



## Newsletter Archives

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### Swami Vivekananda the Revolutionary Monk of Modern Hinduism

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Swami Vivekananda, born Narendranath Dutta, was essentially a Hindu Brahmachari and monk, who was the pioneer to introduce the authentically Indian philosophies of Yoga and Vedanta to the rest of the world.

He was responsible for reviving Hindu culture and renewing a spirit of nationalism in the Colonial India that had prevailed during his time. He also worked about to bring Hinduism to the fore and giving it the status of one of the major religions of the world, by the 19th Century. The most famed disciple of Saint Ramakrishna, Swami Vivekananda went on to become the founder of the Ramakrishna Math and the Ramakrishna Mission as well.

Viveknanda is probably best known for his inspiring speech on Hinduism at the Parliament of the World's Religions, held at Chicago in the year 1893, where he had astounded and impressed the audience by starting with the phrase, "Sisters and Brothers of America".

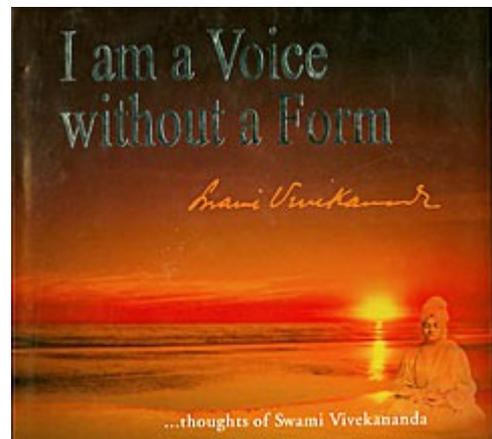
While Vivekananda came to be regarded as India's spiritual ambassador in the United States, he is revered as a patriotic saint in modern India. To date, his birthday is celebrated as the National Youth Day.

## Birth and Early Days of Viveknanda

Born in Calcutta on 12 January, 1863, Vivekananda was originally named Narendranath Dutta. He was born to a traditional Bengali Kayastha couple and so, was brought up in an ascetic environment. Narendra's grandfather, Durga Charan Das, decided to renounce the world when he was merely 25 years old. He had then left home to become a monk.

Narendra's father, Vishwanath Dutta, was a practising attorney in the Calcutta High Court. Possessing a liberal and progressive outlook, both in religious and social terms, Vishwanath was known to be a strong man and a rebel of sorts. Contrarily, Narendra's mother, Bhuvaneshwari Devi, was very traditional, religious and pious. She yearned for a son and even asked a relative to make religious offering to Lord Shiva at Varanasi, so that she would be able to bear a son. It is believed that she had a dream shortly after that, wherein Shiva promised her that he would be born as her son. After his birth, his mother named him Vireshwara, meaning "powerful God".

Narendra imbibed his mother's religious and spiritual nature. On the other hand, he was also influenced by his father's rational and practical way of thinking. He learned the value of self-control from his mother and yet, was a rebel, just like his father. He believed in



...thoughts of Swami Vivekananda

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OF SWAMI VIVEKANANDA**

being pure and guarded his honor at all times, without in any way causing harm to others he came in contact with.

Continuing with his regular meditation, he soon mastered the higher levels and could even go towards the state of Samadhi. Even as a child, he was fascinated by monks and wandering mendicants. He would visualize a light during his meditation and even in sleep and had visions of Gautama Buddha, who he adored right from childhood.

A very intelligent and inquisitive child, Narendra had a wide variety of interests and was especially brilliant in religion, philosophy, arts, literature, history and the social sciences. He was deeply involved in learning the Hindu scriptures such as the Vedas and the Upanishads; the Ramayana and the Mahabharata; the Bhagavad Gita and the Puranas. He also underwent training in Hindustani music from Ustad Beni Gupta and Ustad Ahamad Khan.

Even from a very young age, Narendra showed dislike for blind superstition and caste discrimination. He would never accept anything that did not have a pragmatic, scientific basis.

Narendra enrolled in the Metropolitan Institution of Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar in the year 1871 and continued his studies till 1877. He then moved to Raipur with his family and returned a couple of years later to Calcutta.

## **Narendra's College Life**

On returning to Calcutta, Narendra cleared the entrance examination for the famed Presidency College, Calcutta. There, he undertook further study in western philosophy and logic and the history of European nations from the General Assembly's Institution, which is at present known as the Scottish Church College.

