

YUVA BHARATI

VOICE OF YOUTH

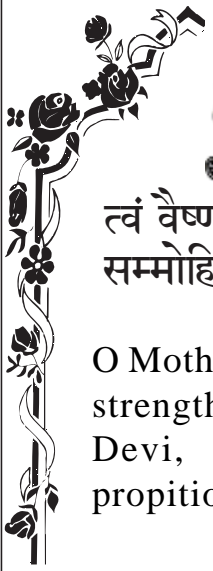


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Editorial	B.Nivedita	04	
Attitudinal Expansion	Dr.K.Subrahmanyam	09	
Dadhichi	N.Krishnamoorti	13	
Dr.Radha Nath Phukan	Dr.Pradip Sarma	16	
Living in Harmony	Swami Mitranandaji	19	
V.K.Samachar	--	31	
Then! Let us get Converted	Satish Chowkulkar	34	

Shall India die? Then from the world all spirituality will be extinct; all moral perfection will be extinct..such a thing can never be.

-- Swami Vivekananda

प्रार्थना INVOCATION

त्वं वैष्णवी शक्तिरनन्तवीर्या विश्वस्य बीजं परमाऽसि माया ।
 सम्मोहितं देवि समस्तमेतत् त्वं वै प्रसन्ना भुवि मुक्ति हेतुः ॥

O Mother, the great primal Energy, the source of infinite strength, the seed of the world, and illusion divine. O Devi, you have enchanted the whole universe. Be propitious and bestow salvation upon us.

—Devimahatmya, XI, 4.

EDITORIAL



Vedanta: The basis of Universal Brotherhood

The month of September brings to us the memory of 11 September 2001 when the WTC was hit by Muslim terrorist killing many innocent persons, thus underscoring the need to work for avoiding such acts of terrorism. But for anyone rooted in Indian ethos, the month of September brings the memory of that glorious 11 September in 1893, when Swami Vivekananda gave the world famous address at the Parliament of Religions. The exclusive religions says "My religion alone is true". So those who do not subscribe to that view have no right even to exist and so should be destroyed. On this day when Swami Vivekananda stressed that the exclusive approach in religions cannot bring peace and brotherhood, and instead it would lead to

bloodshed and violence, he wanted India which has an inclusive approach to religion to take the lead in establishing it in the world. But for that the leading persons – the elite in the country should be confident of the purpose of India and her Sanatana Dharma, which unfortunately is not the case.

Mananeeya Eknathji named the celebration of 11 September – the day Swami Vivekananda spoke first in the Parliament of Religions - as Universal Brotherhood Day. Why did he do so? Eknathji started Vivekananda Kendra as a thought movement. The work of Vivekananda Kendra should add to the efforts of correcting the thinking of the Macaulayites in our society as they are in the forefront and also dominate the intellectual space in our country.

Due to the Macaulayan education, our capacity to understand our strength, the life-giving principles and the purpose of our nation is impaired. Eknathji wrote, ***"The remedy for the ills of our country, therefore, lies in launching a mighty movement of right thought sweeping the entire country. It has to be a two-pronged move. On the one hand, it is to be aimed at (1) transforming our people's inherent God-wardness into the right spiritual urge rising out of the teachings of the Upanishads, namely, (a) each soul is potentially divine and (b) faith in God, in turn means faith in one's self, i.e. in one's potentiality to rise to divine heights. On the other hand, it is (2) to convert the spiritual fervour thus released into works of national reconstruction."***

Thus the work of the Kendra is to direct the thinking of the elite on the lines of our Sanatana Dharma. Eknathji held the Upanishadic principles as the basis of our work because it was these principles which Swami Vivekananda propounded in the West in front of the elite of the world. When the elite in the West appreciated Swami Vivekananda's exposition, the elite in our country also was shaken out of their slavish mentality.

Universal Brotherhood is possible only in Sanatana Dharma – i.e. in the Upanishadic Principles. How is it so, has to be understood by every Hindu.

The Brotherhood is possible based on principles and not personalities

We see Christianity claims Jesus as the saviour of humanity. But to prove that point – Christianity has been exterminating communities after communities in the world! Millions were killed in Europe, America and Africa in the name of Jesus. Islam talks of brotherhood but no Muslim country or Muslims in any country live in peace with others. They are always at war. It is not possible to bring humanity to the path of one God with one name. Diversity is the rule of nature. So how humanity can be brought together in brotherhood? It is only in the unifying principle which lies beyond the apparent diversity that humanity can be made to come together. Swami Vivekananda said, "*I have become used to hear all sorts of wonderful claims put forward in favour of every religion under the sun. ..Let me lay before you my reasons why I think that it is Vedanta, and Vedanta*

alone, that can become the universal religion of man, and that no other is fitted for the role. Every one of the great religions in the world excepting our own, is built on historical characters but ours rest upon principles...It is in vain... to gather all the peoples of the world around a single personality. ...If it ever becomes possible to bring the largest portion of humanity to one way of thinking in regard to religion, mark you, it must be always through principles and not through persons."

Compatible with modern science

Our Sanatana Dharma – the Dharma practiced by Hindus and so also called as Hindu Dharma – is based on Upanishadic principles which are compatible with science, with the rational aspirations and convictions of modern man. Swami Vivekananda said, "*...The second claim of the Vedanta upon the attention of the world is that, of all the scriptures in the world, it is the one scripture the teaching of which is in entire harmony with the results that have been attained by the modern scientific investigation of external nature.*"

India: Where the search of One led to great principle

Swami Vivekananda explains in one of his lectures how in the world history, the search for the One was always there whether in religion or in science. In other lands as different tribes came in contact with each other, they were puzzled by the existence of the Gods of others. Till then they used to think that their God is the only true and great God. There could not be two

rulers or two creators of the world! There has to be only 'One'; all others have to be false. Only one has to be the greatest God. Who was it? Naturally each tribe claimed that its God was the greatest. To prove that, started the wars of domination in the name of God, each group claiming its God alone as the only True God, the Ruler of the World, the most powerful, etc. Swamiji asserted, *"And I am sure, most of you know the amount of bloodshed, of tyranny, and of brutal savagery that this religious conquest entailed."* As we know, it still is the reason, whether the wars in Iraq or Israel or the senseless bomb blasts by the Muslim terrorists in Mumbai on 11 July 2006 or 11 September 2001 when the twin towers of WTC were hit. The search for the One Greatest God has gone wrong. The claim of only One God being true cannot bring peace or brotherhood; it has caused till now only bloodshed of the innocent.

In India too the search for the greatest God - the One - started and fortunately for India and even for the whole humanity, the sages here did not conclude that only our God had to be the suprememost and so its authority had to be established. They saw it was One which has manifested as many. Really it was the greatest discovery for the survival and brotherhood of humanity. Swamiji says beautifully, *"India alone was to be, of all lands, the land of toleration and of spirituality; and therefore the fight between tribes and their gods did not long take place here. For one of the greatest sages that was ever born found out here in India even at that distant time, which history cannot reach and into*

whose gloom even tradition itself dares not peep – in that distant time the sage arose and declared, 'Ekam sad viprah bahudha vadanti'. - 'He who exists is One; the sages call him variously.' This is one of the most memorable sentences that was ever uttered, one of the grandest truths that was ever discovered. And for us Hindus this truth has been the very backbone of our national existence."

