

### Call of Vivekananda

Om. A-sa-to ma sad gam-ma-ya. Ta-ma-so-ma jyo-tir gam-ma-ya. Mri-tyor ma a-mri-tam ga-ma-ya. Avir avir ma e-dhi. Rudra yat te dak-shi-nam mu-kham. Tena mam pahi nityam. Tena mam pahi nityam. Tena mam pahi nityam.

Lead us from the unreal to the Real. Lead us from darkness unto Light. Lead us from death to Immortality. Reveal to us Thy Resplendent Truth and evermore protect us, Oh Lord, by Thy Sweet and Compassionate Face, by Thy Sweet and Compassionate Face, by Thy Sweet and Compassionate Face.

The subject of my talk this morning is: The Call of Vivekananda. Swami Vivekananda's name is well known in connection with the Vedanta movement in this country. It was he who brought Vedanta to the US in 1893. His one hundred and twenty-fifth birthday will be tomorrow and we shall be celebrating this occasion next Sunday at 10:30 am, but this morning's service is a prelude to this birthday celebration, 125<sup>th</sup> birthday celebration of this great prophet, Swami Vivekananda.

Those of you who have read his life story and some of his works are familiar with the dynamic role he played during his three year's stay in the US. Two times he visited the US, first in 1893 as to represent Hinduism in the Parliament of Religions in Chicago. And second time in 1900, 1898, no 1899. So all together his stay in the West was three years and a half. He had a very short life, he died at the age of thirty-nine, but he had to do many things during this short span of life. He was the chief disciple of the great master, Sri Ramakrishna, his messenger. In fact, he was the messenger of the ancient spiritual wisdom of India.

Great personalities in different walks of life, never die. They live their life, but they leave a call. Not merely in the field of religion or philosophy, but in all fields, great personalities who bring new ideas and new power to the human society, we call them... we call them messengers; we call them prophets. They never die and humanity can never forget them. This is more so in the field of religion and spiritual life. So Vivekananda's call is that undying call. And his call has three directions: call to India, call to the West, and a universal call, which is equally applicable to the East and West.

Now his first call was to his listeners at the Parliament of Religions. He addressed the assembly of about seven thousand people by addressing [them] as "Brothers and sisters of America." Now people felt that in this address there was such power and such love that they at once felt indrawn to him and a loud applause was given for several minutes, because he... for him, all human beings, men or women are one in spirit. That was the teaching of the ancient philosophy of Vedanta. And he had seen this great philosophy, spiritual philosophy personified in his master, Sri Ramakrishna, so he always carried with him this outlook, this outlook of unity, this outlook of love and sympathy. And when he found in this strange country, people were sitting with expectant eyes and they have gathered in the name of different religions, representatives of different religion were there, so he at once felt the presence of his master. It was his master, Sri Ramakrishna [who] stood for the harmony of religions. So the heart's

inspiration, the heart's feeling, came out in those three few words of address, "Brothers and Sisters of America." So that call, he had not died. You see, those who come to preach Vedanta, they have to remember that in the spiritual level there is a basic unity among mankind. And when people of all countries, in all phases of life, remember this unity, that goes a long way to build up the peace which we are seeking. Among these conquerors and dissensions and wars and rivalries and all, this ancient call has to ring in our heart, "Brothers and sisters."

We need not say, "Brothers and sisters of God." See? Vivekananda preached that this... that all human beings are one does not need theology. It is a basic truth, which we have to experience-- we have to study and experience, just as one does not need any science to prove the existence of the sky, of the space. So through Vivekananda's teachings we find that he preached this basic unity of mankind in exposing the spiritual truth of the world and man, which is... in Vedanta we call it Brahman, Atman. So this is the ancient teaching of the Upanishads, which have been manifest in many lives in India.