Studying the works of stalwarts such as David Hume, Auguste Comte, Immanuel Kant, Charles Darwin and so on, Narendra also regularly corresponded with the likes of Herbert Spencer. He then went on to translate Spencer's book, Education, into Bengali.

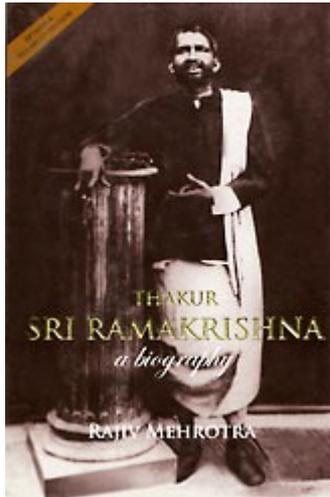
Narendra was considered a genius by many of his own professors. In fact, he came to be known as *Srutidhara*, one with a prodigious memory. He passed his Fine Arts examination in 1881 and acquired a Bachelor of Arts degree in 1884.

## **The Brahma Samaj**

Later, Narendra joined a Freemason's fraternity and also of a branch of the Brahma Samaj, headed by Keshub Chandra Sen. While he was initially influenced by the Brahma Samaj's way of thinking, which included belief in a formless God and was anti idol-worship, he soon became restless and decided to go further into his spiritual inquest. He then went about asking several elitist residents of Calcutta if they had indeed seen God and what it felt like, but could not find answers for any of his questions.

That was the time he was introduced to the saint Ramakrishna Pramahansa. His professor, Hastie, made a passing mention of the saint during his lecture at the General Assembly's Institution, suggesting that his students visit Ramakrishna of Dakshineswar. This spurred on Narendra and a few other students to visit Ramakrishna.

## Meeting Ramakrishna



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**THAKUR SRI RAMAKRISHNA  
- A BIOGRAPHY**

by

**RAJIV MEHROTRA**

Narendra's meeting with saint Ramakrishna in 1881 was the actual turning point in his life. Initially, upon seeing him, Narendra thought that he looked very ordinary and spoke in simple language. Narendra wondered if he would actually be the great teacher he was made out to be.

He went up to the saint and asked him if he had seen God. To this, the master answered that he indeed had seen God and that he saw Him as clearly as he saw anyone else, only, in a more powerful and intense way. Narendra was impressed and from that day on, visited him every single day.

In the beginning, Narendra did not accept Ramakrishna as his Guru. Being a member of the Brahmo Samaj, he rejected the very idea of Ramakrishna's worship of Goddess Kali. He also had no regard for the Advaita philosophy, which states that all are one with the Absolute. However, he felt a certain pull towards the saint and therefore, visited him regularly.

Ramakrishna patiently answered all of Narendra's questions, asking him to inspect things from all angles, before accepting or defying them. Narendra kept meeting Ramakrishna for 5 years, during which he was slowly getting ready to renounce all in order to attain God realization. In due course of time, Narendra also accepted Ramakrishna as his Guru and completely surrendered to him, becoming his faithful disciple.

In the year 1885, saint Ramakrishna was diagnosed with throat cancer and was transferred first to Calcutta and then to Cossipore. During this time, he was under the care of Narendra and a few other disciples. During the saint's last few days, Ramakrishna gave Narendra and a few other senior disciples ochre monastic robes to wear. This time marked the first monastic order of Ramakrishna. Narendra is also believed to have experienced the state of Nirvikalpa Samadhi during his time in Cossipore.

Narendra's spiritual training continued under Ramakrishna, who taught him that service to mankind was indeed equal to the service of God. As the saint's final days approached, he gave Narendra the responsibility of taking care of all the other disciples in the monastery, also telling them to start regarding Vivekananda as their leader, henceforth.

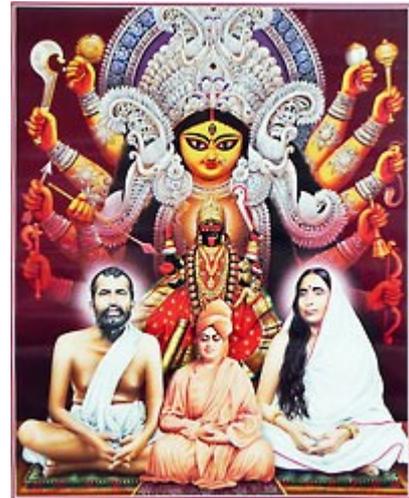
Saint Ramakrishna attained Mahasamadhi in the wee hours of the morning on 16 August, 1886.

