

# Om

The Voice of  
Veda Vedanta  
Mandiram



# Shānti

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## “Sisters and Brothers of America” listen to Swami Vivekananda

By Dr. Murarilal Nagar

Sept. 11, 1893. Chicago, World's Parliament of Religions.

Viśvavibhūti Svāmi Śrī Vivekānanda commenced his epoch-making speech, greeting his audience as: “Sisters and brothers of America!”

All of a sudden there was an unprecedented, spontaneous and tremendous ecstatic effect on the whole audience. None knew why or how that instantaneous electrification was caused. It did happen, though. It was a reality.

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### Editor's column

I recently traveled to India for the first time in my life. The experience of such an ancient, alive culture filled me with a sense of awe and respect for the saints and sages of old. I felt the same genuine admiration for the scholars I met at Shankar Math in Mount Abu.

Swami Mahananda Giri, one of the monks at the ashram, took the time to translate Swami Maheshananda Giri's lectures for me. He also gave me some advice regarding Om Shānti, both the state of Being and the magazine.

As for the latter, he asked me why I spelled the holy syllable “Om” instead of “Aum.” My reasoning was that “Om” is the spelling that is recognized by many Americans. The goal of our magazine is to strengthen understanding between India and America. True, this spelling does not show all three syllables that compose the musical sound, and “Shānti” is not written three times, but I think the message is clear. The meaning of the symbol in the globe, on the other hand, may not be.

Some Indians have asked me why there is an ‘m’ next to the Devanagari symbol. It is meant to show a union between the Sanskrit and English ways of expressing the same, universal message. I thank you all for your input and welcome more.

Aum Shānti, Shānti, Shānti!

—Katherine Marie Lee (Kamalee), Editor

● **Special Thanks to:**  
Dr. Murarilal Nagar  
Ramesh Khanna, MD

# Ayurvedic Medicine

New Western Science meets  
Ancient Ayurveda

Ayurveda is a Sanskrit word, derived from two roots: ayur (life) and veda (knowledge). Knowledge arranged systematically with logic becomes science. In due course of time, Ayurveda became the science of life. It has its root in ancient Vedic literature and encompasses our entire life, the body, mind and spirit.

Ayurveda is a science dealing with treatment of some diseases, but it is also a complete way of life. Ayurveda is a science of life, so to know more about it, we must know what life is. Life, according to Ayurveda, is a combination of senses, mind, body and soul.

Materialism is promoted through modern education, culture and television. But despite achieving great success in amassing materialistic wealth, why is it that most of us are unhappy? There is unrest, anxiety, mental tension, fighting and terror everywhere. This is because some part of our body is not being nourished properly. That part is our inner self or the soul.

There must be a proper balance between materialism and spiritualism. Ayurveda practices the theory of balance. According to Ayurveda, health is the state of balance, and disease is the state of imbalance.

The aim of Ayurveda is to give complete health, not just freedom from physical diseases. So to become completely healthy you must know each and every part of yourself.

Ayurveda aims at making a happy, healthy and peaceful society. Two of the most important goals of Ayurveda are to: 1) preserve the health of healthy people; and 2) cure the diseases of sick people.

Ayurveda is as old as humanity. One of the principal tenets of Ayurveda is that life is eternal, therefore, science should also be eternal. Ayurveda has no beginning and no end. It is eternal as well as universal. It does not belong to any particular country, religion or civilization. It does not belong to any particular period of history. The eternity of Ayurveda is also described in the Charak Samhita. It says that Ayurveda is eternal because: 1) it has no beginning; 2) it deals with things that are inherent in nature; and 3) such natural manifestations are eternal.

Scholars of Ayurveda and ancient literature have estimated that Ayurveda originated before or around 6000 B.C.

Ramesh Khanna, MD, will discuss Ayurveda further in a future *Om Shanti*. ©

## Visiting Professor Praises the Continued Cultural Awareness of Indians Living in America

“Jananī janmabhūmiśca  
svargād api garīyasī.”

Having conquered the glorious, fabulous and sumptuous golden city of Lanka, Bhagavān Shri Rāmacandra, while trying to dispel at the same time any wrong thinking in the minds of his followers, addressed his younger brother, Lakṣmaṇa, thus:

Api svaṇṇamayī Laṅkā  
na me Lakṣmaṇa rocate.  
Jananī janmabhūmiś ca  
svargād api garīyasī.

Even though made and full of all gold, this Laṅkā does not appeal to me at all, O Lakṣmaṇa!

The mother and the motherland are far superior even to the Heaven.

This memorable saying of Bhagavān Shri Rāmacandra came to my mind when in Columbia, Mo., I was engaged in an informal conversation with some resident Indians there who had settled in America.

Even while living in such a happy environment, full of all kinds of physical comforts, these Indians have in their hearts a very deep agony of being away from their homeland. They cherish a lasting love and lingering longing for their country of origin. They entertain an affectionate desire to serve their original home in every possible way. And all this is but natural, logical and reasonable too. A man may live anywhere, but it is his

prākṛtika svadharmā (natural-born function) to take pride in his homeland and have a longing thereof full of love and tenderness.

The greatness, growth and development of any tree is dependent upon its root. If the root is cut, the branches wither away. They die and disappear in no time. Therefore, while keeping one's own root firm, steady and strong, it is a moral obligation of every worthy man to disseminate the bright light of his glorious cultural heritage throughout the world, and thus contribute toward universal peace, progress and prosperity.

Maharshi Manu ordained:

Etaddeśaprasūtasya  
sakāśād agrajanmanah.  
Svam svam caritram śikṣeran  
pṛthivyām sarvamānavāḥ.

From the learned leaders of this land, all the men throughout the world shall learn their conduct and behavior.

Wherever I went in America, whichever town or city I visited, I tried to meet the Indian families and their friends. Among almost all the families there, I found an immense enthusiasm, love and affection toward Hindi and India's glorious cultural tradition. Everywhere there was a new awakening and uprising. In some cities, I found that some enthusiast learned leaders regularly teach Hindi



to young children and the youth as a selfless service. I visited also one or two such classes.

India's lovely and loving ladies observe their rituals, fairs and festivals regularly with full faith and firm belief. They are all maintaining their family traditions quite well.