The spiritual oneness: The basis of brotherhood and upliftment

It is not only that God is One who appears differently, or is called by different names by the sages, but that man also though having separate body-mind complex, is sharing the same spiritual oneness with all. It is that One which has expressed as many; therefore, though apparently we are different, spiritually we are one. The real nature of each one of us is Divine, is Ishvara. In this realization there is not just brotherhood but oneness with all. This great principle of Vedanta we have to give to the world for ushering in Universal Brotherhood. We have to apply this principle within our country to raise our masses, to be one with them who were neglected for centuries during foreign invasions. Swami Vivekananda said, *"The other great idea that the world wants from us today ... is the eternal grand idea of the spiritual oneness of the whole universe... It is the one great life-giving idea which the world wants from us today, and which the mute masses of India want for their uplifting, for none can regenerate this land of ours without the practical application and effective operation of this ideal of the oneness of things."*

The spiritual oneness: The sound basis for morality and ethics

Brotherhood is possible if everyone behaves responsibly and with concern for others. A fear of Satan or the commandments of any personage cannot make man to be moral and ethical perpetually. The morality and ethics should have sound basis. Swami Vivekananda said, *“The rational West is earnestly bent upon seeking out the rationality of all its philosophy and its ethics; and you all know well that ethics cannot be derived from mere sanction of any personages, however great and divine he may have been. Such an explanation of the authority of ethics appeals no more to be the highest of the world’s thinkers; they want something more than human sanction for ethical principle of truth as the sanction of ethics. ...The infinite oneness of the Soul is the eternal sanction of all morality, that you and I are not only brothers but that you and me are really one. ...This oneness is the rationale of all ethics and all spirituality.”* **Religious awakening means experiencing the presence of God in one’s own self and in the world and not exploiting the world or bombing innocent women and children out of existence.** Understanding of spiritual oneness makes one conscious of the divine within and urges him to work for its unfoldment and enables him to grow spiritually. Simultaneously, it generates in him a sense of oneness with God’s creation and, consequently, an intense fellow-feeling for the members of

his own species – the human race – and prompts him to work with zest for human welfare and progress. Vedanta provides the sound and rational basis for ethics in personal and social life.

Thus, we see that Universal Brotherhood is rooted in Vedanta – in Sanatana Dharma. Therefore the function of Universal Brotherhood is to point out two things: how exclusive approach in religions lead to bloodshed. Secondly, it is to stress these life-giving, inclusive principles of Sanatana Dharma. Eknathji had written in one of his letters, *“The main theme of my life is to take the message of Sanatana Dharma to every home and pave the way for launching in a big way the man-making programme preached and envisaged by great seers like Swami Vivekananda.”*

Howsoever great may be the message of Sanatana Dharma, unless the Hindu society is strong and united to deliver it, it will not make any impact especially on the people blinded with exclusive religious zeal. It was for that that Swami Vivekananda stressed on organization, organization, and organization. It was for that, that Eknathji started Vivekananda Kendra. It is for this that our work is not just to carry the message of Sanatana Dharma but to bring more and more persons into the organizational fold. Even after having the philosophy and the technique to bring in Universal Brotherhood if we do not do our duty, then it would be a betrayal of the whole humanity.



--NIVEDITA

ATTITUDINAL EXPANSION

DR. K.SUBRAHMANYAM

Water assumes the form of the container. It also gets the name or nomenclature of the vessel in which it is present. For example: water in a spoon is called spoon water. The same quantity of water, when poured into a glass, becomes glass water. And the contents of the glass when emptied into a jar, will be jar water. The same when placed in a tank, becomes tank water. The tank water, when added to a lake, becomes the lake water. And the same water when directed towards a river, becomes the river water. And the same water, when it flows into and merges with the sea, becomes the sea water. The spoon water can become the sea water if it can rise towards or flow into or merge with a larger container.

Every machine invariably has nuts and bolts. The capacity of the nuts and bolts may vary. In small machines there may be nuts and bolts of very small size and strength. And a very huge machine may also have small parts, which require to be fastened with very small nuts and bolts. A bicycle moves on the road and it has small nuts and bolts in it. Similar small nuts and bolts are available in a moped, which moves faster on roads. Two wheelers, three wheelers and four wheelers also have such nuts and bolts. In the trains too there are small nuts and bolts. Finally the aeroplane that flies in the vast skies also has the same nuts and bolts. The nuts and bolts of the bicycle move slowly with the small machine on the road. But the same

bolts and nuts, which are fitted on the aeroplane, are privileged to fly along with the

aircraft in the open sky. Nuts and bolts are the same in all machines. They are of the same size and capacity. But the machines, which contain them, are different. One is on the road, another is on the rails; yet another is in the air. Blessed is the nut or bolt that has a place in the flying aircraft.

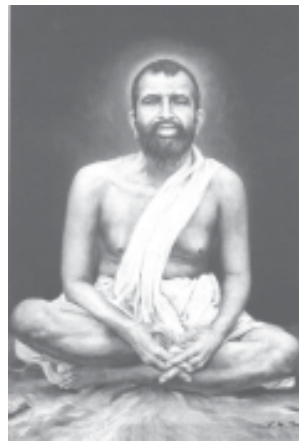
A man is in the habit of watering a plant every day. Without knowing anything about the nature of the plant, he has been watering it. It grows to a small size, develops a few flowers and fruits within a month or two and dies. Another person too has the habit of watering a plant. But the plant grows to a great height and is called a teak tree, fetching a large amount of profit to the person who has planted and watered it. A third person has also planted a different variety of plant and watered it every day. And that has grown into a huge tree giving shelter, fruit and flower for many years. The first person has watered and fostered a small plant of short life and it gives insignificant fruit. The second person has brought up a tree which is profitable. The third person has fostered a tree which is not only of benefit to the grower, but to the posterity and society at large. The labour and



sincerity put in by the three are the same. It is the plant that makes the difference. Effort is the same. But the yield is different.

The bull going round a grinding mill remains in the same place without covering any distance. Every day it walks several kilometres. But its labour is confined to the circular track around a grinding stone. If only it can come out of that beaten track and walk towards a goal it could have reached the peaks of success on the top of Mt.Kailas. It is not enough if we put in efforts ; our efforts should be with an aim, directed towards a goal. Anyhow we read, let us read for a purpose. Anyhow we live, let's live for a purpose.

Sri Ramakrishna observes: People shed tears for many worldly things. They weep for money, children, kith and kin and a host of transient objects and accidental relationships. If all those tears are shed for God , we are sure to be blessed with God-realization. A person seeking water should not get disturbed in mind and stop his effort if he fails to get it after digging for ten meters. If he digs at ten places for ten metres each, his labour may not bear fruit. If he can dig in the same place all the one hundred metres, he is sure to get water. Labour should not only be pointed towards a goal but ceaseless as well. Anyhow the seeker has dug in ten places for ten meters in each place. Instead if it is at, once place, it is bound to be fruitful. Aims are no aims if they are to alter or if they are not accompanied by tireless efforts.