## Founding the Ramakrishna Math

Ramakrishna had a number of disciples who were Grihastas (led family lives). These disciples funded the monastic disciples, who were headed by Vivekananda. Together, they formed a fellowship, initially starting their activities in a dilapidated residence at Baranagar. Since the house was abandoned and in bad condition, it cost very little rent and maintenance. It was also close to the place where Ramakrishna was cremated.

This house went on to become the first building of the Ramakrishna Math, which was the original monastery of the Ramakrishna sect. Here, Narendra and the other disciples discussed several schools of philosophical thoughts and exchanged notes on the many spiritual masters of the past and present. They also spent much of their time meditating on the Supreme.

In January 1887, Narendra and eight of the senior disciples formally took their monastic vows. Narendra then took the name of Swami Bibidishananda. Later on, he was given the name Vivekananda by the King of Khetri, Ajit Singh. In 1899, the Math at Baranagar was transferred to Belur. It is in existence even now, by the name of the Belur Math.



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**SWAMI VIVEKANANDA AS DISCIPLE  
OF RAMAKRISHNA PARAMAHANSA  
AND MAA SARADA**

## Vivekananda Travels All Over India

Vivekananda moved from the monastery to become a Parivrajaka, or a wandering Hindu monk, living solely on alms. His only possessions were a kamandalu (water-pot), staff and two books, the Bhagavad Gita and the Imitation of Christ. He then travelled all over India for the next 5 years, during which time he visited several spiritual and religious centers, also getting to know the culture and traditions of all the places he visited. During his long journey, he stayed and moved around with people from different castes, religions and social backgrounds.

He interacted equally with the low-caste pariahs, government servants, Kings, their Dewans and all the other different people he met. He also exchanged opinions on religion and spirituality with Hindus, Muslims and Christians.

The poverty and suffering that he saw among the masses moved him and he vowed to fight to uplift the nation.

## North India

Varanasi was Vivekananda's first travel destination. There, he met the famed Bengali writer, Bhudev Mukhopadhyay, noted Sanskrit scholar, Pramadas Mitra and also the saint Trailanga Swami. He then visited Agra, Lucknow, Ayodhya, Hathras, Rishikesh and Brindavan. At Hathras, Vivekananda met Sharat Chandra Gupta, a station master. He went on to become one of Vivekananda's earliest disciples, Sadananda.

He then visited Vaidyanath, Allahabad and Ghazipur, where he met Pavhari Baba, who was an ascetic who propagated Advaita.

Vivekananda returned to the Baranagar Math a few times thereafter. The disciples of Ramakrishna, Balaram Bose and Suresh Chandra Mitra, who had funded the Math were no more and hence, Vivekananda tried to assist the Math monetarily.

## **The Himalayas**

Vivekananda visited the Himalayas with Swami Akhandananda, another disciple of Ramakrishna, in 1890. Continuing this journey, he went to Srinagar, Almora, Nainital, Dehradun, Haridwar and Rishikesh.

At this time, he met several other saints such as Turiyananda, Brahmananda, Advaitananda and so on, and stayed in Meerut for some time, during which he was constantly engaged in the study of religious scriptures, meditation and prayer. He then left Meerut and left to Delhi.

## **Rajputana**

After spending some time in Delhi, he went to Rajputana, Jaipur, Ajmer and Mount Abu. In Jaipur, he learnt everything about Panini's Ashtadhyayi. While in Mount Abu, the Raja Ajit Singh of Khetri became his devotee and staunch supporter. Here, he met with Pandit Ajjada Adibhatla Narayana Dasu and learnt the Mahabhasya on the sutras of Panini. He then undertook a journey to Maharashtra.

## **Western India**

On a journey to Maharashtra, Vivekananda also visited Ahmedabad, Limbdi and Wadhwan. At Ahmedabad, he undertook the study of Jain culture. At Limbdi, he met Thakur Saheb Jaswant Singh, who had travelled all over England and America. Thakur Saheb gave him the idea of propagating Vedanta and Indian philosophy in the West.

He then went to Junagadh, Girnar, Porbander, Kutch, Dwaraka, Nadiad, Palitana and Baroda. During his time here, he got acquainted with several saints and sages and influential people as well. He stayed on in Porbander for a few months.