Dr. Shivendra Shukla, a reputed scientist at the University of Missouri-Columbia told me that they frequently hold sessions of continuous recital of the holy Rāmacaritamānasa of Gosvāmī Shri Tulasīdāsajī Mahārāja. Dr. Murārīlāl Nāgar has been regularly offering Gītāpravacana and the readings of many Vedanta granthas for the past so many years. These facts not only provide profound pleasure to us, but also demonstrate their determination to transmit their own cultural traditions to their succeeding generations exactly the way they have inherited them from their forefathers. The holy flow of Jñānagaṅgā must continue from generation to generation without any break at all. These views enabled me to view India herself in America.

I offer my heartfelt greetings to all the Indians residing abroad from the Indians here. I wish all of them the best of health, wealth and happiness. May God bless them all the supreme Bliss.

Ramachandra Pandeya  
Professor and Head,  
Department of Jyotisha,  
Banaras Hindu University  
INDIA

#### Editorial Note:

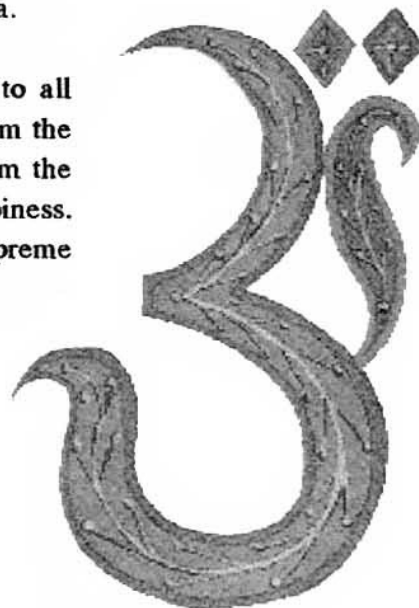
This scholar from Varanasi visited us here in Columbia. At my request, he wrote something for Om Shanti. It was in Hindi. While translating it, tears of joy rolled down from my eyes - as many drops as the letters!

Shri Ramachandra Pandeya probably overlooked the fundamental fact that Bhagavān Shri Rāmacandra was just playing the role of a man with a purpose. He was Māyāmānuṣadehavān, only showing his mohamayī līlā. He knew, but did not say:

Udāracaritānām tu vasudhaiva  
kutumbakam  
and/or  
Kṛṇvanto viśvam Āryam.

Many Indians living abroad contribute well to the welfare and well-being of India.

-Dr. Murarilal Nagar



## The Scheduled Cast

The previous scheduled caste got its name from having a set schedule, from always having some chore to do. We have done this to ourselves, made ourselves the slaves of Time.

Today we all belong to the "scheduled cast."

We have succumbed to a schedule; reduced ourselves to a routine. In Nature's hierarchy, we are now last.

Other creatures live spontaneously, seizing all opportunity, while we remain locked to a clock, our schedules immovable as rock.

Never a spare moment, always on the run, as if there's something important to be done.

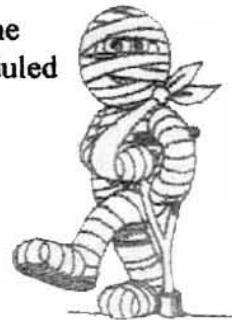
But All has already been done  
The battle is already won.

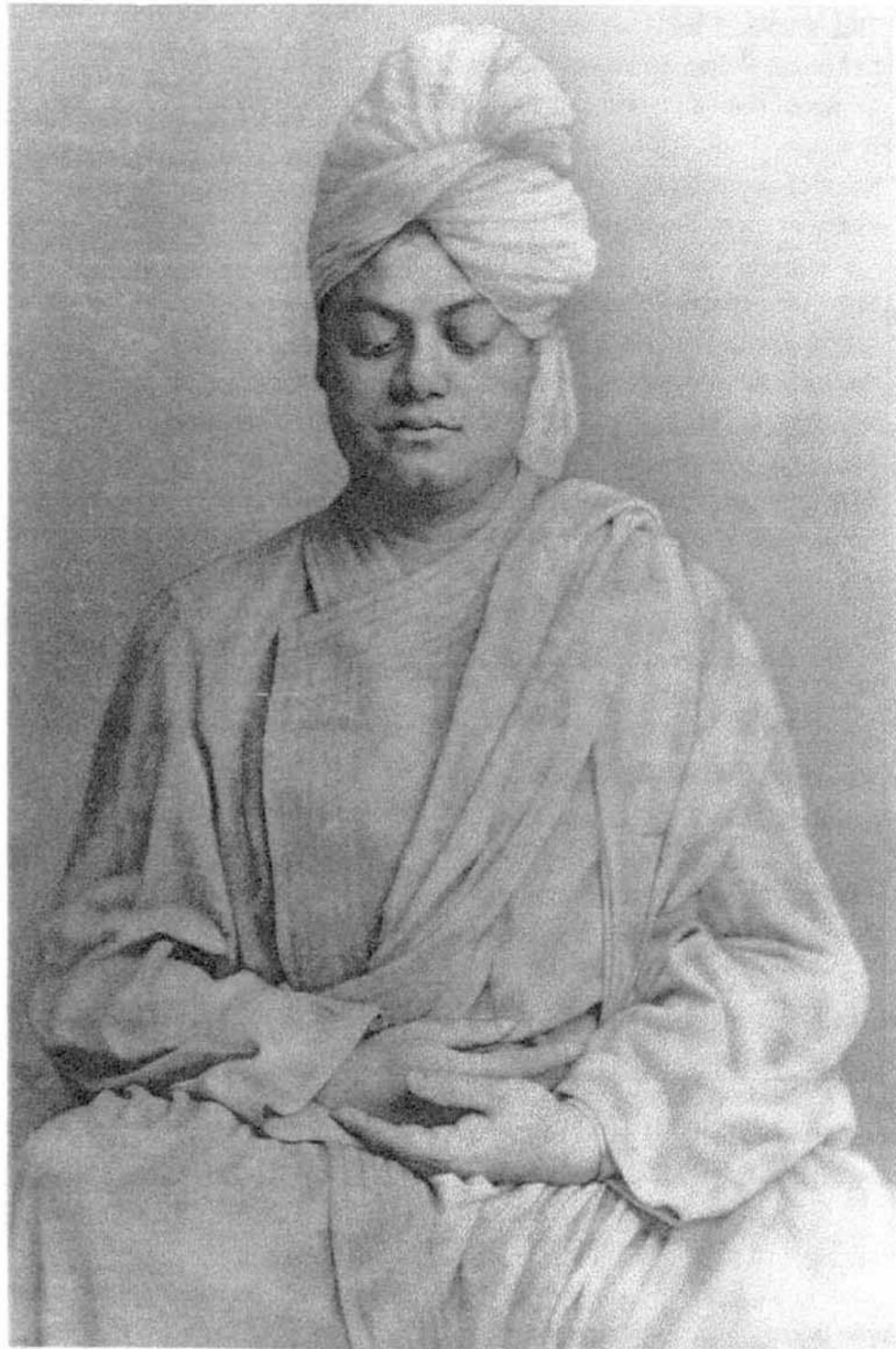
We hurry ourselves over nothing at all,  
preparing ourselves for the possible fall.

