its full rational articulation seemed to remain elusive to him. This fact does not diminish the great life of inspiration and service he lived. It would, if anything, only ennoble the humanness of his interiors and the reasonableness of his worldview.

The greatness of a man lies not in the finality of his success as much as in the loftiness of his aspirations and the sincerity of his struggles. All

⁷Epistles - First Series,LXIX Alasinga (C.W.5.118-7th ed.)

⁸Lectures And Discourses, Reason And Religion (C.W.1.367-1st ed.)

through his intensely active life, Vivekananda exemplified such loftiness and sincerity. For these qualities, he continues to command our admiration.

Swami Nikhileshwarananda ji Maharaj at IISc



V

Why should I serve society?

Nachiketa Deshmukh,

Ph.D. student, IIT Kanpur

The G20 summit recently concluded in New Delhi was a festive occasion for many of us. Most of us are aware that something grand has happened in Delhi. The logo of the G20 summit and its tagline were selected for this year after much deliberation from the concerned people. The tagline was – वसुधैव कुटम्बकम्, loosely translated as the whole Earth is a family. Below the G20 logo, they wrote six words – One Earth, One Family, One Future. Let us take a moment to think about these six words. The first four words indicate that we, all occupants of earth, are related to each other in one way or another. We are all connected in some sense and more importantly, we share the same future. This statement means if the future for some of us is not bright, then the future for all of us is also dull.

We even got a taste of this philosophy recently in COVID-19. A person sitting in Mumbai may wonder why I should care for some virus in some corner of China. However, time has proven that they need to care as the same virus may come to get them. In another instance, India provided a part of its initial vaccine stock to frontline health workers in neighboring developing nations. These workers have heavy exposure to viral loads due to their profession. Hence, the virus may mutate rapidly inside their body to the extent that the vaccine may not be effective. Therefore, it becomes essential to help these workers as soon as possible. Hence, it is vital to ensure the health of surrounding countries to ensure India's health.

If this philosophy applies to all countries at a global scale, this is equally applicable to us – parts of the society living together in India. If

we want to ensure our safety, we must ensure the safety of each part of the society in India. If we need to ensure our happiness and prosperity, we must ensure the happiness and prosperity of each part of the society in India. Unless the future is bright for everyone, it will also not be so for us. This idea can be our motivation to start serving society. Our self-experiences get enriched as we start serving our society. We have a better perspective on our problems and more sensitivity to those around us. Even if we have setbacks on the way to the goal, there is a sense of purpose behind our actions. This sense of purpose helps us to figure out alternative paths. In life, we will always have things that we can do and things that we can't do. The real problems start when the latter stops us from doing the former. We can easily avoid this grave trap by having a purpose in life. If we look at it, we are indeed serving ourselves in serving society.

Swami Bodhmayananda ji Maharaj at IISc



VI

Swami Vivekananda and Shraddha

Avaneesh Athreya Varanasi,

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श्रद्धावान् लभते ज्ञानं तत्परः संयतेन्द्रियः ।
ज्ञानं लब्ध्वा परां शान्तिमचिरेणाधिगच्छति ॥ ॥ (Gita-4.39)

“Upon controlling one’s mind and senses, a person with Shraddha attains divine knowledge. They quickly attain everlasting supreme peace through such transcendental knowledge”, says the Gita-acharya in the above shloka. Shraddha is considered a primary requirement in an individual’s spiritual journey. Adi-Shankaracharya defines Shraddha in Vivekachudamani as “शास्त्रस्य गुरुवाक्यस्य सत्यबुद्ध्यावधारणा । सा श्रद्धा कथिता सद्विद्यया वस्तूपलभ्यते ॥” which translates to – “Shraddha is, acceptance by firm judgement as true of what scriptures and Guru instructs; by means of Shraddha one perceives the reality.” It is that strong conviction that the path shown by the Shastras and the Guru will never go unproductive that goes by the name of Shraddha. Whenever we have direct proof, faith is not required. However, many religious concepts lack direct proof, and some may contradict our observations. For instance, ‘the idea that meritorious actions lead to good and sinful actions lead to bad’ is a common principle shared by all religions. However, what we observe in the world is often contradictory, with people who do good suffering and those who do evil thriving. In response, our scriptures propose that the consequences of good and bad actions are not immediate but rather unfold over multiple lifetimes. Since this cannot be proven, Shraddha is necessary to accept this concept and oth-



Mr. Avaneesh Athreya

ers similar to it.