A large number of people are engaged in a quarry cutting stones for building a magnificent temple nearby. A press reporter is curious to elicit the views of the workers. He meets a few of them and raises a few questions to know about their attitude towards the assigned work. He goes close to a worker who sits in a relaxed posture enjoying and smoking a beedi without doing the allotted work. The moment

the reporter approaches, he gets a little startled and resumes the work of stone cutting. To the enquiry of the reporter he replies, "I thought you are the supervisor. So I am a little afraid; I hate this work. I want to enjoy the smoke and be free always. But I should have some money to buy beedi. Therefore I come to do this work. Also I know no other work. As far as possible I avoid work and enjoy my smoke .

The second cutter is found cutting the stone reluctantly and with disgust. He tells the enquirer: The only work I am taught by my parents is this stone cutting. It is a laborious task. It is a dirty work. I hate it, but what can I do? I can't go away from my family; nor can I do any other work. So for my livelihood, I do this wretched work. Had my parents sent me to a computer training centre, I would have now been sitting in an A/C room earning a lot. It is my ill luck; I know not anything else.

The third worker welcomes the reporter and asks, "Sir you visit many places. Is there a better job available anywhere? I shall go there and do any work fetching me higher wages. For me money is important, not the nature of work, not even the place of work.

No other sentiment, except money is my guiding factor. I don't mind cutting stones for a church or mosque or even a tomb. Money, money is all-in-all for me."

The fourth person replies, "Sir, I am really lucky. I am blessed with an opportunity to contribute my mite in the temple construction. I am happy to be a tool of service to humanity and posterity. I am grateful to God for the great blessing; I am able to be useful in the sacred construction."

The fifth person has not even noticed the arrival of the reporter. He is engrossed in his work. After repeated shouts and disturbing claps, he looks at the enquirer and says, "please do not disturb me. I am with my God. While doing God's work, I see God and merge with God. For me work is worship; not only worship, I become one with the work which is worship and the deity worshipped by me through my work."

All are stone-cutters. Each has an attitude different from others. It is the positive attitude of divinity that elevates the work and the worker to a Godly state.

Anjaneya was an unknown warrior of valour, vigour and vitality until he submitted himself to the great work of Sri Rama. This unknown person, because of his submission to cosmic work, could assume a cosmic form. But for Rama's work, he would have remained an obscure vanara. Blessed are the people who have high ideals and who can associate themselves with great endeavours, activities and ideals.

Swami Vivekananda was born to Bhuvaneshwari as Narendranath. Then his

brothers and sisters were only a few. Later he grew to be a spiritual son of a spiritual mother called Sri Sarada Devi. Simultaneously, therefore, his brothers and sisters have increased in number. All the disciples of Sri Ramakrishna are the spiritual children of Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi. They automatically have become the brothers and sisters of Narendranath. Later, the same Narendranath rose to accept mother Bharath as his national mother. He wandered



throughout the country as the son of Mother Bharath. All the children, therefore, of Mother India have become his brothers and sisters. The same wandering monk or parivrajaka moved from East to West accepting the Cosmic Mother as his Universal Mother. Therefore, all the people, all over the globe have become his brothers and sisters. Therefore, on the 11th of September at the Parliament of Religions, when he stood up to address a huge gathering at Chicago, his heart had expanded to infinite love and he rained in a torrential ambrosia of all-embracing affection and Universal Brotherhood. 11th September, therefore, has become the Universal Brotherhood Day.





DADHICHI

N.KRISHNAMOORTI



Sumati: Brother, I have read in the Tamil sacred book Tirukkural that a selfish person keeps everything to himself. And a totally unselfish person gives away even his bones to others. Commentators have referred to Dadhichi here. Who is Dadhichi? What did he do?

Sumanta: Sister, Dadhichi is a Rik Vedic Rishi whose name appears in the Mahabharata also. Sometimes his name is spelt as Dadhicha. He was the son of the great hermit Bhrigu. He was made of the essences of the world with a huge body.

Sumati: What did he do to deserve the great fame he attained?

Sumanta: He was a great Tapasvin who meditated on the banks of the river Saraswati and got a son named Sarasvata. Dadhichi blessed his son, saying that when there was a drought continuously for twelve years, Sarasvata would have the power to bring rain.

Sumati: Oh. His Tapas could change the course of Nature too!

Sumanta: Yes. The Rik Veda mentions another episode. Once the world was tormented by a large number of Asuras. Indra, the head of Devas went to the Ashram of Dadhichi, in the Saranya country by the side of a lake. There, the head of a horse was found among the belongings of Dadhichi Muni. With the help of the bones of that horse-head, Indra

and Dadhichi destroyed a large number of Asuras.

Sumati: Now please describe the better known episode!

Sumanta: That famous episode occurs in the Mahabharata (Salya Parva). The Asuras went under the leadership of Vritrasura to fight with Lord Indra. Indra tried his utmost, to kill Vrittrasura, but he could not do so. When Indra approached Brahma for advice, the Lord of creation suggested that Indra receive from Dadhichi Muni, his bone, to forge out the weapon Vajrayudha.

Sumati: That means death for the Muni!

Sumanta: Yes, Indra, accompanied by Nara and Narayana, went to Dadhichi Muni's hermitage situated on the banks of the river Sarasvati. The sage was shining with his ojas of tapasya, and Indra bowed to him and explained his errand to the sage. The sage readily agreed to perform the act of supreme sacrifice, in order to serve the Devas. He gave up the body. Indra took the bone of Dadhichi and fashioned the Vajrayudha. With that strong weapon, Indra killed Vritra.

Sumati: What a great sacrifice! Evil can be overcome only through sacrifice. For the good of the society, a good person has to make the supreme sacrifice. Tapas is the source of all strength. Our National strength comes from Tapas and Selflessness.

Sumanta: Dadhichi was a great deovtee of Lord Shiva and has spoken to a Brahmin called Karuna, about the sacred Ashes of Shiva. Ashes symbolize Vairagya.

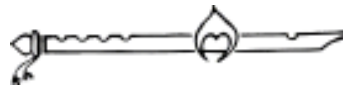
Sumati: What a great symbol of National culture the Vajrayudha is!

Sumanta: Bagini Nivedita says that the Trishula of Lord Shiva, Vajrayudha of Indra, Vajraasana and Vajra of Buddhism are all derived from the famous episode of Dadhichi's bones. The weapon of Durga is Vajra. Nivedita says, "Here then, we have the significance of the Vajra. THE SELFLESS MAN IS THE THUNDERBOLT. Let us strive only for selflessness, and we become the weapon in the hands of the gods. Not for us to ask how. Not for us to plan methods. For us, it is only to lay ourselves down at the altar-foot. The gods do the rest. The divine carries us. It is not the thunderbolt that is invincible, but the head that hurls it. Mother! Mother! Take away from us this self. Let not fame or gain of pleasure have dominion over us! Be Thou the sun-light, we the dew dissolving in its heat."