But how can we fall; where would we land?

All we can do here is make a stand

against the routine  
against the scheduled  
cast.





*Viśvavibhūti Svāmī Śrī Vivekānanda - the Enlightened Soul in deep meditation*

Here are some impressions and reflections of the eye-witnesses:

"I was at the Parliament of Religions in Chicago in 1893. When that young man got up and said, 'Sisters and brothers of America,' seven thousand people rose

to their feet as a tribute to something they knew not what. When it was over, I saw scores of women walking over the benches to get near him, and I said to myself, 'Well, my lad, if you can resist that onslaught you are indeed a God.' - Mrs. S. K. Blodgett.

Yes, indeed, he was a god - in deed and in word. Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa Himself has assured us, His devotees:

"Yad yad vibhūtimat sattvam śrīmad  
ūrjītam eva vā.  
Tat tad evāvagaccha tvam mama  
tejomśasambhavam."

"Whosoever is endowed with superior strength, is blessed with grandeur and glory and wields mighty majestic power, regard that being as having been born of a particle of My own effulgence."

According to another eye-witness report, "When Mr. Vivekananda addressed the audience as 'Sisters and Brothers of America,' there arose a peal of applause that lasted for several minutes." (Barrows and Houghton)

And Svāmījī himself told us a "deafening applause of two minutes followed."

Analysts have tried to find the cause of that sudden, spontaneous electrification of the entire audience. What made the listeners so exuberant? Why that kind of unbounded display of emotional integration and identification? The people present at the Parliament themselves could not figure out why they cheered Svāmījī so spontaneously at the very first words with which he addressed them. We believe it was his spiritual power, attained through life-long sādhanā and tapasyā. (He was only 30 years old, but his soul was much more ancient.)

It was his deep faith in what he spoke. He was honest and sincere. He meant exactly what he said. And what did he say? He said:



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

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

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

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

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

*-New York Herald*

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

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

*The New York Herald* wrote that Vivekānanda was "undoubtedly the greatest figure in the Parliament of

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Yogīrāja Śrī Aurobindo said:

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

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

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

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





Every Shāstra (discipline) in India's vast and varied literature has a system of the sūtras or aphorisms. They are extremely brief. They are unequivocal. They constitute quintessence. They are universal in application. They flow like a stream. They expound and propound a specific system of knowledge. Literally they mean the thread which keeps all the beads united together. Saints and sages deliver to the world the message of what they themselves have experienced and thereby derive the true and eternal happiness. They express themselves for humankind in the form of the Sūtras. One purpose of the Sūtras is that human beings read them, understand their meaning and implement them in their lives to derive the same eternal happiness.

Following are VIVEKA SUTRAS, inspiring aphorisms of Viśvabandhu Yogeśvara Svāmī Śrī Vivekānanda...

Arise! Awake! And stop not till the goal is reached. Bless men when they revile you. Conquer yourself and the whole world is yours.

Do not merely endure, but be unattached. Eat to Him, drink to Him, sleep to Him, see Him in all.

First get rid of the delusion, 'I am the body'. Give everything and look for no return.

Homogeneity, sameness is God. Incarnations like Jesus, Buddha, Ramakrishna can give religion.

Jñana Yoga really tells man that he is essentially divine. Knowledge exists; man only discovers it.

Look at the Ocean and not at the wave. Man as the Atman is really free, as man he is bound.

Never turn back to see the result of what you have done. Ot of purity and silence comes the word of power.

Perception is our only real knowledge or religion. Quarrels in religion are always over the husks.

Religion without philosophy runs into superstition. See no difference between man and angel.

The more our bliss is within, the more spiritual we are. Unchaste imagination is as bad as unchaste action.

Vedas cannot show you Brahman; you are That already. We are human coverings over the Divine. Xian you will be when you see Christ; look only for realisation.

You are good, but be better. Zeal with faith (*Shradhā*): Have this, and everything is bound to follow.

## Editorial note on the "Hymn of Shiva's Greatness"

As quoted in "Sisters and Brothers..."

In the article you just read, Swami Shri Vivekananda quotes a few lines from the *Mahimnastava*, an immortal and eternal Sanskrit prayer credited to have been composed by a Gandharvāja Puṣpadanta (see page 5). It remains one of the most popular and honored hymns in India, as Swami Vivekananda points out in his speech.

The verse Swamiji quoted was translated by an American scholar named W. Norman Brown as:

"Since the way of religion is diverse—including the Triad of the Vedas, the Sāṅkhya, the Yoga, the doctrine of Paśupati, Vaiṣṇavism—and one person considers this one best and another person that one suitable; because of the variety of preferences, you are—for men who favor different paths, straight or winding—the single goal, as the ocean is of waters."

Coincidentally, in our Summer 1997 issue of *Om Shānti*, we chose this very same verse to begin our selection from W. Norman Brown's translation of the *Mahimnastava* ("The Praise of Shiva's Greatness"). We felt that this verse beautifully portrays the message of Veda Vedanta Mandiram, the idea that we are all One and that cultural differences are deceptions of perception.

As translated by W. Norman Brown:

Since our Summer 1997 issue mailed, it has been brought to our attention that a verse from the hymn was omitted. The reason for this was that, with all due respect to Dr. Brown, his translation of this verse seemed inappropriate.