Swami Vivekananda believed that every individual must develop Shraddha since it is Shraddha that makes a man great and another weak. While delivering a lecture in America on the topic “Steps to realisation”, Swamiji says, “One must have tremendous faith in religion and God. Until one has it, one cannot aspire to be a Jnani. A great sage once told me that not one in twenty millions in this world believed in God. I asked him why, and he told me, ‘Suppose there is a thief in this room, and he gets to know that there is a mass of gold in the next room, and only a very thin partition between the two rooms; what will be the condition of that thief?’ I answered, ‘He will not be able to sleep at all; his brain will be actively thinking of some means of getting at the gold, and he will think of nothing else.’ Then he replied, ‘Do you believe that a man could believe in God and not go mad to get him? If a man sincerely believes that there is that immense, infinite mine of Bliss, and that it can be reached, would not that man go mad in his struggle to reach it?’ Strong faith in God and the consequent eagerness to reach Him constitute Shraddha.”⁹

It is well known that Swami Vivekananda was a patriot. He attributed the country’s downfall to the lack of Shraddha in our own culture. When asked how we as a nation came to lose this Shraddha, Swamiji says that our skewed education constantly undermines our culture, heritage and significance ¹⁰. We are rarely taught about great individuals born in our country. Instead, we focus on learning about the ancestors of others while neglecting our heritage. As a result, we’ve internalised weakness and believe we lack independence. This negative mindset has led to losing Shraddha, or faith in ourselves. As Swamiji pointed out,

⁹Lectures and Discourses, Steps to Realisation(C.W.1.407-1st ed.)

¹⁰Conversations and Dialogues, The loss of shraddha in India, Shri Surendra Nath Sen, 22nd January, 1898(C.W.5.332-7th ed.)

to overcome our country's problems, we need to revive Shraddha and believe in our potential, allowing us to find solutions on our own. Therefore, be it an individual's spiritual growth or a nation's growth towards excellence, Shraddha in our Shastras and, more so, on ourselves is indispensable.

To preach the doctrine of Shraddha or genuine faith is the mission of my life.¹¹

Swami Vivekananda

Swamini Divyanandaprana mataji at IISc



¹¹The influence of Indian spiritual thought in England, Lectures from Columbo to Almora (C.W.3.444-9th ed.)

VII

Building Characters, Building Nation

Bhabani Shankar Dey,

Post Doc, RBCCPS, IISc

In the quest of achieving excellence the human civilisation has come a long way. The society excelled in every possible field ranging from science, technology, to finance and health sector. In today's rapidly evolving society, the importance of human character building cannot be overstated. As technology advances and global interconnectedness increases, the need for individuals to possess strong moral and ethical foundations becomes paramount. Character building fosters qualities such as integrity, empathy, resilience, and accountability, which are essential for navigating the complexities of modern life. These traits not only enhance personal development and well-being but also contribute to creating a more harmonious society. By prioritizing character education, communities can cultivate responsible citizens who are equipped to face challenges with wisdom and compassion, ultimately leading to a more stable and prosperous world. Unfortunately, modern education system is yet to incorporate this value addition into the curriculum. However, Swamiji ingrained the very notion of character building, a cornerstone of nation building



Dr. Bhabani Shankar Dey

Swami Vivekananda, a towering personality in the history of Indian spirituality, philosophy, and reform, emphasized the importance of character building as the foundation for a fulfilling life and a prosperous

society. His teachings offer a timeless guide for personal development, moral integrity, and social responsibility. He has a strong belief that self-discipline is the foundation of a strong character. He was an example of self-control and control over impulses. We can develop resilience and accountability by practicing self-control over our ideas, deeds, and feelings. According to him, “The greatest religion is to be true to your own nature.”¹² Have faith in yourselves.

One of Vivekananda’s most powerful messages was the call to cultivate inner strength and courage. Every individual possesses an immense inner power, a reservoir of strength and huge potential waiting to be harnessed. This inner power is the wellspring of resilience, creativity, and determination that allows people go beyond boundaries. The world within is infinite, may be bigger than the outer one. He was always vocal about looking inside of self. It is fuelled by self-belief, positive thinking, and a deep understanding of one’s values and desires. When tapped into, this inner power can transform challenges into opportunities, propelling individuals towards higher aspirations. Embracing and nurturing this inner strength not only leads to personal fulfilment but also inspires others, creating an impact of empowerment and positivity. He urged individuals to face challenges head-on with confidence and bravery. His famous words, “Arise, awake, and stop not till the goal is reached,”¹³ inspire us to pursue our goals with determination and to overcome obstacles with unwavering resolve. Strength, both physical and mental, is crucial for building a robust character.