"But the future is never exactly as the past. And the new symbol cannot be even as the old. Hence the Thunderbolt of present day use is crossed. That is to say, it is multiplied in power, as befits the aspiration that is not of a great man here and there, but of every soul in a vast nation, at the same time. It is India, in all her millions, not a few Indian saints or prophets, who is called today to attain selflessness. India, in the might of her brotherhood, India in her unity, India in the cohesion of a single body, has to go down, down, down, into the depths in order to climb the mountains of perfect strength and gaze upon the Promised Land."

"It is for this that the Thunderbolt is multiplied, that it may be the symbol, not of a hero, but of a nation of heroes." It is with this feeling that Sister Nivedita designed the National Flag with the symbol of Vajrayudha in 1909.

Sumati: Oh Lord, let us work to make our people recapture the true spirit of India.



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

ROMAIN ROLLAND

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**THE LIFE AND PHILOSOPHY OF
DR RADHA NATH PHUKAN
Dr. PRADIP SARMA**



Vedanta Vachaspati Dr Radha Nath Phukan was a great luminary of Assam with scholarship in science, philosophy and literature. A pioneer in analyzing Indian philosophy against the backdrop of western doctrines, he was successful in inspiring many scholars to take up Indian philosophy in right earnest to cope with the scientific approach of the day.

Born in 1875, Radha Nath's father was a Sheristadar of the British period. In the days when the system of modern education introduced by the Britishers was yet to be accepted widely in Assam, his father tried his best to educate the children. After receiving Merit Scholarship from the Sivasagar town in 1891, Radha Nath joined the Presidency College, Calcutta. The new environment offered him an opportunity to come into contact with the changing pattern of education of those days; it also helped him learn science against the backdrop of traditional knowledge. He took up Sanskrit in his undergraduate studies and opted for Physics in post graduate education. The first Assamese to become a Master's Degree holder in 1897, he was awarded the Bachelor's Degree in Law in 1898.

Radha Nath started his professional career in 1898 by joining the Bar of Jorhat District Court. In 1903 he joined the Provincial Administrative Service as an Extra Assistant Commissioner. After an

eventful career of 28 years he retired in 1931. His post-retirement years were more eventful than those of his career life. He joined the Bar in 1936 and procured a tea-garden which became a flourishing tea-estate!

Besides his professional career, Radha Nath had always pursued a life of scholarly investigation. Initially, he developed the habit of reading science and philosophy. But, subsequently, he started taking interest in ancient Indian scriptures. This turning point of his life apparently came up when he started studying the Geeta. But his science background helped him analyse the scriptures with a spirit of scientific fervour making him quote from contemporary scientists like Rutherford, Edington and Jeans.

Dr Phukan's simple and lucid style of writing made his writings accessible to the common Assamese readers even in critical subjects like the Vedanta philosophy, Upanishad, Sankhya, Darshan, etc.

Dr Phukan believed that the Upanishads were the basic sources of all philosophies of India. He was of the opinion that Sankhya, Vedanta and Buddhist philosophers do not maintain even one percent of difference as the people used to think. He desired that measures should be taken to bring about a consensus among the opinions of the different *Acharyas*.

Phukan's deep philosophical convictions enabled him to imbibe the most critical doctrines of our ancient philosophers

resulting in the publication of his first Assamese book on the *Sankhya Darshan* in 1949 followed by the publications of the *Vedanta Darshan* in 1951, *Srimadbhagavat Geeta*, 1952, *the Upanishad*, 1954 and some other thought-provoking compositions based on science and tradition, such as, “*Vijnanar Sipare*” in 1955 and “*Jantarmantar Rahasya*” in 1957. He also wrote a long series of 31 articles on philosophy in general in an Assamese magazine, *Panchajanya* by name which brought him wide name and fame.

Phukan always tried to explain the doctrine of Indian Philosophy from the scientific point of view. He often quoted similes from the most up to date discoveries of science like the Theory of Relativity, Nuclear Physics, etc.

Dr Phukan was a vocal exponent of the neo-Vaishnava doctrines of Mahapurusha Sankaradeva, the great Rishi from Assam who propagated new-Vaishnavism through his writings, plays, songs, acting, art, weaving and social reformation. Phukan believed that

the philosophical doctrines of Sankaradeva were similar to those of Sankaracharya.

The wide literary contributions of Radha Nath Phukan made him popular among scholars and litterateurs of this region. Many academic institutions awarded him titles like *Rajarshi*, *Taatvadarshi*, *Vedanta Vachaspati*, etc. In recognition of his life-long contributions towards literature and philosophy, the Gauhati University conferred on him the honorary D.Litt Degree in 1964. Incidentally, the great philosopher also breathed his last in this very year at the ripe old age of 89.

In recognition of the contribution of this great son of Mother India, Vivekananda Kendra Institute of Culture, Guwahati has been organizing Bi-ennial memorial lectures since 1997.

The author is the Director, Research Council, Vivekananda Kendra Institute of Culture, Guwahati.

HONESTY PAYS

Smt. Neelavathi, a domestic help, is a resident of Triplicane, Chennai, Tamilnadu. She is the mother of three sons, all of them carpenters. On March 8, she found a camera attached cell phone lying on the road. It is worth Rs. 18,000 and someone offered to sell it and give her Rs. 10,000 to part with it. The wedding of her eldest son is slated for June 9. But, for Neelavathi, others' belongings amounted to “burden”. She promptly handed it over to the lady of the household where she has been working for the last 18 years. The lady, Smt. Sharadha, in turn, called in the police and passed it on to them. The police traced out the owner as one Shri. Saumitran, a US based NRI presently in town. Saumitran gifted Rs. 1,500 to the goodnatured Neelavathi. The Chennai Police Commissioner Natarajan gave her Rs. 500 in appreciation of her honesty. Octogenarian astrologer- philanthropist, Shri. Varadhan awarded her Rs. 7,000 when he learnt of the incident, as is his practice.

(Based on a report in DINAMANI, Tamil Daily of March 20, 2004.)

Vivekananda Kendra Institute of Culture, Guwahati
5th Radha Nath Phukan Bi-ennial Lecture

LIVING IN HARMONY
Speaker: Swami Mitranandaji

Dated: 24 July 06

When a religion reaches the zenith of its evolution, it will become Hinduism. This is because a 'religion' in its true sense, should have the depth to accommodate diverse views, accepting the most primitive form of worship to the most profound sublime form of worship. Then alone can it serve its true and noble purpose. This accommodativeness alone can accept every view, and bring us harmony.

What is the difference between Hindu culture or Sanatana Dharma and other religions? It is this- Hindu culture does not pertain to the teachings of one sage, messiah, or prophet. It is not about fiercely defended dogmatic precepts that relate to one school of thought, or the deductions of one individual. It is collective thinking. Science can provide a lot of harmony because science is not about one individual's views, inventions or discoveries. Science is a collective Contribution. Different scientists, in different times in history have researched and made various observations on nature and its beings and indeed the laws that govern them. These related observations were

all collected together and presented under the category of study called 'natural science'. One person has not authored science; it is collective thinking. Similarly too, the Vedas were not written by one person. That is the reason why it has room for all and the depth in itself to 'accommodate'. This is called *Dharma*, the rest are all *Sampradaya*.