Going on to Mahabaleshwar, Khandwa, Indore and Pune, he heard of the Parliament of the World's Religions to be held at Kathiawar. Staying at Bombay for a while, he met Bal Gangadhar Tilak on a train journey. He stayed with Tilak in Pune for a few days and then decided to visit Belgaum, Panaji and Goa. In Goa, he stayed in the Rachol Seminary to study their religious literature and Christian theology.

## **South India**

Vivekananda then went to visit Bangalore, where he met K. Seshadri Iyer, the then Dewan of the State of Mysore. He also stayed with the Maharaja of Mysore, also a great poet and composer, Chamaraja Wodeyar. The Maharaja handed the Swami a letter of introduction to the Dewan of Cochin.

Vivekananda continued his journey to Trichur, Kodungalloor then and Ernakulam, where he met Chattampi Swamikal, who was a contemporary of Sri Narayana Guru. He then left to Trivandrum, Nagercoil and then to Kanyakumari.

At Kanyakumari, the Swami meditated sitting upon what he referred to as the "last bit of Indian rock", now known as the Vivekananda Rock Memorial, for a period of three days. There, he had the "Vision of One India", also called "The Kanyakumari Resolve of 1892".

After leaving Kanyakumari, he proceeded to Madurai, where he acquainted with Bhaskara Sethupati, the Raja of Ramnad. The king became his disciple and also advised him to go to the Parliament of Religions at Chicago. He also visited Rameshwaram, Pondicherry and Madras, where he got some more disciples, who later played a great role in funding his journey to America and also establishing the Ramakrishna Mission in Madras. Vivekananda left for Chicago in May 1893.

## Vivekananda Enthralled Audiences Abroad

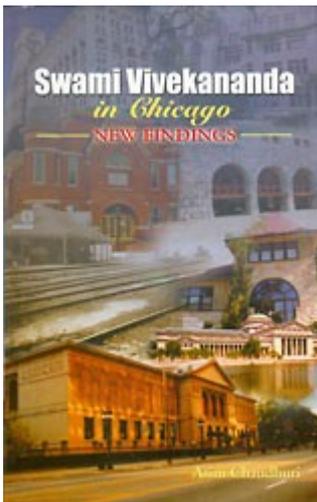
### Japan

On his way to Chicago, Vivekananda decided to also visit Japan in 1893. Reaching Nagasaki, he took a steamer to Kobe and then to Yokohama. Along the journey, he also visited Osaka, Kyoto and Tokyo. He immensely liked the nation and the people for their clean attitudes, healthy lifestyles and clear thinking. He also noticed the preparatory military build-up, just before the Sino-Japanese and the Russo-Japanese wars. Looking at the tremendous advancements there, he urged the people back in India to follow their example and get out of the rut of superstition and caste discrimination, instead, moving on towards the path of true progress.

### The Western World

After visiting China and Canada, the Swami entered American soil, starting with Chicago. There, he was disappointed when told that he would not be able to speak at the Chicago Parliament, as he, according to them, was not part of any bona fide organization. He then met Professor John Henry Wright of Harvard University, who wrote to the Chairman in charge of delegates, giving a glowing tribute to the Swami.

### Parliament of the World's Religions



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**SWAMI VIVEKANANDA IN CHICAGO - NEW FINDINGS**

by

**ASIM CHAUDHURI**

The Parliament of the World's Religions event commenced on 11 September, 1893, at the Art Institute of Chicago. This event was part of the World's Columbian Exposition. Here, Swami Vivekananda gave a brief address, introducing India and Hinduism to the West.

He first offered his obeisance to Goddess Saraswati, the Goddess of Learning and Knowledge, and then began his speech with the words for which he later became famous: "Sisters and Brothers of America!" The seven-thousand-strong crowd immediately applauded him and gave him a standing ovation, which went on for two whole minutes. The Swami then continued with his address, greeting "the youngest nation on behalf of the most ancient order of monks in the world", also quoting passages from the Bhagavad Gita. By the end of the event, India had come to be revered as the Mother of all religions, represented by Swami Vivekananda, the Orange monk, as they referred to him! He was surrounded by the press media and they raved about him, calling him the "Cyclonic monk from India". Many American dailies referred to him as the "greatest figure in the Parliament of Religions".

After this monumental address, Vivekananda gave many more speeches during the event. He spoke extensively on Hinduism and Buddhism; and developing harmony and tolerance between all religions, winning many hearts each time he took to the dais.