As we belong to one of the supreme educational institutions of the country, it is important to note that Swamiji emphasized the importance of holistic education that goes beyond academic achievement. He believed that true education is the manifestation of the perfection already

¹²Mohammed, Lectures and Discourses (C.W.1.483-1st ed.)

¹³The Real Nature of Man, Jnana Yoga(C.W.2.87-14th ed.)

within us. Knowledge should empower individuals to develop their intellect, moral values, and spiritual understanding. He said, “Education is the manifestation of the perfection already in man.”¹⁴ By pursuing knowledge with humility and curiosity, we can cultivate wisdom and integrity.

Service to others, or “seva,” was a core tenet of Vivekananda’s philosophy. He believed that selfless service is a path to become a higher being. By helping others, we develop compassion, empathy, and a sense of interconnectedness. Vivekananda’s message, “They only live, who live for others, the rest are more dead than alive,”¹⁵ encourages us to contribute positively to society and to prioritize the welfare of others. From our birth, the society, the mother earth has been offering so much to nurture us. One of the effective ways to give it back is serving the mankind and society.

Honesty and integrity were the fundamental principles in Swamiji’s teachings. He believed that truthfulness is essential for a strong character. By being honest with ourselves and others, we build trust and credibility. Vivekananda’s insistence on integrity inspires us to uphold moral values and to act with righteousness in all aspects of life. He said, “Truth can be stated in a thousand different ways, yet each one can be true.”¹⁶ Vivekananda’s teachings are deeply rooted in spirituality and faith. He encouraged individuals to seek a higher purpose and to cultivate a connection with the divine. This spiritual grounding provides a sense of direction and meaning in life. Vivekananda taught that faith in oneself and in a higher power fosters inner peace and moral fortitude. His famous quote, “You cannot believe in God until you believe in yourself,”¹⁷ highlights the importance of self-confidence in spiritual

¹⁴What we believe in, Writings:Prose (C.W.4.358-12th ed.)

¹⁵Our duty to the masses, Writings: Prose (C.W.4.365)

¹⁶Sayings and Utterances (C.W.5.410-7th ed.)

¹⁷Sayings and Utterances (C.W.5.409-7th ed.)

growth.

In a developing nation like us youth has been the powerhouse. For the youth of nation, he has been instrumental in shaping their faith and idea. Perseverance and hard work are essential virtues in Vivekananda's philosophy. He believed that sustained effort and dedication are necessary for achieving success and building character. By persevering through difficulties and maintaining a strong work ethic, we develop resilience and a sense of accomplishment. His message, "Take up one idea. Make that one idea your life think of it, dream of it, live on that idea. Let the brain, muscles, nerves, every part of your body, be full of that idea, and just leave every other idea alone. This is the way to success,"¹⁸ underscores the importance of focus and persistence. His interpretation of Vedanta emphasized universal values, spirituality, and the importance of self-realization. The sense of oneness, the concept of Advaita Vedanta was one of his major contributions to path of life. The deeper we delve into his teachings the more we unveil truths, important life lessons. No matter how science has developed, it is yet to be capable enough to realise the teachings.

Swami Vivekananda played a pivotal role in nation-building, particularly in the context of India, through his teachings, philosophy, and vision for a revitalized society. Here are some of the key areas from the uncountably many, he has contributed towards building a society of harmony. Vivekananda worked to revive Hinduism, presenting it as a rational and modern religion that could contribute to personal and social growth. Through his speeches and writings, Vivekananda inspired a sense of pride and confidence in Indian culture and heritage. He called for the awakening of the nation's youth, urging them to work for the betterment of the country. Swamiji championed social reforms, particularly concerning the upliftment of the marginalized sections of society.

¹⁸Prathyahara and Dharana, Raja Yoga (C.W.1.77-12th ed.)

He spoke against caste discrimination and worked towards creating a more inclusive and equitable society.

His participation in the Parliament of the World's Religions in USA in 1893 helped place India on the global stage, fostering intercultural dialogue and understanding. His message of universal brotherhood and tolerance had a lasting impact worldwide. He established the Ramakrishna Mission, an organization dedicated to social service and spiritual education. The mission continues to play a significant role in educational and humanitarian efforts across India and beyond. Swami Vivekananda's contributions laid the foundation for a modern, progressive, and self-reliant India, inspiring countless individuals to work towards the nation's development.