Sampradaya has a single founder, a single book and a code of conduct to follow. A *Sampradaya* if it is a little rigid –(because it is written by one person) cannot be altered. You can't change it - then there would be differences. It has to be accepted per-se. One *Sampradaya* not accepting or even tolerating another *Sampradaya*. *I-believe- in- this-I-reject-others* will definitely create disharmony.

If we need harmony we should understand that *Sampradayas* should evolve into a Dharma where it accepts everybody, where it says: *every path takes you to the Lord*. Until we bring in this concept, this vision to the decision makers and legislators in our country, harmony will only remain a dream. The day, we succeed in bringing

this reason to prevail upon the policy makers and intellectuals who influence the decision making process in the country, harmony would become a reality. Swearing by one, rejecting the rest is bound to create disharmony. So, if we have to bring in a kind of harmony, we need to call for open sessions with the intellectuals of every community.

For a beginning the least we could do is to pick-up the similarities in all faiths and say: ‘OK, these are the areas we agree. Here are the areas that suit all of us fine.’ That can open out avenues for further discussions. The world is beautiful only because of its variety. It

is that variety that is at stake. If diversity were to be lost, then the world would not be so beautiful. If the Roman civilization could exist, if the Egyptian civilization could sustain, if they were still there, the world would look more beautiful. We need all civilizations. Acceptance must be promoted. As the popular adage goes “variety is the spice of life”. It is an assortment that can break the monotony and lend more color and joy in the world. Any rigid view that has been indoctrinated and thrust upon us with stress on imperatives can only be stifling and joyless.

THE BRIDGE IS STILL STRONG

The Swami was by no means unknown in the Western world. During his first visit there, which had extended from the middle of 1893 to the close of 1896, his name had become familiar to almost every newspaper-reading American. By some he had been loved and revered, by others, feared and reviled; but few, if any, had looked upon him with indifference. His talks at the august and celebrated Parliament of Religions, held in Chicago in September of 1893, had revealed to an astounded American public the moral and spiritual grandeur of India's religious culture. He himself...his majestic presence, his keen wit and powerful intellect, his unmistakable and towering spirituality—had been no less an eye-opener. After the Parliament, the fame of the young Hindu monk (he was then thirty years old) had steadily increased, as had his influence. During the last months of 1893 and throughout most of 1894 he had traveled, lecturing, from place to place in the mid-western, southern, and eastern States of America. In 1895 and 1896 he had worked primarily in New York and London, teaching in both cities the basic ideals and practices of the Vedanta philosophy and religion and spreading the message of his great Master, Sri Ramakrishna, of whom he was the chief disciple and apostle... Over and over, in a cascade of words, he had exhorted the Hindu people to live by and for the great ideals that had sprung from the very soul of the country itself, and to make them real. “By stimulating (the Hindu people) I want to bring life into them”, he had said; “to this I have dedicated my life. I will rouse them through the infallible power of Vedic Mantras. I am born to proclaim to them that fearless message—‘Arise! Awake!’”
Source: Swami Vivekananda—His Second Visit to the West—New Discoveries. By Marie Louise Burke, an American author.

Another major difference between a *Sampradaya* and Dharma is this—Dharma by virtue of being a collective presentation of similar, corroborated thoughts, is more adaptable and flexible. In a *Sampradaya* you believe in one person, therefore in his absence you can't have your clarifications or modify it. It remains unquestionable and fortress within impregnable walls of rigid rules and commandments. To make even a small change becomes very difficult. In the *Christian World*, I was reading an article three days ago in the Internet. In America, owing to space constraint, they are thinking of cemeteries where bodies can be buried straight- vertically upright rather than the usual stretched out posture. I am just talking about a very ordinary issue. Someone is dead, the body has to be buried alright. But why not straight, if it is going to occupy less space than when laid to rest in the lying posture? But they haven't been able to get a consensus solution to the problem owing to religious stipulations. Therefore people are thinking in terms of the levels or tier pattern. Upright posture is simply not agreeable because it hasn't been the done thing hitherto. You have to follow it, isn't it? Whereas, if it is a Dharma

you can debate it, people sitting together, can think, accept it or reject it and bring a new idea saying, '*Yes, this was useful at that time, now it is not applicable; so we will change it.*' Even to make a decision whether the body should be buried or cremated, you don't have the freedom. You understand it is necessary but you are unable to do anything. You can't change it. Why? It is one person's view or one messiah's way and since he is no more there, you can't alter it. Do you see the rigidity? How it develops and thrives not to help progress but abet decay? It blindly curbs and restricts. In the case of a Dharma like ours however, that is not the case.

We believed at one point of time that child marriage would suit us better. It can bring a lot of harmony. It will help with family unity. We believed so, and therefore we followed it. It had its own good results. It was *religiously* followed. Please understand. It was part of our *Smriti*, so we followed it. At another point of time we felt this is not good. The positive influences could not sustain for long.. Rather, undesirable effects seemed to be more. Therefore we decided '*let us alter it*'. Change it. Why? Because in Hindu culture it is democratic, collective

"Quite literally he planted the seeds of spirituality deep in the hearts of innumerable human beings, changing the course of their lives for ever. So spontaneously and naturally did Swamiji do this that it is possible he himself was not aware of it..."

--Marie Louise Burke.

thinking. All positive suggestions are taken on board before the intellectuals or thinkers of the prevailing time can come forward and alter it at *Smriti*.

Shruti we accept. *Shruti* we will not allow anyone to touch. *Shruti* is the Upanishads, which is the sublime truth; the code of conduct. It talks scientific facts: how we can evolve from the human plane, I mean from human, how we can become divine. That is the theme of the *Shruti*. The Upanishads we accept as it is. Why? Because it is science. You can't fight law of gravity. You must accept it. *Shruti* is science, *Smriti* is a way of life. Collectively decided. Hence, when we felt child marriage is not required, we changed it. In ancient India, women were not educated academically. There was a different kind of education in arts, culture and spirituality taking place at home. We changed that trend and decided that women can come forward and have normal education like the men. Similarly there was child marriage. Sati was part of tradition, particularly enforced when the country faced wave after wave of invasion. It was an honour for women to die than be taken captive to live in a harem. So people felt that 'sati' ought to be encouraged. But later on with greater national security and improved general awareness, came an awakening, regarding the callousness of humankind in allowing this vile practice to thrive.

Therefore it was done away with. However, change is possible only when it is collective. If it is a single individual's narrow views that are being implicitly followed by a certain community of people, change cannot happen therein, no matter how devastating the consequences are.

So we must work on our programmes where we can make the *Sampradayas* come together, probably evolve themselves to a Dharma. This is not easy to accomplish because people are very rigid. What we need is like what Shri Balakrishnanji just now said: *Promote Vedanta, promote Dharma*. Let us develop different skills, different methods by which, we can take this idea across. It will certainly appeal to the rational minded or the thinking community across the world. But we need to make a presentation of that kind, a presentation of such a nature where people will easily see reason and accept the view. Once they start accepting the view there is no other choice but to abide. *The Sampradayas will be compelled to evolve or perish*. Those animals, which did not adapt to change are now extinct. Those which did are still around.