In India, philosophy or religion has to be lived, not merely preached and studied, but lived. And he came from that country, where religion and philosophy are lived from day to day. So in his call, we at once see this... his heart. We could say that was Vivekananda's first call. And in that Parliament of Religions he spoke several times. And the paper, the main paper he read about Hinduism, there he quoted a verse from one of the Upanishads, the Svetasvatara Upanishad: "Hear o ye children of immortal bliss, I have found in my heart that ancient being, by knowing whom one goes beyond all darkness and delusion." "Srnvantu visve amrtasya putra a ye dhamani divanyi tasthuh.. vedaham etam purusam mahantam aditya-varnam tamasah parastat."<sup>1</sup> [2:5 3:8] He quoted this, and then he said, "Allow me to call you brethren, by that sweet name-- heirs of immortal bliss... Ye divinities on earth -- sinners! It is a sin to call a man so; it is a standing libel on human nature."<sup>2</sup>

So he was never tired of speaking [about] the divinity of man. And, according to him, it is... it has to be put into practice. See? We have to rethink in term[s] of our relation with man. A man irrespective of color, or creed, or country, or religion-- is basically spirit, is basically the divine. That is the teaching of the Upanishads and the Vedanta. And that is the teaching of the saints and seers of India and he came to represent this ancient teaching. So he was not afraid and boldly asserted that ye are divinities. All men and women are brothers and sisters in this because they're all divine; they're all carrying that flame of the infinite spirit, the atman, the Soul.

And through his teachings he spoke about not merely the unity of mankind in the spirit, but unity of the world in which we are function[ing]. That unity cannot be a material unity. Material unity is there; all when we say everything is matter, when we say everything is energy, when we say everything is life, there is [unity] for the supreme unity is the unity of spirit. And the teaching of the Upanishads declare that it is the spirit, it is the atman or Brahman, the Sat-Chit-Ananda that is the basic reality. And from that, the other levels come: time, space, or life, prana and mana, mind. Then the sense of egoism and this also the bliss. These are the teachings of the Upanishads, but in modern language the combining with the thought of the east and west, he presented these ancient teachings, the gospel

of unity. This unity, that is in all existence, in the material, in matter, in energy, in life, there is but one binding thread, the thread of unity. That is the Paramatman; that is God in, in our common language. But he brought a God, not of theology, a God who is living in heaven and God who is going to punish us. Not that. We could say a scientific God – just as matter, energy, life, these are things which can be scientifically investigated.

So according to Vivekananda, spirit, the basic, the deepest truth of man, and the deepest truth of the world can be scientifically investigated by people who of course, has to follow the procedure. Each science has its own method. So the science of man, the science of the spirit also has its own methods. And if one is ready to follow these methods, one can surely, surely experience this unity is his heart and in other human beings, fellow human beings, and also in nature. There is a basic unity between nature and man, which the poets and philosophers present from time to time in their writings. But Vivekananda spoke of this basic unity, not to remain in books, but [which] has to be practiced in life, through what we call yogas.

Yoga is the practical science of bringing spiritual truths into our everyday experience. So he presented four such yogas: karma yoga, bhakti yoga, raja yoga and jnana yoga. Through these different yogas are methods of communion. A person has to develop this sense of spirit in him. A man has to develop this spiritual truth in his actions, in his thoughts, in his behavior, so that is the way to build a society of peace and harmony. The society that science is always discovering and inventions is giving us, is not going to be a society of harmony and peace. Something else is necessary. That is the science of man's spiritual nature and the world's spiritual nature. And so, Vivekananda's call was for this, his call [was] for the unity and for the divinity of existence, and also there's a new concept of God.

Different theological concepts are good in themselves. But– now that this world is becoming more and more one—different countries are coming closer to each other, so in religious thinking also there should be a... a feeling of unity. And that unity can come through a new outlook on man, a new outlook on nature, and a new outlook on God. That is what we find in Vivekananda's writings and his speeches and his...his mission. His mission was to have this Vedanta put into practice through these yogas. He has four very important books: the Karma Yoga, the Jnana Yoga, the Raja Yoga, and the Bhakti Yoga. So man, if he analyzed the man's nature according to the ancient teachers of India – a man has an emotional nature. Man has an active nature; man has a rational nature; and man has a psychic nature. So all these natures have to be satisfied by the practice of these yogas.

So, that was his great mission and great call. When in India, his call was to...India was under subjugation, you see. It was a slave nation. And he instigated the spirit of freedom, the spirit of self dependence, inspired the Indian national movement for freedom [which] has much of its inspiration from the... the poise of Vivekananda. He used to quote one passage from the Upanishads, from the Katha Upanishad. "Uttisthata jagrata prapya varan nibodhata."<sup>3</sup>[1:3:14] "Arise awake and stop not till the goal is reached." So that became, the early, early, early fighters of Indian freedom, they got great inspiration from

Vivekananda. See for Vivekananda, freedom is something won, political freedom, social freedom, or religious freedom. See?