The Swami spent the next two years travelling around the United States giving more such speeches. His busy schedule eventually led to poor health. He then stopped his tours and instead, gave free private classes on Vedanta and Yoga. Later, he went on to found the Vedanta Society of New York.

### England and the Rest of Europe

The Swami became equally popular in England as well. During his time spent in that

country, he met Margaret Elizabeth Noble, an Irish woman, who later went on to be referred to as Sister Nivedita. He also met with Max Muller from the Oxford University, who penned Ramakrishna's very first biography in the Western World.

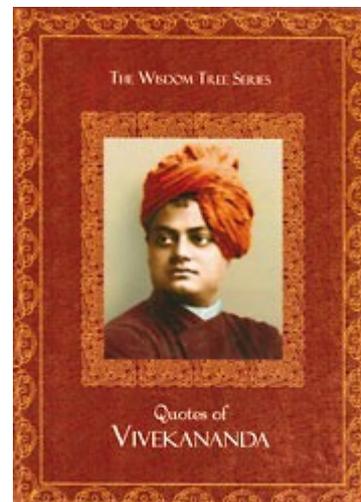
From there, he travelled to many other countries in Europe, including Germany. He was offered to chair the faculty of Eastern Philosophy at Harvard University, but declined, stating that since he was a monk, he could not settle down in one place like that. Vivekananda had many followers in Europe as well. Many who were very influential, helped him found the Advaita Ashrama. He also initiated many of his followers in Brahmacharya.

He wrote many letters to his followers and fellow monks in India, constantly inspiring to work ever harder on their mission. He also kept sending money, which was used to start the periodical, Brahmavadin, in 1895. This magazine's main aim was to propagate Vedanta. The first six chapters of Vivekananda's translation of "The Imitation of Christ" was also published in this periodical.

## Journey Back to India

The Swami returned to India in 1896, along with his followers. Sister Nivedita followed him later and then spent the rest of her life in India, fighting for the cause of Indian women and Indian Independence. On the way, passing through Colombo, Vivekananda was given a rousing welcome there as well. He gave many speeches, after which he proceeded to India, journeying through many Indian states by train, including Rameshwaram, Ramnad, Madurai, Madras and so on. This long journey ended in Almora. The lectures given at various places during this tour have been collectively published as a work, called "Lectures from Colombo to Almora".

Many leaders such as Mahatma Gandhi, Balgangadhar Tilak, Subhas Chandra Bose and Bipin Chandra Pal, had been vastly influenced by the Swami's fiery speeches.



**QUOTES OF VIVEKANANDA**

compiled by

**HARISH DHILLON**

## The Ramakrishna Mission

Vivekananda founded the Ramakrishna Mission on 1 May, 1897, at Calcutta. An organization focusing on social service, the ideals of the Ramakrishna Mission were based on Karma Yoga. Its activities were governed by the trustees of the Ramakrishna Math. Both these branches have their headquarters at Belur Math.

Vivekananda also founded two more monasteries; at Mayavati on the Himalayas, close by Almora, called the Advaita Ashrama; and one at Madras. Two journals, Prabuddha Bharata and Udbhodan, were also started alongside.

## Swami's Visit to Punjab

Vivekananda then visited western Punjab in order to establish peace between the Arya Samaj and the Sanatanists, who were the most orthodox Hindus in that area. He also worked to create harmony between the Arya Samajists and Muslims. His speeches in Lahore pulled in large crowds of people who adored him.

The Swami then visited Delhi and Khetri, after which he returned to Calcutta. There, he trained many disciples and also consolidated all the work of the Math. He also composed the arati song, "Khandana Bhava Bandhana", sung during the consecration of the Ramakrishna temple in a devotee's house.

Again leaving for a tour to the West, he spent some time in both Europe and the U.S. He founded several ashramas in the States, including the Shanti Ashrama at California. After attending the Congress of Religions at Paris in the year 1900, he then visited several other regions of Europe.

Getting back again to India, he spent some at the Advaita Ashrama, before settling down at Belur Math.

His health started failing again, but yet, he undertook pilgrimages to Bodhgaya and Varanasi. He was suffering from severe asthma, diabetes and insomnia. Knowing that his end was near, he told many of his disciples that he would not live till he was forty and also pointed out the spot for his cremation.