Why do certain species of animals become extinct? Only because they are unable to cope and adapt to changes in climatic conditions, and various other factors that support life. Then, the animal slowly perishes. The same law

applies to everything - to the human as well as to the philosophies. If they don't accept change, they will perish. But at some point of time or other as man keeps evolving, his thinking mind is going to reject a *sampradaya*, because *sampradaya* by nature is very rigid. *Sampradayas* are intrinsically fanatic. Swearing by one and rejecting another is going to create disharmony. So we have to promote Dharma.

Dharma is universal. In Dharma there is space for everybody. There is space for Rama, there is space for Christ. Christ is yet another form to reach the Supreme. There is space for Guru Nanak; and there is space for Gautam Buddha too. We can think hard and adopt any mode or approach of presentation to get our message across. But it must have an impact. If we don't present Dharma well, *Sampradayas* will continue to have their sway, and critically so on the naive and the gullible. Naturally, disharmony is bound to prevail. So we need to get the Vedantic idea across.

In Vedantic idea, 'form' for the Divine is only in the formative stages of spiritual sadhana. The spiritual science is so beautiful that the worship of a form is only required up to a certain stage. Once you evolve spiritually to a point, the 'form' is not required. It doesn't matter thereafter, because you glide as it were into contemplation on the formless. In formless there is

always harmony. From the highest level, Vedanta always talks about God as formless. This 'form' aspect has to go at that stage.

Consider the symbolic significance of our own festivals. *Ganesha Chaturthi*, which we celebrate for instance. We have an idol or 'form' of Lord Ganesha which we worship for ten days. The devotee ardently worships the 'limited form' of the "Infinite Formless Divinity" over a certain period of time and thereafter, the immersion of the idol in the sea signifies the merging of the finite or 'limited form' into the vastness of 'Formless Infinity' both of which are but aspects of the same Supreme Being. For that devotee, that form is no more required. He is now evolved to take up the formless. Then, why do we bring it back next year? Somebody in the family needs it. Somebody has still not evolved there he needs a form. Allow it. The culture is so flexible, so beautiful! That's the beauty of it!

When we are not rigid we can evolve. When we become rigid, disharmony would be there. The stanzas which Balakrishnanji quoted from the Gita "*Sut্রে maniganaa iva*" is the ideal answer. When I had this topic in mind, that was the stanza I was also thinking of. The central cord is the same life principle in you and in me, in the plant and in the animal. The central linking cord is the same. That binds everything

together. This understanding is true spirituality, this is Vedanta, knowledge. Until we become aware of that knowledge we would not even look at another person as a divine being. We may probably look at another person as fallen, or a sinner etc. because we don't see the spirit.

I remember a very powerful anecdote. There was a man sitting by the pond in which fish were swimming; a couple of fishes moving there. A monkey came there with a rod in hand. It put the fishing rod inside and caught a fish. The monkey held it, wouldn't let it go. On asking the monkey: "*What are you doing?*" the monkey said, "*I am saving the fish from drowning*". For heaven's sake! We do not need 'saviours' of that kind! These saviours create only disharmony thinking that they are right. The fish is fine swimming. So the rigidity of thinking and fanaticism of ideology that limits and messes up the human mind must go if we are to bring about harmony. That must be the spiritual science.

If this redeeming idea can truly reach far and wide and influence people even in other countries, we can claim to have bright prospects for 'change'. Sadly, here we are still not together; we are not able to work on this harmony. Elsewhere they have gone through it, they are ready to reject the *Sampradayas*; people are looking out for Dharma. Because they have reached

a point where *Sampradayas* are not making any appeal any more--which means the human has evolved to the next point. *Sampradayas* have nothing substantial to offer, inspire them, or hold their interest. So they are ready; ready for change.

That's why people like Swami Vivekananda worked more outside because he knew people have come to a point of dropping *Sampradaya*. If more such work we can do, I think dharma here can be protected more easily. That's the irony, isn't it? Rabindranath Tagore wanted to build a school with a difference, Shanti Niketan. How many of us came forward to support him. His wife had to pledge all her jewellery and property to build a school. We are not ready to support. Then came the Nobel Prize - the First Asian to become a Nobel Laureate. Immediately support was forthcoming at home.. How unfortunate! A genius among us is not noticed! It takes someone outside India to recognize and honour his brilliance. Then we wake up! In the same way if we can make better appeals *there*, I think the people *here* would accept it more easily.

So for us to have harmony basically we have to make this concept clear to the people: what is *Sampradaya*, what is Dharma, and how *Sampradaya* creates conflict. Because you swear by one, and reject the rest. This is bound to

create disharmony, confusion, and conflicts. Whereas Dharma is all accepting, and supremely accommodative; the most primitive to the sublime have space in it. That is the beauty of our culture which accommodates everybody. If this spirit we can take, we would find harmony in the world outside.

For all the workers who are putting in efforts, please remember: until you take up that spirit you will not find harmony in you. The mind would always remain agitated. With agitation when we act, we cannot perform our best. Vedanta alone can help us to have harmony within. We would be more peaceful inside. When we start finding that kind of peace through spiritual knowledge, we are more equipped to meet the challenges outside. A peaceful person naturally by his very presence would spread peace and harmony. So the workers also must realise that *'I must become peaceful within. There must be harmony in me'*. That's why sadhana is necessary, that's why study is necessary. Only work will not do. If that was the case, Krishna would have told Arjuna, "*Arjuna pick up your bow and fight. I am with you. You will win this war, you have nothing to fear.*" He tells him something similar only in the 18th chapter. Arjuna had to go through the knowledge of all the Eighteen chapters of the Gita.

The best of India is in her rich culture and matchless Vedantic knowledge. We must all, make the best use of that knowledge to which we are natural heirs. Our workers particularly should have it. Then alone can we find lasting peace within and with that peace we would become better workers, turning out far better quality of work, because we would be operating with the background of this knowledge. Around us there is bound to be harmony. So we need to work within us to ensure our own transformation even as we serve outside. For that Vedantic studies, quietude of mind, serenity of mind, and meditation are absolutely essential. We would become better workers and there would definitely be more harmony in the world. We Can achieve it.

Another thing which we have to remember: the power of Vedanta or power of spirituality is very deep. It is unfortunate that we are not able to invoke it. We need not feel daunted by challenges. No doubt the situation on hand is quite tough to handle, but there is immense potential *within* each of us, that is now latent. We only need to understand and summon forth that potential. If we should so decide, it is instantly at our disposal. Once it manifests, it only needs to be directed. Thereafter, nothing can stop us. The power of spirit, the strength of the spirit or the strength of truth should never be underestimated. Stick to truth at any

cost..The *Mundaka Upanishad* says that “*Satyameva Jayate,*” *the truth alone will win.* But we need to invoke it and stick by it. Its power is not to be undervalued. The situation may seem bleak now, but if we can stay unruffled and allow the benign influence of the spirit to prevail, we will derive the necessary strength, faith and courage to see our task to its victorious end.