Omitted verse (#23 in W. Norman Brown's translation):

"O you who are devoted to restraint, if Devī, just because she is associated with you in the half-female androgynous form, still thinks you uxorious\*, though

she saw even the flower-weaponed god (Kāma)—who had grasped his bow in reliance upon her beauty—suddenly burnt up before her like grass, O crusher of the cities, then what, O granter of boons, can we expect from unsophisticated young women?"

\*Uxorious: excessively fond of or submissive to a wife (Webster)

The poet-devotee says: "bata mugdhā yuvatayaḥ"

Brown translated it as "what can we expect from unsophisticated young women?"

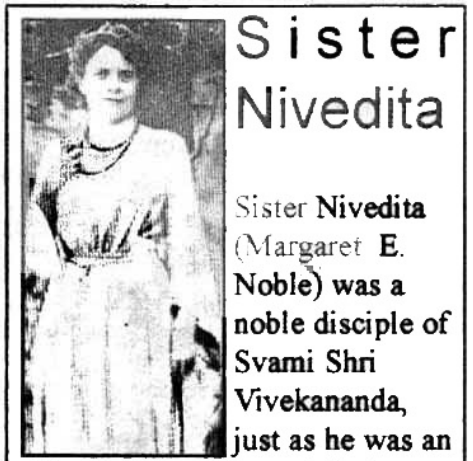
To us, this rendering seemed to be misleading. The Sanskrit language is one of the richest in the world. The poet has used a word that has two meanings. Mugdhā means "unsophisticated," but it also means "immature," "innocent" and "charming." A devotee of Shiva won't make rude remarks about His consort, Parvati. It is unthinkable.

As translated by an Indian scholar

W. Norman Brown is not the only scholar who translates verse #23 in such a way. Here is Swami Pavitrananda's translation in the Advaita Ashrama version of the *Siva-Mahimnah Stotram*:

"O Destroyer of Tripura, O Giver of boons, even on seeing in front the god of love, bow in hand, burnt like a piece of straw in a trice by Thee, if Parvati, proud of her beauty, thinks that Thou art under her fascination, because she was allowed to occupy half of Thy body on account of her austerities, ah, surely the young women are under delusion."

Swami Pavitrananda's footnote: "Parvati performed much austerity to get the love of Siva. Taking pity at her suffering, Siva allowed her to become a part of His body. But forgetting this act of pity on the part of Siva, Parvati might think, like ordinary women, that she got this favour because of her fascinating beauty. In that case she is wrong, as indicated by Siva's burning the god of love."



## Sister Nivedita

Sister Nivedita (Margaret E. Noble) was a noble disciple of Swami Shri Vivekananda, just as he was an able disciple of Swami Shri Ramakrishna Paramahansa.

Ireland was the original home of Margaret Noble. She dedicated and devoted her whole life (as Sister Nivedita) for the service of India, which became her spiritual home.

"Our dream of an Indian nationality is not a selfish dream for India," said Sister Nivedita, "but it is a dream for humanity in which India shall be the mother of a great cause, shall be fosterer and the nurse of all that is noble, humane and great."

The following is a tale from Margaret Noble's homeland. It talks about holy wells in ancient Ireland. People make little piles of stones as they pray near the wells. This reminded me of a temple in Mount Abu where there was a pile of stones, and each person was supposed to throw another stone on the pile and make a wish. Another thing I noticed in India was a lack of wishing wells. People make their offerings directly to the gods, rather than to an abstract "Blarney stone" or pool of water. Of course, there is a difference between a wish and a prayer, and between superstition and faith.

-Kumari Kamalee



# The Priest's Soul: An Irish tale

By Lady Wilde

from *Ancient Legends of Ireland*,  
edited by W. B. Yeats

In former days there were great schools in Ireland, where every sort of learning was taught to the people, and even the poorest had more knowledge at that time than many a gentleman has now. But as to the priests, their learning was above all, so that the fame of Ireland went over the whole world, and many kings from foreign lands used to send their sons all the way to Ireland to be brought up in the Irish schools.

Now, at this time there was a little boy learning at one of them who was a wonder to everyone for his cleverness. His parents were only labouring people, and of course poor, but young as he was, and as poor as he was, no king's or lord's son could come up to him in learning. Even the masters were put to shame; for when they were trying to teach him he would tell them something they never heard of before, and show them their ignorance.

One of his great triumphs was in argument; and he would go on till he proved to you that black was white, and then when you gave in, for no one could beat him in talk, he would turn round and show you that white was black, or maybe that there was no colour at all in the world. When he grew up, his poor father and mother were so proud of him that they resolved to make him a priest, which they did at last, though they nearly starved themselves to get the money.

Well, such another learned man was not in Ireland, and he was as great in argument as ever, so that no one could stand before him. Even the bishops tried to talk to him, but he showed them at once they knew nothing at all.

Now, there were no schoolmasters in those times, but it was the priests taught the peo-

ple; and as this man was the cleverest in Ireland, all the foreign kings sent their sons to him, as long as he had house-room to give them. So he grew very proud, and began to forget how low he had been, and worst of all, even to forget God, who had made him what he was. And the pride of arguing got hold of him, so that from one thing to another he went on to prove that there was no Purgatory, and then no Hell, and then no Heaven, and then no God; and at last that men had no souls, but were no more than a dog or a cow, and when they died there was an end of them.

"Whoever saw a soul?" he would say. "If you can show me one, I will believe."

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**There were no schoolmasters  
in those times, but it was the  
priests taught the people.**

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No one could make any answer to this; and at last they all came to believe that as there was no other world, everyone might do what they liked in this; the priest setting the example, for he took a beautiful young girl to wife. But as no priest or bishop in the whole land could be got to marry them, he was obliged to read the service over for himself. It was a great scandal, yet no one dared to say a word, for all the king's sons were on his side, and would have slaughtered anyone who tried to prevent his wicked goings-on. Poor boys. They all believed in him, and thought every word he said was the truth. In this way his notions began to spread about, and the whole world was going to the bad, when one night an angel came down from Heaven, and told the priest he had but 24 hours to live. He began to tremble, and asked for a little more time.

But the angel was stiff, and told him that could not be. "What do you want time for, you sinner?" he asked.