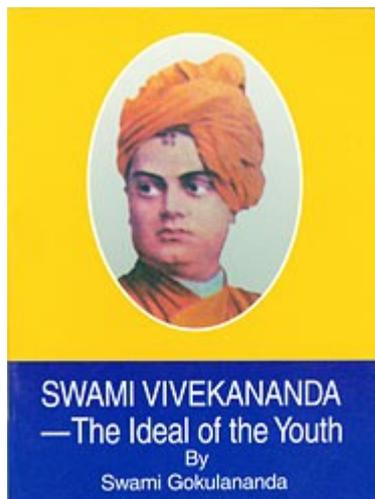
## The Swami Sheds His Mortal Coil

Vivekananda woke up early morning on the 4th of July, 1902, and went to the chapel, where he went into deep meditation for 3 hours. He sang a song on Goddess Kali and taught the Shukla-Yajur Veda to some disciples at Belur Math. Then, taking a walk with Swami Premananda, he instructed him on the future of the Ramakrishna Math.

Swami Vivekananda breathed his last at 9:10pm on the same day. He was meditating at the time and so, his disciples believe that he had attained Mahasamadhi on this day. The exact cause of death was unknown, but some disciples noted that a little blood had come out from his nostrils, mouth and eyes. Some disciples believed that the Brahmarandhra, the aperture in the crown of the head, was pierced when he attained Mahasamadhi.

Swami Vivekananda was cremated on a pyre made of sandalwood logs, on the banks of the Ganga, in the exact location he had pointed to; just like his own Guru, Shri Ramakrishna was cremated. Now, a shrine dedicated to his memory, stands at this very spot.

## Influence of Swami Vivekananda on India



**SWAMI VIVEKANANDA -  
THE IDEAL OF THE YOUTH  
by  
SWAMI GOKULANANDA**

Swami Vivekananda is regarded as a very influential figure in modern Hinduism. Propagating Indian philosophy, Vedanta and Yoga both in India and abroad, he won accolades from many scholars of religion and philosophy throughout the globe. He was a major inspiring force for his contemporaries, Mahatma Gandhi, Subhas Chandra Bose, Aurobindo Bose and so on. Greats like Rabindranath Tagore, Nobel Laureate Romain Rolland and Jamshedji Tata were admirers of this spiritual figure.

Considering the tremendous influence that Vivekananda had over the entire world, the Indian Government approved the funding of the "Swami Vivekananda Values Education Project", at the cost of Rs.100 crore. The main aim of this project was to educate the youth on his philosophy and principles, by way of conducting several study circles, discussions, debates, competitions and also publishing the Swami's complete works in different languages.

## Vivekananda's Written Works

A great orator and an author of several books on philosophy, Vivekananda showed great brilliance with the written word. Very few of these works had been published during his lifetime. His works largely discussed Karma Yoga, Bhakti Yoga, Raja Yoga and Jnana Yoga. Most of these works are essentially the compilation of his lectures and speeches given across the world. He used clear and simple language and all his works had a touch of humour, which never failed to entertain the reader.

Vivekananda was also a singer and poet and composed several songs, including those on his favourite deity, Goddess Kali.

## Vivekananda Rock Memorial

Vivekananda Rock Memorial is a holy monument and also a popular tourist destination, located in Vavathurai, Kanyakumari. The memorial stands on one of two rocks, which is situated around 500 meters off that mainland of Vavathurai, which is India's southernmost tip. This rock memorial was built in 1970 by the Vivekananda Rock Memorial Committee in honour of Vivekananda's visit to Shripada Parai.

Vivekananda is believed to have swum to this rock and sat there in deep meditation, contemplating the past, present and future of India. It is said that he attained enlightenment, sitting on this very rock.



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**SUNRISE AT VIVEKANANDA ROCK MEMORIAL IN KANYAKUMARI**

The main memorial basically consists of two vast structures, including the Vivekananda Mandapam and the Sripada Mandapam. A Dhyana Mandapa or meditation hall has been built along the main mandapa for visitors desiring to meditate in that particular location. The mandapa, which showcases different styles of Indian temple architecture, houses an impressive statue of Vivekananda.

The other speciality of this rock is that visitors can get a view of the breathtaking Trisagara Sangama, or the meeting of the three seas, the Bay of Bengal, the Arabian Sea and the Indian Ocean. The sea here is actually layered in three colours; blue, green and a greenish-blue, to show the confluence of the three seas.