I recall a passage of Swami Vivekananda. Swamiji says:

My motto for the last ten years is: *struggle*. When everything is dark I tell myself: *struggle*. When light is breaking in, when things have come back, I could see the light breaking in, I tell myself: *struggle*.

Without effort, without sadhana, without tapas, harmony is not possible. Workers must understand this and have to take up work only that way. Internally when we change, the world will change. My teacher Swami Chinmayanandaji use to always say, “*You change, and the world around you will change.*” The world around us has no other choice but to change. If we make the necessary change within, then harmony would certainly be there.

I am extremely happy to be here with you to talk to you on this great occasion. Thank you very much.

The speaker, Poojya Swami Mitranandaji, is the Director, Chinmaya Yuva Kendra.



VIVEKANANDA KENDRA SAMACHAR

Visit of Pujya Swami Mitrananda, Director, Chinmaya Yuva Kendra
Pujya Swami Mitrananda, Director, Chinmaya Yuva Kendra, along with Pujya Swamini Prachi Chaitanya, Chinmaya Mission, Guwahati visited Arunachal Pradesh from 25th to 27th July 2006. They visited Vivekananda Kendra Vidyalayas: Seijosa Nivedita Vihar, Seijosa, Balijan and Itanagar. A team of 9 workers of Chinmaya Yuva Kendra also accompanied them. Swami Mitrananda addressed the students in all these schools on the topics -how to be self inspired, How to improve concentration etc, which was followed by a question - answer sessions. They visited Vivekananda Kendra Vocational Training Centre at Seijosa and were briefed the activities of the Centre as well as Vivekananda Kendra Arun Jyoti Project. They also visited Nyeder Namlo (the place of worship of Nyishi community of Arunachal Pradesh) at Doimukh. Later there was an interaction session with the elders of NISHI community, Swami Mitrananda addressed a public programme also organized at Vivekananda Hall of Ramakrishna Mission, Itanagar on the last day of his stay in Arunachal Pradesh.

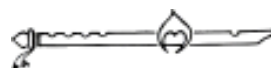
Third PRACHODAYA SHIBIR (8th to 11th July 2006)

A shibir was conducted for the students who have scored 75% or above in the central evaluation

of class VIII annual examination (session 2005-2006) in All VKVs of Arunachal Pradesh. The Shibir was inaugurated by Shri Vishwas Lapalkar, Secretary, VKVs (North - East) on 8th July 2006. 71 students from 16 Vivekananda Kendra Vidyalayas of Arunachal Pradesh (39 boys & 32 girls) participated in it. The objective of the camp, of equipping and motivating the students for systematizing their studies and improving their techniques of learning to perform the best in the coming years, was achieved during this camp.

TEACHING SKILLS' DEVELOPMENT TRAINING CAMP (8th to 11th July 2006)

Shri Vivek Ponkshe, (Principal) and Shri Surendra Thakur Desai both from Jnana Prabodhini Prashala, Pune shared their experience and wisdom and imparted training to the selected 27 teachers of 23 VKVs of Arunachal Pradesh & Assam. The focus was on developing the teaching skills and effective notes preparation. Mananeeya Kum. Rekha Davey, Joint General Secretary, Vivekananda Kendra Kanyakumari addressd the participants of Prachodaya Shibir and Teaching Skills' Development Training Camp conducted at VKV, Tinsukia on the occasion of Gurupoornima.



YUVA BHARATI

Subscription Renewal - An Appeal

Dear Subscribers/Readers,

We quote below the subscription numbers, renewal of which is due. Readers are requested to take note of it and act at the earliest.

YB/13303, 304, 345, 349, 365, 367, 368, YB/17009, 023, 025 to 031, 033 to 36, 38 to 47, 49 to 58, 64 to 74, 76 to 79, 81 to 17100, 101 to 131, 133 to 135, 137, 138, 140, 142, 145, 148 to 153, 155 to 162, 164, 165, 168 to 170, 173 to 176, 178 to 188, 190, 196 to 214, 216 to 221, 223, 225 to 233, 235 to 240, 309 to 311, 772 (Ends with September '06)



Then! Let us get Converted...

Satish Chowkulkar



While in Chennai, I came to know that a group of college students have invited Shiva Swaroopananda to a study group in their college. I decided to join the group as I had enjoyed their interactions while they were at Kanyakumari, last month.

I thought Shiva Swaroopananda will give a talk, but instead he offered to answer their questions on anything they wanted to know. Students were delighted and put forward their questions without any inhibitions. Some of these questions and answers were very much enlightening.

A student asked, **“Many say that India is a unique country and Hinduism is also a unique religion. Please clarify.”**

Shiva Swaroopananda smiled and said: “What is being said is absolutely true. More and more Hindus and Indians should know this and get convinced about this. Let us enlist a few such points which are common for India as well as Hinduism.

First thing, both these entities are the most ancient. Nobody knows about their antiquity. Secondly, both are known by their present names given to them by others. Hinduism or Hindu is an identity given to us by outsiders, that too very recently, say, less than 2000 years ago. Considering our ancient existence 2000 years is a recent past (Shiva Swaroopananda evidently added this, in response to some eye-brows being raised that 2000 years is recent!)

“Then, what is our original identity and why this name India came to our land?” asked a student.

“In our ancient scriptures, dating back much before the Christian Era started, this land is referred to as Bharat Varsha. This is an adjective to denote that people in this area cherish enlightenment – Bha + Ratah and people in this Bharat Varsha are called Bharateeya, whose purpose of life is enlightenment--pursuance of knowledge and self realization.”

The invaders from the Middle-East and Europe identified this land as a land beyond Sindhu river. Due to linguistic limitations the Sa was pronounced by them as Ha and the word Hindu was coined. Further, the Greeks took cue from this word Hindu and sound Ha was transformed by them to start with Eee. Then Sindhu river became Indus and eventually the words *India* and *Indian* came to stay; as an effect of the European influence.

“Then what about Hinduism? Is not that the name of our religion?” asked a student. Shiva Swaroopananda proceeded with his reply.

“The name of our religion is not Hinduism. We are basically the followers of Sanatan Dharma. This Sanatan Dharma is also most ancient. This has neither a beginning nor an end. Because of this, Sanatan Dharma or Hinduism, for that matter, is not a

religion, like other faiths. Sanatan Dharma was not founded by any person, it does not restrict itself to one scripture and does not have the concept of a single God. All other faiths i.e., religions in the world have one founder or messenger, they conform to one particular God only and follow only one scripture. Every such religion looks upon itself as a separate entity from that of other faiths. Most of them also cherish an ambition to drag the followers of other faiths to theirs by hook or by crook. This has led to clashes and bloodshed among the followers of these different faiths, overriding the spiritual tenets a religion is expected to have. "That means our Sanatan Dharma or Hinduism and Bharat Varsha are inseparably one." A student shared his understanding. "Yes", Shiva Swaroopananda was visibly happy that the students have well taken the point and continued... Coming back to the commonalities—our nation has not invaded any other nations and our people have not converted the followers of other faiths to Hinduism. Hindustan is a non-invading nation and Hindus are non-converters. We, as a nation, as well as a faith, accept multiplicity and peaceful coexistence as a way of life and respect every faith and admit the existence of other nations.