"Oh, sir, have pity on my poor soul!" urged the priest.

"Oh, no! You have a soul, then," said the angel. "Pray, how did you find that out?"

"It has been fluttering in me ever since you appeared," answered the priest. "What a fool I was not to think of it before."

"A fool, indeed," said the angel. "What good was all your learning, when it could not tell you that you had a soul?"

"Ah, my lord," said the priest, "if I am to die, tell me how soon I may be in Heaven?"

"Never," replied the angel. "You denied there was a Heaven."

"Then, my lord, may I go to Purgatory?"

"You denied Purgatory also; you must go straight to Hell," said the angel.

"But, my lord, I denied Hell also," answered the priest, "so you can't send me there either."

The angel was a little puzzled. "Well," said he, "I'll tell you what I can do for you. You may either live now on earth for a hundred years, enjoying every pleasure, and then be cast into Hell for ever, or you may die in 24 hours in the most horrible torments, and pass through Purgatory, there to remain till the Day of Judgment, if only you can find some one person that believes, and through his belief mercy will be vouchsafed to you, and your soul will be saved."

The priest did not take five minutes to make up his mind. "I will have death in the 24 hours," he said, "so that my soul may be saved at last."

On this the angel gave him directions as to what he was to do, and left him. Then immediately the priest entered the large room where all the scholars and the king's sons were seated, and called out to them: "Now, tell me the truth, and let none fear to

contradict me; tell me what is your belief - have men souls?"

"Master," they answered, "once we believed that men had souls; but thanks to your teaching, we believe so no longer. There is no Hell, and no Heaven, and no God. This is our belief, for it is thus you taught us."

Then the priest grew pale with fear, and cried out: "Listen! I taught you a lie. There is a God, and man has an immortal soul. I believe now all I denied before."

But the shouts of laughter that rose up drowned the priest's voice, for they thought he was only trying them for argument. "Prove it, master," they cried. "Prove it. Who has ever seen God? Who has ever seen the soul?" And the room was stirred with their laughter.

The priest stood up to answer them, but no word could he utter. All his eloquence, all his powers of argument had gone from him; and he could do nothing but wring his hands and cry out, "There is a God! There is a God! Lord have mercy on my soul!"

And they all began to mock him! and repeat his own words that he had taught them: "Show him to us; show us your God." And he fled from them, groaning with agony, for he was that none believed; and how, then, could his soul be saved?

But he thought next of his wife. "She will believe," he said to himself, "women never give up God."

And he went to her, but she told him that she believed only what he taught her, and that a good wife should believe in her husband first and before and above all things in Heaven or earth.

Then despair came on him, and he rushed from the house, and began to ask everyone he met if they believed. But the same answer came from one and all: "We believe only what you have taught us," for his doctrine had spread far and wide through the country.

Then he grew half mad with fear, for the hours were passing, and he flung himself down on the ground in a lonesome spot, and wept and groaned in terror, for the time

was coming fast when he must die.

Just then a little child came by. "God save you kindly," said the child to him.

The priest started up. "Do you believe in God?" he asked.

"I have come from a far country to learn about Him," said the child. "Will your honour direct me to the best school they have in these parts?"

"The best school and the best teacher is close by," said the priest, and he named himself.

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**"Then if we have life,  
though we cannot see it,  
we may also have a soul,  
though it is invisible,"  
answered the child.**

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"Oh, not to that man," answered the child, "for I am told he denies God, and Heaven, and Hell, and even that man has a soul, because he cannot see it; but I would soon put him down."

The priest looked at him earnestly. "How?" he inquired.

"Why," said the child, "I would ask him if he believed he had life to show me his life."

"But he could not do that, my child," said the priest. "Life cannot be seen; we have it, but it is invisible."

"Then if we have life, though we cannot see it, we may also have a soul, though it is invisible," answered the child.

When the priest heard him speak these words, he fell down on his knees before him, weeping for joy, for now he knew his soul was safe; he had met one at last that believed. And he told the child his whole story—all his wickedness, and pride, and blasphemy against the great God; and how the angel had come to him, and told him of the only way in which he could be saved,

through the faith and prayers of someone that believed."

"Now, then," he said to the child, "take this penknife and strike it into my breast, and go on stabbing the flesh until you see the paleness of death on my face. Then watch - for a living thing will soar up from my body as I die, and you will then know that my soul has ascended to the presence of God. And when you see this thing, make haste and run to my school, and call on all my scholars to come and see that the soul of their master has left the body, and that all he taught them was a lie, for that there is a God who punishes sin, and a Heaven, and a Hell, and that man has an immortal soul destined for eternal happiness or misery."

"I will pray," said the child, "to have courage to do this work."

And he knelt down and prayed. Then when he rose up he took the penknife and struck it into the priest's heart, and struck and struck again till all the flesh was lacerated; but still the priest lived, though the agony was horrible, for he could not die until the 24 hours had expired.

At last the agony seemed to cease, and the stillness of death settled on his face. Then the child, who was watching, saw a beautiful living creature, with four snow-white wings, mount from the dead man's body into the air and go fluttering round his head. So he ran to bring the scholars; and when they saw it, they all knew it was the soul of their master, and they watched with wonder and awe until it passed from sight into the clouds.

And this was the first butterfly that was ever seen in Ireland; and now all men know that the butterflies are the souls of the dead, waiting for the moment when they may enter Purgatory, and so pass through torture to purification and peace.

But the schools of Ireland were quite deserted after that time, for people said, "What is the use of going so far to learn, when the wisest man in all Ireland did not know if he had a soul till he was near losing it, and was only saved at last through the simple belief of a little child." ☺



# America's First Home of Vedanta



Hindu temple at Vedanta Society of San Francisco, originally constructed in 1906 and now a city landmark.

# Searching your true nature & evaluating your lifestyle

By Dr. Usha Chowdhary

Hindu philosophy, like Christianity, focuses on the concept of trinity: God's existence as creator of the universe, preserver of the good and destroyer of evil in the world.

The *Bhagavadgita*, believed to be the essence of the Vedas, contains 18 chapters and 700 verses. The first 16 chapters focus on the immortal nature of soul and mortal nature of the human body. Chapters 17 and 18 offer 15 triads to describe "karma philosophy," which involves experiential training, learning and fine-tuning over a period of human life.