All freedom is coming from one source, so according to him, freedom is in the voice of the universe. The whole universe is really moving in search of freedom. His generalizations are wonderful when we read his, his messages. And that is why he... America, he loved this land of freedom. And for him, one of the holiest days of the year was the fourth of July. In fourth... he wrote in a great, a big poem on the fourth of July. And he chose fourth of July for his body to go. You see he died in the fourth of July in 1902. And for him, he would... in this poem to the fourth of July, he sees the future, which has slowly been seen with the historians' eye. The dream of Vivekananda, the fourth of July—for him the fourth of July, the American independence from England was a symbol of a great freedom that is to come to all countries in this world.

America is showing the way of the depressed people, the subject people to assert their freedom, see? For him, this was a holy pursuit. So he, in this poem he says, the freedom, he considers as a devi, as a goddess. He's pursuing the light. So he invokes freedom. As you know the Statue of Liberty, you see, if we remember the Statue of Liberty. So he invokes this god or goddess to have this light not merely in one country, but all people, all subject people. All should be free. And he considered this country, this great country as this melting pot of all nations. This was his dream.

All great thinkers have dreams. They come with some visions, which are not... which cannot be fulfilled in their lifetime, but it... leave their voice. This is true of many great personalities. Turns out that even Jesus Christ, even Buddha, the messages that he brought they... they are not dead. They are slowly... they are being fulfilled. So also, these Vivekananda's visions and dreams. If we watch what is happening, we see what is happening around this world, this, so what he wanted see, they are slowly becoming true. And sometimes, these great prophets, their language is bound to be, sound like images, not practical. But they have a... a vision of the future, and they cannot describe that vision in the current language.

I shall read Vivekananda's idea of God. He says, "May I be born again and again, and suffer thousands of miseries so that I may worship the only God that exists, the only God I believe in, the sum total of all souls; and above all, my God, the wicked, my God the miserable, my God the poor of all races, of all species is the special object of my worship."<sup>4</sup> And in another place, Vivekananda says, "If one millionth part of the men and women who live in this world simply sit down and for a few minutes say, 'You are all God O ye men and O ye animals and living beings, you are all the manifestations of the one living Deity' the whole world will be changed in half an hour. Instead of throwing tremendous bombshells of hatred into every corner, instead of projecting currents of jealousy and of evil thought, in every country people will think that it is all He."<sup>5</sup>

Now, Swami Vivekananda believed that religion is immensely practical. And his great idea is to see the divine in all beings and to make the whole life spiritual through these yogas. Actions. If in actions we remember one's divinity, then actions, work becomes worship. These things are detailed in his books on yoga, his *Karma Yoga*, *Bhakti Yoga*. Those who are of an emotional bent of

mind, they need a God to worship, a God to love, a God to pray to. And this hope is found in the bhakti yoga. And those of a psychic, a psychical temperament, they have to practice what is called the raja yoga, the concentration of the mind, the practice of the breath control. All these things are come from the raja yoga. So he has detailed this in his work on *Raja Yoga*. And jnana yoga is the yoga of the rational person. Analysis, see? A complete analysis of man's body, man's mind, man's vital principle and also the spiritual analysis of man's experience. These things are treated in *Jnana Yoga*.

So Vivekananda thought that these yogas are immensely practical things. Those persons who are seeking a way to peace and harmony of these conflicts and tensions, they should be drawn to bring these yogas in their life, according to their temperament and their inclination. So he is again in one of his lectures he says his hope for the future. "A time must come when every man will be as intensely practical in the scientific world as in the spiritual, and then that Oneness, the harmony of Oneness will pervade the whole world. The whole of mankind will become Jivanmuktas, free whilst living. We are all struggling towards that one end through our jealousies and hatreds, through our love and co-operation. A tremendous stream is flowing towards the ocean carrying us all along with it; and though like straws and scraps of paper we may at times float aimlessly about, in the long run we are sure to join the Ocean of Life and Bliss."<sup>6</sup>

He was, Vivekananda was a very optimistic man. He... his motto was, "Even though there is failures, consider the fight, the struggle as worship. Never be depressed." So for the human society, he had cherished this hope, that there will be a time when man will discover this basic spiritual unity and then real harmony and peace can...can come. Man... man will become god-like. You see, will become angels.