## Mythological Significance of the Sripada Parai



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**KANYAKUMARI AND VIVEKANANDA WITH VIVEKANANDA ROCK MEMORIAL AS BACKDROP**

The rock, Sripada Parai, has been considered sacred from ancient times. There are some mythological tales associated with this place. It is said to have been blessed by the touch of 'the sacred feet' of the Devi Kumari. Interestingly, even today, one can find a projection on the rock, which looks very much like a human foot and is also slightly brownish in complexion. This has been respected as the Sripadam (the Goddess' foot). Legend has it that Virgin Devi Kumari had performed austerities on this very rock, while awaiting a darshan of her Lord.

## **How the Memorial Came into Existence**

As Vivekananda's birth centenary was celebrated in 1962, the residents of Kanyakumari thought of creating a memorial on the rock for the Swami. They formed a special Kanyakumari Committee for this and started off by constructing a pedestrian bridge leading to the rock. Incidentally, those running the Ramakrishna Mission also had the same plans, though they had not formally voiced them as yet.

The local Catholic fishermen raised an objection to this, also putting up a huge cross on the rock, saying that this was St. Xavier's Rock. This led to communal tension, finally forcing the Court of Law to intervene. The government then stated that though the rock would be called Vivekananda Rock, no memorial would be permitted to be constructed there. However, followers would be able to put up a tablet stating how this rock was associated with Vivekananda. The tablet was installed in January 1963.

However, the Kanyakumari Committee formed an All India Committee, comprising important public personalities. It selected Eknath Ranade, who had just stepped down as the General Secretary of the RSS, to head this committee and influence the governments at the State and Center levels.

## **Eknath Ranade's Role in the Project**

Eknath Ranade, who was already familiar with the life and teachings of Vivekananda, immediately started work on the project. He first ensured the full support of both the Ramakrishna Math and Mission. He then became Organizing Secretary of the Rock Memorial and took on the reins of the project. He worked his way through many legal, political and communal obstacles and gathered signatures of approval from several hundred Members of Parliament, then presenting the same to the Prime Minister.

The construction of the Memorial started, presenting several logistical problems, including insuring the safety of the building and transporting huge blocks of stone to construct the same. The idea of building the pedestrian bridge was dropped and the team had to now think of ways to enable bigger crafts to move along the stretch between the shore and the rock.

The most major hurdle, though, was the inflow of funding for the project. Ranade approached almost all State governments and insisted that they contribute for what was to become a National Monument. The public too contributed large chunks of money for the project. Ranade launched a one-rupee folder campaign, which invited all those willing to donate for the Memorial. Even amounts as low as a single rupee were most welcome.

The Memorial was constructed within just 6 years from the start of the project and was inaugurated in the year 1970. This monument would never have existed, but for the untiring efforts of Eknath Ranade. It was then dedicated to the entire nation as a whole.

## **The Vivekananda Kendra**

Ranade next thought of starting the second phase of the Memorial for Swami Vivekananda. The construction of the Living Memorial or the Vivekananda Kendra, started alongside the stone structure of the Rock Memorial. This officially came to be in 1972, on the occasion of the 108th birth anniversary of Vivekananda.

This Kendra became a service mission of the non-monastic order. Several hundred men and women continued with the tradition of penance, spreading the message of the Swami all over the nation; also supporting the poor and infirm and educating the public on love, peace and equality. The main idea of constructing this center was to attain the twin objective of man-making and nation-building. These Jeevanvratīs, as they were called, would not be paid any salary, but would be wholly funded by patrons.

This tradition continues even today and every day, a saffron flag with "OM" written over it is hoisted at sunrise and lowered at sunset, thus symbolizing the spiritual service wing of the Vivekananda movement.

## The Mandapams

The Vivekananda Mandapam consists of the Dhyana Mandapam, the meditation hall, with 6 rooms next to it; the Sabha Mandapam or the Assembly Hall, including the statue section, 2 rooms, corridor and open prakaram; the Mukha Mandapam; and a Front Entrance, including the steps leading to it, 2 rooms and a corridor heading below.

The Shripada Mandapam is a square hall that includes the Garbha Graham (sanctum sanctorum), the Inner Prakaram, the Outer Prakaram and the Outer Platform.

Both these Mandapams are designed in a way that the vision of Vivekananda in the statue is seen directed toward the Shripadam.

There is an additional Mandapam erected at the Shripada Parai, the location where the footprint of Devi Kumari is seen on the rock.



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**VIVEKANANDA ROCK TEMPLE AT  
KANYAKUMARI, TAMIL NADU**

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