In each chapter (17 and 18), all but two of the triads have to do with the three gunas—sattva, rajas and tamas—which are described as natural-born qualities. In chapter 17 these two are:

1. Three kinds of austerities: austerities of speech, the body and mind
2. Three-fold designations of the Absolute: Om, Sat and Tat.

In Chapter 18 there are:

1. Three motivations of an action: knowledge, the object of knowledge and the knower
2. Three constituents of action: the doer, the action and the organ of action.

The rest of the trinities concern the gunas. The *Bhagavadgita* offers

information to help people place themselves in the applicable category and potential to make a choice to uplift their nature through self-discipline. For it is not the birth alone, but the way in which the earned life is lived that matters.

## TRY THE TRIADS

Take this self-reflective quiz, drawn from chapters 17 & 18 of the *Bhagavadgita*, to help determine which guna prevails in you

From Chapter 17:

### To whom do you pray?

- A. Worship of the gods
- B. Worship of Rakashasas and Yaksas
- C. Worship of spirits and ghosts

### Which foods do you enjoy?

- A. Foods that are sweet, bland and nourishing
- B. Foods that are salty, bitter, acidic or very hot
- C. Foods that are very rare, half-cooked or stale

### Which type of sacrifice do you perform?

- A. Sacrifice performed in congruence with the scriptures without desire for fruits
- B. Sacrifice performed for ostentation with desire for fruits
- C. Sacrifice performed without faith, fee, food distribution, sacred formula or sanction of scriptures

### What is the nature of your penance?

- A. Penance performed with supreme faith without desire for fruits
- B. Penance performed for winning respect, honor and worship
- C. Penance performed with deluded understanding and torture of mind, senses and body for oneself or others

### In what spirit do you give gifts?

- A. Gifts given for dutifulness or regard to the place, time and recipient of the gift
- B. Gifts given with gainful intention
- C. Gifts given at an improper place and time in a disrespectful, insulting manner to an undeserving person

From Chapter 18:

### What is the nature of your action or inaction?

- A. Dutiful performance of action without attachment to or desire for the fruits
- B. Withdrawal of actions due to fear of physical discomfort
- C. Giving up action out of ignorance

### Which type of knowledge do you possess?

- A. Knowledge generated by the concept of Oneness by which one sees harmony and unity
- B. The existence of diversity and variety to separate through discrimination
- C. Knowledge limited to one individual only and having little value or meaning for others

### What type of doer are you?

- A. Free from attachment, unegotistic, firm, vigorous and unaffected by



success or failure

B. Passionate, greedy, seeker of fruits of action, victim of violence and impure conduct, affected by duals of joys and sorrows

C. Piety, vulgarity, arrogance, deceit, procrastination, laziness and lack of self-control

**Are your actions justified by good reasons?**

A. Reason that knows the difference between right and wrong; shoulds and should nots; fear and fearlessness; and liberation and bondage

B. Reason by which one incorrectly understands what is right or wrong or what must or must not be done

C. Reason embedded in ignorance, regards wrong as right and everything contrary to the prescriptions

**What is the nature of your firmness?**

A. The unshaken firmness that is accomplished through the Yoga of meditation and by control of the mind, breathing and senses.

B. The firmness by which an individual seeks the fruits of action and values virtue, prosperity and pleasure.

C. The firmness that makes one not to abandon sleep, fear, grief, arrogance or depression.

**What type of joy do you enjoy?**

A. Joy that gets rid of sorrow; poison of initiation becomes nectar in the end and is born with placid mind.

B. The sensual joy that appears like nectar at first and poison in the end.

C. The joy that is derived from sleep, idleness, indulgence and carelessness.

As you probably guessed, if your answers were primarily "A," the Sattvic quality prevails in you. If "B" was your most common answer, then the Rajasic guna is prevalent in you. And if you answered mostly "C," the Tamasic quality is your prevailing guna. This quiz was not meant to be puzzling, as it can be easily understood and manipulated. It is meant to be answered honestly, so that self-improvement can incur. If your goal is to lead a good life, you should strive for the Sattvic level in all your thoughts and actions.

In the *Bhagavadgita*, Lord Krishna (a proponent of karma philosophy) asserts that one cannot perfect knowledge without action.

Therefore, action is superior to knowledge. The 15 triads in the last two chapters of the Gita, along with the concepts of prescriptive lifestyle in the first 16, clearly establish the parameters and directions that can serve as the guiding light for those

## A Vedic Prayer for Universal Peace

presented by Dr. Usha Chowdhary

Om Dyauḥ śāntir antarikṣam  
śāntiḥ pṛthivī śāntir āpaḥ śāntir oṣadhayaḥ śāntiḥ  
vanaspatayaḥ śāntir viśve devāḥ  
śāntir brahma śāntiḥ sarvaḥ śāntiḥ  
śāntir eva śāntiḥ sā mā śāntir edhi  
Om śāntiḥ, śāntiḥ, śāntiḥ

Oh God! Bring Peace through the unique elements of space, earth, water and medicines. Provide Peace to the gods of the universe through vegetation. Bestow peace on everyone through Brahma and all the human virtues! Oh Creator, Preserver and Re-Creator of the Universe: Bless us all with Peace, Peace, Peace.

who wish to follow it as their path. This path of karma can elevate their state of mind (socialized or cultured brain).☉

"I have found that the life persists in the midst of destruction. Therefore, there must be a higher law than that of destruction. Only under that law would well-ordered society be intelligible and life worth living.

"If that is the law of life, we must work it out in daily existence. Wherever there are wars, wherever we are confronted with an opponent, conquer by love. I have found that the certain law of love has answered in my own life as the law of destruction has never done.

"It takes a fairly strenuous course of training to attain a mental state of nonviolence. It is the disciplined life like the life of a soldier. The perfect state is reached only when the mind, body and speech are in proper coordination. Every problem would lend itself to solution if we determined to make the law of truth and nonviolence the law of life."