The nation today should ingrain the teachings of Swami in current education system. A few of his lessons if can be materialised will change the society manifold. As the future of our beloved nation, we as youth should indulge in following the great teachings of Swamiji. Slightest of effort towards realising the teachings will undoubtedly create a bright tomorrow, better workforce.

VSC-IISc members at a spiritual trip to Srirangapattana in 2017



VSC-IISc members with Swami Paramasukhanandaji Maharaj
Secretary, Ramakrishna Mission, Villupuram, Tamilnadu



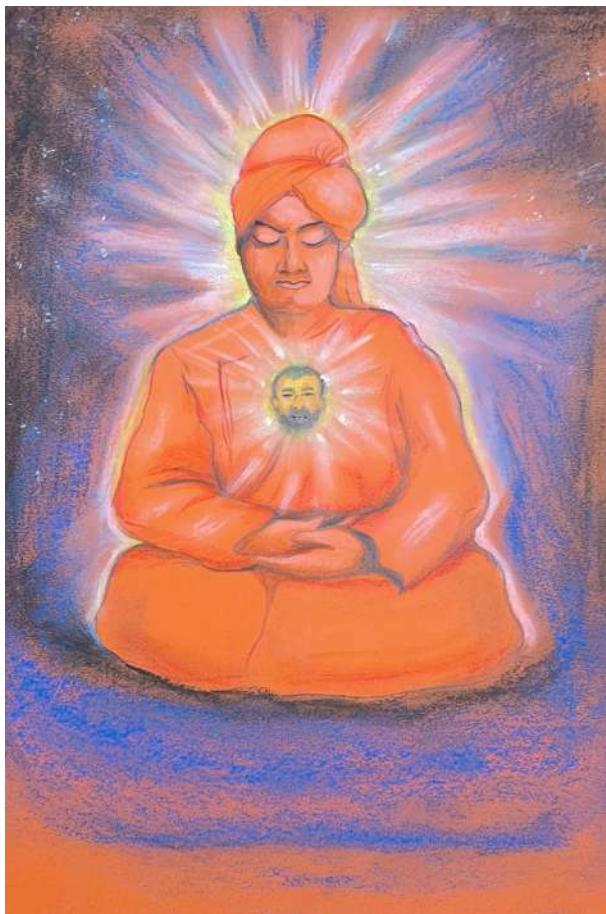


“Be not afraid of anything. You will do marvellous work. It is fear that is the great cause of misery in the world. It is fear that is the greatest of all superstitions. It is fear that is the cause of all our woes, and it is fearlessness that brings heaven even in a moment. Therefore, “arise, awake and stop not until the goal is reached.”¹⁹

Swami Vivekananda

¹⁹ Address of Welcome presented at Calcutta and reply, Lectures from Columbo to Almora (C.W.3.321-9th ed.)

Art by Debdyuti Bhadra, Int. Ph.D., IISc



“The whole secret of knowledge is concentration.”²⁰

Swami Vivekananda

²⁰Notes of lectures and classes, The religion of India (C.W.9)



“Let us all work hard, my brethren; this is no time for sleep. On our work depends the coming of the India of the future. She is there ready waiting. She is only sleeping. Arise and awake, and see her seated here, on her eternal throne, rejuvenated, more glorious than she ever was — this motherland of ours.”²¹

Swami Vivekananda

²¹Reply to the address of Welcome at Ramnad, Lectures from Columbo to Almora(C.W.3.154-7th ed.)

Art by Smt.Pooja Jagtap, Maharashtra



"Be bold and fear not. It is only in our scriptures that this adjective is given unto the Lord — Abhih, Abhih. We have to become Abhih, fearless, and our task will be done. Arise, awake, for your country needs this tremendous sacrifice. It is the young men that will do it. The young, the energetic, the strong, the well-built, the intellectual — for them is the task."²²

Swami Vivekananda

²²Address of Welcome presented at Calcutta and reply, Lectures from Columbo to Almora(C.W.3.332-7th ed.)

NOTES



Conch in the sea indicates knowledge being ruminated and discussed in a small group. Sun indicates manifestation of the knowledge in all spheres of life. The lotus around indicates love for God and all living beings. The guiding motto for the Study Circle is the Upanishad statement, “Uttishtthata Jaagrata” - “Arise Awake” as explained by Swami Vivekananda. “Arise” indicates study and work for the welfare of the world. “Awake” indicates developing spiritual knowledge.