"Yes! I remember Swami Vivekananda began his first address in the World Parliament of Religions at Chicago in America, on this note". A senior student pepped up. "Yes, That is why the day September 11 is observed as Universal Brotherhood day." Shiva Swaroopananda continued-"Another common feature is,

our nation and Dharma survived all the onslaughts by the barbarian invaders like Shaka, Kushan, Hun, Turks and Mongols Mugals and so on. The uniqueness is that these invaders were absorbed so much so, their traces only are seen in museums, tombs and chronicles. Crusades of these non-tolerant violent exclusive faiths with their proselytising designs could not destroy the soft, inclusive, benign and tolerant characteristic of Sanatana Dharma." Another student came up and asked, **"From your reply, I am getting the impression that religion and Dharma are not the same. Is it so, then what is the difference?"**

"Good, you brought this point", Shiva Swaroopananda said, "Many persons think that Dharma in Sanskrit is translated as religion in English and vice-versa. But it is not so. The word religion implies faith. Religion revolves around a founder, who founded it. It focuses on a particular book of the teachings by the founder. It insists on worshipping a God propounded by the founder and professed in the book. That means whole dependence is on the faith or belief on these three points. The followers of such faith or religion will have limited options as for getting knowledge or worshipping God. Almost all of these religions prohibit switching over to the book or God other than what is guided by their prophet or founder. These followers thereby become exclusive in all walks of their life. Now let us look at the word Dharma. Linguistically the meaning of the word Dharma is certain basic laws of Life which are eternal in nature, they have universal applicability to all the people at

all the places and all phases of time. By following these laws one gets evolved to realize the Truth. Satya is the word, which leads to Happiness—Ananda. Experiencing this Ananda is the purpose of taking birth in human species.

These eternal Truths as realized by the rishis, who are seekers of Truth, are passed on to the posterity--future generations. This storehouse of guidance is called Vedas. Knowledge in the Vedas is being enriched by the seers from time to time. There is nothing dependent on a person--founder or prophet. The Vedas--store house of knowledge--are never exclusive. One is free to interpret it basing on the experience and realization. The concept of God also is a matter of subjective option. Freedom is in abundance to choose worship of any god to experience the Truth. So our Dharma knows no restrictions like the faith or belief in one prophet, one god and one scripture. Religion thus can bind a person whereas by following Dharma one gets liberated.

"Religions are supposed to give peace and happiness but why now a days we see religion has become a cause for conflict and violence?" asked a girl student.

Shiva Swaroopananda was thoughtful for a while and then said.

"Swami Vivekananda had addressed this problem in the World Parliament of Religions in Chicago in September 1893. The proceedings were in progress from 11 September to 26 September 1893. He was summoned a number of times to speak in order to cool the tempers and banish

tardiness of the deliberations. The sum and substance of what he spoke during such occasions is not pertinent.

He said people fight in the name of religions to claim "My religion alone is the true religion, my book alone is the authority, the founder of my faith alone is the realized person or true or the only or last prophet." Such claims are not only ridiculous but also cast a shadow on the capability of their, what they call, Almighty God. He said no one should make any such exclusive claims. The followers or leaders of the faiths should not have an ambition to convert people following all other faiths to their faith—thereby creating a monolithic umbrella under which all must come. Such an ambition is not only non-spiritual, it is also immoral and is a violence against other faiths. In reality it is against the tenets of Universal Truth upon which existence of their own faith also depends. Such ambition also smacks of political overtones, expansionist and profiteering designs. More so, when we find such exclusive faiths working in tandem with multinational companies, neo-imperialists, pseudo-secularist and corrupted, so called intellectuals, we become more than convinced that these faiths are working against Divinity--the God the Creator, from whom gods of their faiths also draw their power. These people are working against their own gods. Then it may be Jihad, crusade or the conversion. These approaches are non-spiritual as they are narrow-minded, selfish, immoral and violent.

All those who advocate peace and happiness for all, human values, etc. therefore oppose the religious conversion in any form

“What should be our role as a youth to face this challenge?” A bold students stood up and asked.

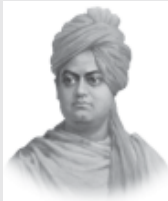
Shiva Swaroopananda was visibly delighted and exclaimed, "Very good initiative. In fact that is what Vivekananda wanted. As a modern youth we all should penetrate into the tenets of Sanatan Dharma, we should introduce ourselves to the philosophy of Vedanta and Upanishads, take up the study and practice of yoga and yoga sastra of Bhagvad Gita. We should take cue from the Itihasas, the Ramayana and the Mahabharata. We should hold on to the strong link between Sanatan Dharma

and Bharat Varsha. We should strengthen ourselves so that no one can uproot us so easily and convert us to what Vivekananda says “namby pamby ideas”. A student stood up and said with a jovial tone, “We shall instead get converted ourselves to-- from mere Hindus to Sanatan Dharma from just the Indian to Bharateeya”.

“Then only we can celebrate Universal Brotherhood Day in true spirit”, Shiva Swaroopananda said smilingly and concluded the class.

CHRISTOPHER ISHERWOOD ON SWAMI VIVEKANANDA

One of the most enchanting things about Vivekananda is the way he was eternally changing sides when he was speaking to different people; he could denounce the British in words of fire, but again he would turn on the Indians and say, “You cannot manufacture one pin, and you dare to criticize the British!” And then he would say that no women in the world were greater, and that the treatment of women in India was absolutely disgraceful. And so in every way, he was integrating, he was seeing the forces of good, the constructive forces, in the different countries, and saying. “Why don’t we exchange?”. So Vivekananda’s revolution was revolution for everybody, a revolution which would in the long run be of just as much use to the British as to India. Vivekananda’s nationalism, the call to India to recognize herself—this again was not nationalism in the smaller sense, it was a kind of supernationalism, a kind of internationalism sublimated. You all know the story that Vivekananda was so fond of, about the lion that was brought up with sheep. Now another lion comes out of the forest and the sheep all run away, and the little lion that had been brought up thinks it’s a sheep and runs away too, and now the pursuing lion grabs it, takes it over to a pool of water and says, “Look at yourself, you’re a lion.” This is what Vivekananda was doing to the Indian people. He remarks in one of his letters, that the marvelous thing about all the Western nations is that they know that they are nations. He said jealousy is a curse of India. Indians cannot learn to co-operate with each other. Why can’t they learn from the co-operation of Western nations with each other? I’m quoting all this because by considering all these different attitudes that



Vivekananda took, one sees the immense scope and integrity of his goodwill. He was really on everybody’s side, on the side of the West, and on the side of India, and he saw far, far into the future; his political prophecies are extremely interesting, and he said repeatedly, that the great force, which would finally have to be reckoned with was China. He also remarked on visiting Europe for the last time in 1900 that he smelled war everywhere, which was more than most professional statesmen did, at that time.