— Paramahansa Yogananda  
*Autobiography of a Yogi*, 1989, p.440



# Vivekananda back in Chicago ...to stay

Since Svāmi Śrī Vivekānanda's epic visit to Chicago in 1893, local residents have made many efforts to keep his message in the public eye. A plaque has been installed at the Art Institute of Chicago where he once spoke. A part of Michigan Avenue has been renamed "Swami Vivekananda Way." And, on July 12, 1998, a 10-foot high statue of the holy sage was erected outside the Hindu Temple of Greater Chicago.

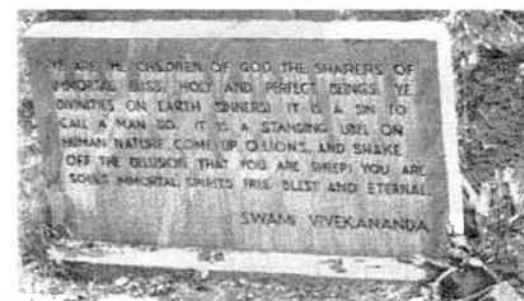
Although numerous statues of Svāmi Śrī Vivekānanda can be found throughout India, the replica in Chicago, created by Calcutta sculptors G. Paul and Sons, is the first statue of him to be erected in North America.

More than 1,000 people including representatives of the Jewish, Sikh, Jain, Catholic and Protestant faiths, attended the unveiling ceremony.

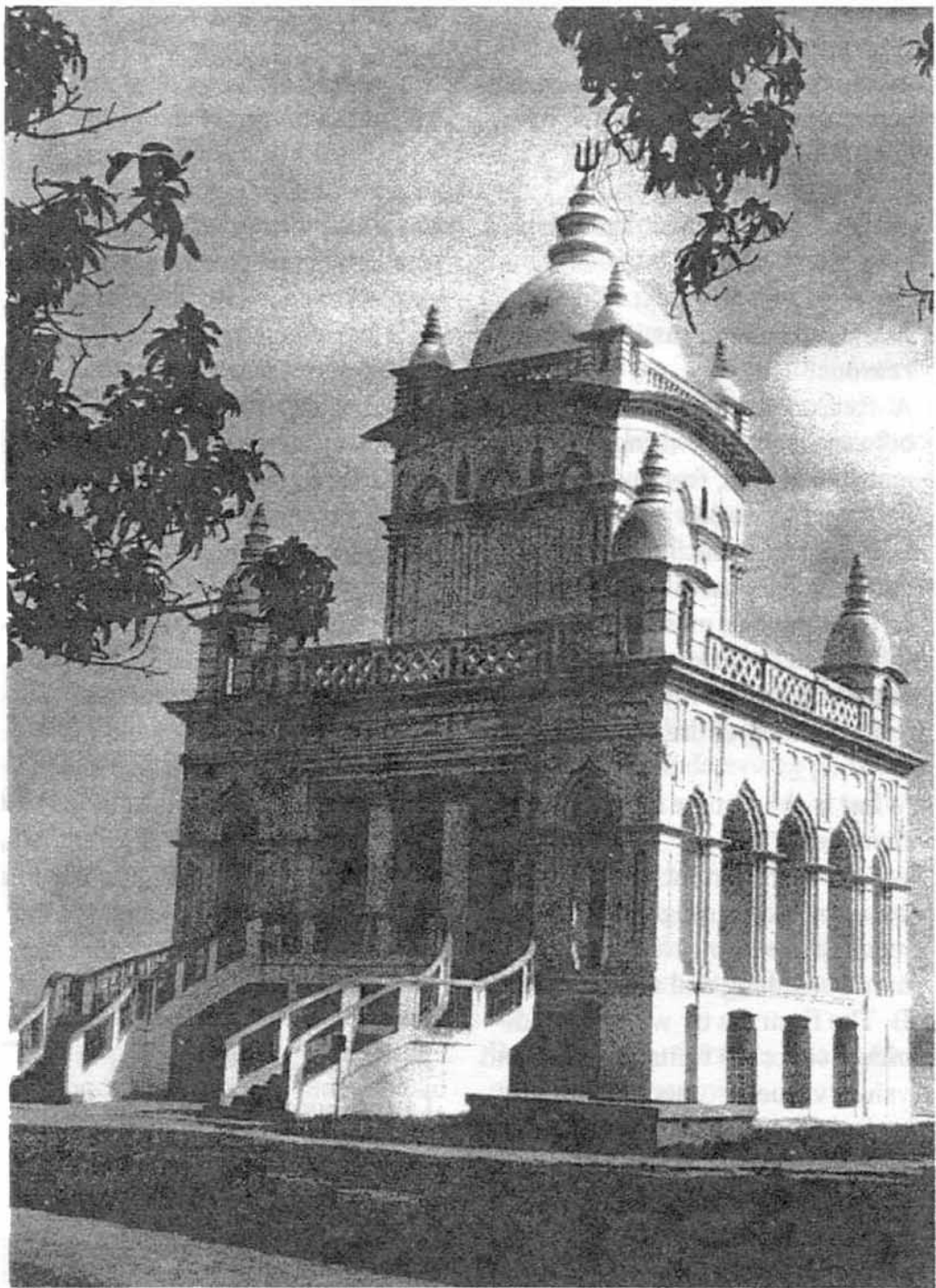
"He opened the door in the West for Eastern philosophies," said Shiva Singh Khalsa, a Sikh minister in the audience.

The plaque below the statue reads that he was the "first spiritual and cultural ambassador to the West and introduced Hinduism to America."

The statue of a man who moved mountains to unite valleys of understanding now stands on "Vivekanda Hill."



*Although the Chicago statue is the first in North America, there are many such monuments in India. Shown above is the plaque under a statue in Mumbai.*



Just days before giving up his mortal body, Swami Vivekananda pointed to a spot on the banks of the Holy River Gangā and said:

**"When I give up the body, cremate it there!"**

The place Swamiji chose was close to the Bilva tree under which he used to sit and talk to the inmates of the monastery and to the visitors.

After Swami Vivekananda's disembodiment, devotees built the temple shown above on that very same sacred spot.



# An Electronic Temple for All

Veda Vedanta Mandiram, in cooperation with some cultural organizations and residents of Indian origin, is proposing to create and maintain a Universal Prayer Hall.

The Universal Prayer Hall will be a unique reservoir of India's cultural heritage embodied in sound and sight.