Then his, another call was for the call of the harmony of these different religions. He did not... he did not encourage that one religion should [dominate while] all other religions are minor religions and only one religion should be supreme –unity of mankind through one religion. According to Vivekananda that was an idle dream that could never be. The great religions have come according to the need of man and they are going to stay. So his formula... he said, "I would have been happy. I would be happy if there were in this earth as many sects as there are human beings... Sect itself is not a danger to man, but sectarianism is." You see, when you say that my sect is true, my religion is true and others have to come to my viewpoint, then the danger comes. But if you know how... if you know how to appreciate each other and how to live together, you see with different [traditions]... then, you are building the... a bridge of unity.

So, he said, "I accept all the religions that were in the past, and worship with them all; I worship God in every one of them, in whatever form they worship Him. I shall go to the mosque of the Mohammedan; I shall enter the Christian's church and kneel before the crucifix; I shall enter the Buddhistic temple, where I shall take refuge in Buddha and his law. I shall go into the forest and sit down in meditation with the Hindu, who is trying to see the Light, which enlightens the hearts of every one. Not only shall I do all these, but I shall keep my heart open for all the religions that may come in the future. Is God's book finished? Are His revelations still going on? It is a marvelous book, the spiritual revelations of the

world, the Bible, the Vedas, the Koran, and all other sacred books are but so many pages and an infinite number of pages remain yet to be unfolded. I shall leave my heart open for all of them. We stand in the present, but open ourselves in the infinite future. We take in all that has been in the past, enjoy the light of the present, and open every window of the heart for all that will come in the future. Salutation to all the prophets of the past, to all the great ones of the present, and to all that are to come in the future!”<sup>7</sup>

And in his... in one of his addresses in the Parliament of Religions in Chicago in 1893, he made this remark, “Holiness, purity and charity are not the exclusive possessions of any church in the world. Every system has produced men and women of the most exalted character. In the face of this evidence, if anybody dreams of the exclusive survival of his own religion and the destruction of others, I pity him from the bottom of my heart and point out to him that upon the banner of every religion will soon be written, in spite of resistance, ‘Help and not Fight,’ ‘Assimilation and not Destruction,’ ‘Harmony and Peace and not Dissension.’”<sup>8</sup>

It was Swami Vivekananda’s belief that religion when properly understood cannot be in conflict with science. The amazing discoveries of science, according to Vedanta, does not nullify religion, if you understand religion in the Vedantic way. The Vedantic way of understanding religion frees you from dogmatism, see? Now, [for example] Darwin’s theory of evolution. People began to... at least the churches began to cry, “Our religion is gone. Religion is gone.” Vivekananda would have laughed at this, because whatever science is discovering, it is discovering the laws of God. Theory of Evolution was in God’s mind. See?

A simple rethinking resolves these antagonisms. If you are bound to a book and literally you see, then you are bound. So Vivekananda tried to present in his days whatever science was discovered, but he was a keen student of science, whatever was discovered in his days. Darwin’s theory was discovered in his days. He did not see any antagonism. So whatever now is discovered, Vivekananda would not see any antagonism between religion and science. Rather, the more science discovers, see a religious man should be thrilled. Oh this is God’s book [that] is being unfolded to us. We did not know God had these wonders in His cold storage. [laughs and audience laughs] And now there through different persons there have been revealed to us, this great discovery of science, including what issue. If something comes and we are... we become... our faith becomes shaken. Oh, this will go to shake the foundation of religion. But not so! If you establish religion on a really ... a rock, you see, then religion can never be shaken. Religion can... one of his favorite expressions was, “Religion and science will shake hands with each other.” So, he... the study of Vivekananda is very beneficial, even now in this age, when we are really coming across new thoughts, new theories. Now, Vivekananda sees that these are really the expressions of the Infinite, the Infinite Brahman, the Infinite God. That is the foundation of nature. That is the foundation of man, of society. So Vivekananda’s call is not just as in the case of many other thinkers, many others who have brought revolution either in politics or in society. So [this was the call of] Vivekananda -- in the field of religion and philosophy, or the total of humanity

as I mentioned earlier. He had a call for the East. He had a call for the West and he had a call for the... humanity at large. And [for] this humanity at large Vivekananda's teachings and his sayings are really prophetic and very helpful in our confusions of modern days.

*As I mentioned we shall... tomorrow there will be his actual one hundred and twenty-fifth birthday and there... we shall have a simple worship in our temple, but that is not the actual celebration, will be next Sunday. Next Sunday, I shall announce that afterwards, in the morning the usual Sunday lecture will be postponed and there will be this celebration.*

*Next Sunday as I mentioned we shall be celebrating Swami Vivekananda's one hundred and twenty-fifth birthday with a program of worship, meditation, chanting, devotional songs and refreshments. 10:30. The function begins at 10:30 in this temple, and this coming Wednesday instead of the Gita class, I shall be conducting a special Upanishad class with guided meditation at 7:30 in the evening. And next Saturday there won't be any class. Now instead of my usual closing chant, our choir will sing a song to Sri Ramakrishna which has been sung here several times. So they will sing this song: Parama Purusha Ramakrishna.*

*[Choir member first reads in English. Unfortunately the words are distant from the microphone and there are intervening sounds so this may not be exact.]*

*Adoration to Ramakrishna*

*Adoration to Ramakrishna*

*Adoration to Ramakrishna*

*The embodiment of a supreme person and incarnation of his age*

*The enlightener of all who wish to cross [other words here?]*

*The ocean of compassion*

*Ramakrishna, the truth beyond speech and mind*

*The eternal reign of knowledge, personified, beginningless*

*Revealed to the pure mind thou art the destroyer of all doubts.*

*Seated under the Panchavati grove*

*The great yogi is immersed in meditation.*

*O lord of Sarada, be gracious to us,*

*Thou destroyer of the delusion of relative existence.*

*O Lord the giver of devotion and liberation.*

*O Gadadhar son of Chandra Devi*

*Thy servant takes eternal refuge at thy lotus feet.... Ramakrishna.*

*Parama Purusha Ramakrishna*

*Yuguvatara sarva dharma sthapaka Deva*

*Karuna sagara*

*Vakya manasatita satya*

*Veda murati anadi tattwa*

*Shuddha buddhi ganya shakala*

*Saamshaya Hara*

*Panchyavati padapasina*

*Mahayogi dhyana Magana*

*Saradapati bhava kripalu*

*Samsara bhaya moha nashana  
 Bhakti mukti dayaka prabhu  
 Gadadhara Chandra tanaya  
 Sharanagata sevaka yachita charana kamala*

1. Svetasvatara Upanisad in: The Principal Upanisads, ed. by S. Radhakrishnan. New York: Harper & Brothers, c. 1953. p. 719, 727.
2. The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda, Volume 1, Addresses at the Parliament of Religions. Paper on Hinduism, 19<sup>th</sup> September, 1893, Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 15<sup>th</sup> ed, 1977, c. 1847, p. 11.
3. Katha Upanisad in: The Principal Upanisads, ed. by S. Radhakrishnan. New York: Harper & Brothers, c. 1953, p. 628.
4. Letter from Swami Vivekananda to Mary Hale, 9<sup>th</sup> July 1897, in: Letters of Swami Vivekananda. Mayavati: Advaita Ashrama, 2<sup>nd</sup> new ed, c. 1964, 6<sup>th</sup> impression 1986, p. 350.
5. The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda, Volume 2, Chapter XV, The Real and the Apparent Man, delivered in New York, Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, c. 1847, 13<sup>th</sup> ed 1976, p. 287.
6. The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda, Volume 2, Chapter IX, Unity in Diversity. London 3<sup>rd</sup> November, 1896, Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, c. 1847, 13<sup>th</sup> ed 1976, p. 188.
7. The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda, Volume 2, Practical Vedanta and other Lectures. The Way to the Realization of a Universal Religion. Universalist Church, Pasadena, California, 28th January 1900, Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, c. 1847, 13<sup>th</sup> ed 1976, p. 374. [Slight variations from this text as read in the lecture.]
8. The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda, Volume 1, Addresses at the Parliament of Religions. Address at the Final Session, 27<sup>th</sup> September 1893, Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 15<sup>th</sup> ed, 1977, c. 1847, p. 24.