The Prayer Hall will facilitate every devotee to freely worship his or her object of faith and devotion. It will not be limited to any specific religion, cult, creed or faith. It will

belong to everyone, and everyone will belong to it. It will be an ideal Sanctum Sanctorum of the 21st Century.

As soon as a devotee steps into the Prayer Hall, he or she will be greeted by the Omkārahmanāda and its anuranana--the recital of the mystic universal syllable Om, followed by its reverberations. The basic scriptures of all the major religions of the world will be stored there as recorded sound and can be played back just by pressing a key. The representations (images or icons) of the chosen gods and goddesses can be stored as 3-D pictures and displayed at will by just clicking the respective icon.

Bhagavan Buddha, Shri Mahavira, Jesus Christ and Shri Guru Nanak Deva could all be there. There would be recitations of the Vedas, the Bhagavadgita, Ramayana, Bible, Guru Grantha Sahib and other holy books. The limit will be the ingenuity and skill of devotees to store what they want to retrieve and their ability to fund and maintain the project.

This electronic reservoir will not only feature incarnations of the past, but also figures and voices of the pre-

sent, including: builders of modern India such as Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru; and prophets and saints such as Ramakrishna Paramahansa and Vishvabandhu Svami Shri Vivekananda.

An Om Mandir was proposed in a sutra form by Svami Shri Tirtha more than 100 years ago. His proposal was based on his fundamental faith in the unity and universality of all the religions of the world. His Mandir was intended to be a place for meditation

and prayer generating a holy environment where a devotee could have a direct communion with God.

This may sound like

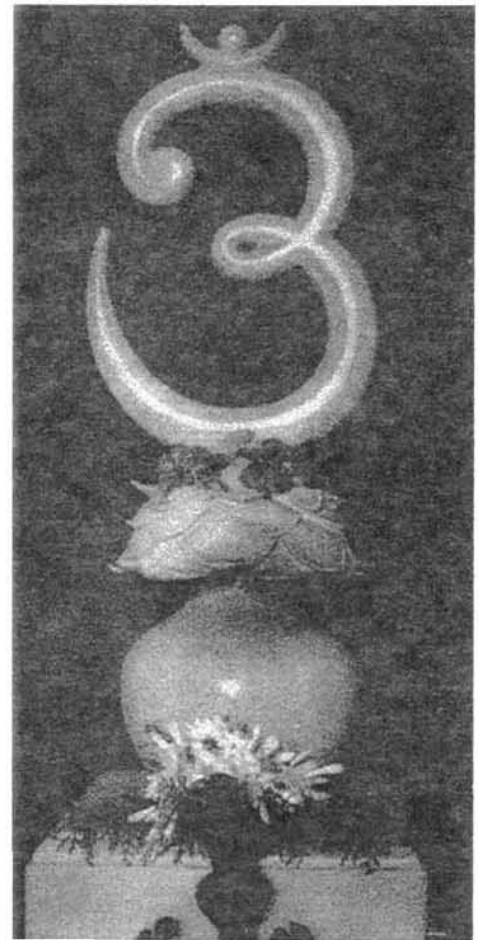
Utopia, but yesterday's utopias become today's realities. The light of the dawn (Ushas) comes long before the Sun shines. People with vision start thinking of things long before they are realized. It all depends upon the nature of their dreams and their power to make them real.

Universities like Harvard and Chicago; Depositories of books (the embodiments of knowledge) like the Center for Research Libraries in Chicago; and America's national institutions like the Library of Congress in Washington D.C. have been receiving millions of dollars from the government and philanthropic foundations to preserve India's cultural heritage in book form. However, our project extends past the printed word and strives to preserve the spoken words.

It is our duty to use the technology we now have to capture the sight and sound of yesterday and today for a peaceful tomorrow. ©

-Dr. Murarilal Nagar

The basic scriptures of all the major religions of the world will be stored there as recorded sound and can be played back just by pressing a key.



*The holy symbol Om in the Temple of Universal Prayer (Mahāsamādhi Mandira) of Svāmi Śrī Vivekānda*

A dedicated devotee delivers his divine prayer:

O Merciful Lord Shiva Shankara Mahādeva,  
Shining with the crest-gem of the crescent moon !

Be kind and grant me soon my coveted boon—  
Let it be the bank of the holy river Gangā.

Let there be a pious bilva tree to make me free.

And may the time be nearly the dawn of dawn.

Then alone let my Prāṇa leave this mortal body.

-Rendered into English from Hindi by Dr. Murarilal Nagar

# **HONORING THE MOTHER**

## **THE CRADLES OF MANY GREAT MEN, WHO ROCKED THE WORLD BY THEIR WORDS OR DEEDS, WERE ROCKED BY THE GENTLE HANDS OF THEIR MOTHERS.**

We at *Om Shānti* honor the Universal Mother, who resides in all women and looks after all creatures of Nature, by paying our respects to Shrimati Kamalādevī Mehta. This family is noble and selfless, serving all who deserve. Kamala's daughter, Pushpaji Khanna, another kind and generous mother, has helped Om Shānti in many ways. Every great mother has her great mother, and Pushpaji, along with Kamalaji's honorable husband and sons, and the rest of the Mehta family will remember her fondly.

Svami Maheshanand Giri, at the Mount Abu Ashram composed an ode honoring Kamalaji after her passing:



“Dharme ratā Shambhubhaktā patisevāparāyaṇā.  
Kamalā Mehatā Devī Gurujñānasamāgatā.”

“Dedicated to Dharma, a devotee of Shiva and always rendering service to her bati, Kamala Mehta Devi acquired the learning from Guru (or a great knowledge); and she achieved divine knowledge.”

May that knowledge be a means for the union with the Universal Peace for Shrimati Kamalādevī Mehta, a Universal Mother.  
Om Shanti, Shanti, Shanti.

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## **What is Veda Vedanta Mandiram?**

VVM is a non-profit charitable organization dedicated to increasing awareness of Vedic culture and tradition by presenting ancient wisdom in a way that is relevant to our modern readers. If you have enjoyed reading our publication, we request that you kindly make a charitable contribution. With your help we can continue to enlighten people around the world who, like you, still honor the Culture and Truth of ancient India. Please send your contribution - along with any comments, suggestions or story ideas - to our headquarters:

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We hope to hear from you soon!

