

THE MESSAGE AND INFLUENCE OF VIVEKANANDA

BY J. V. NASH

PERHAPS the most significant and fruitful element in the liberalizing of religious thought among Western peoples during recent years has been the awakening of interest in the sacred literature of the East, and a growing appreciation of the spiritual values which are to be found outside of Christianity.

For centuries, Christian speakers and writers had been content to lump all non-Christians together as "heathen," a word about which clustered the most odious and disparaging connotations. For generations, too, the Christian churches at great expense sent out their missionaries, not only to uncivilized lands such as Africa and the South Sea Islands, but likewise to China, Japan, and India, firm in the belief that all non-Christian religions were equally degrading and their followers doomed to perdition.

That the great religions of the East might have helpful spiritual contributions to offer to the West, that Christianity might enter into an *entente cordiale* with other historic faiths, would have seemed nothing short of blasphemous to the religious leaders of Christendom until well toward the close of the nineteenth century. Orthodox theology, based upon the Bible as an unique, infallible, and all-sufficient revelation of God, permitted no other point of view. The doctrine of exclusive salvation made Christianity the sole custodian of the keys of Heaven, its representatives unreasoning and intolerant propagandists.

Today, even orthodox Christian clergymen acknowledge with thankfulness the good in non-Christian faiths. An example of this changing attitude will be found in an incident related by Dr. G. B. Smith, of the University of Chicago Divinity School:

"Dr. Cutbert Hall, who was at one time the Barrows lecturer to India, was a man himself of conservative theology, a very profoundly religious man, but with the spirit of a Modernist. When

he came back from his lectures in India, he was constantly telling people in the West that when you went to India you found people who made religion their first business. He was greatly impressed with the large place which religious experience had in the life of the devoted Indian people, and he said that the Christianity of the future is going to be enriched and enlarged from what we may learn from the Orient."

The gradual abandonment of the old hostile and scornful attitude toward non-Christian faiths and peoples is traceable to several factors. First, there was the enlarging conception of the universe, following the great discoveries of nineteenth century science, in biology, geology, and astronomy, and a radically modified evaluation of the Scriptures in the light of this growing scientific knowledge and of the new scholarship brought to bear upon their interpretation by the higher criticism.

Again, the revolution in transportation brought the East and its peoples closer to us, our contacts with them thus became more frequent, our understanding deeper and most sympathetic, and age-old prejudices tended to disappear.

Still further, the work of great Oriental scholars, such as Max Müller in England, Professor Deussen in Germany, and Dr. Paul Carus in America, made accessible to the Western public the unsuspected wealth of inspiring spirituality in the ancient books of the East, particularly those of India.

Finally, there has been the interpretation of Oriental religions and philosophies by their own spokesmen who in late years have been coming among us as visitors, lecturers, and writers.

Now, since the war has revealed the pitiable bankruptcy of Western ecclesiasticism as a saving force, the Occident is more than ever receptive to spiritual influences from Asia, the venerable mother of religion; the world itself may find renewal of youth in the waters of those life-giving springs which have been flowing through the ages from the slopes of the Himalayas.

It is not too much to say that a new religious era was ushered in with the opening of the historic Parliament of Religions in connection with the World's Columbian Exposition at Chicago in 1893. It was a rather heterogeneous gathering, and, owing to the lack of rules and precedents, it could only feel its way, sometimes awkwardly. Nevertheless, for the first time in history, the spokesmen of all the great religions, Christian and non-Christian on an equal footing, were given an opportunity on the public platform and in

a friendly atmosphere, to set forth the values which they respectively emphasized, to show the service which each sought to render, and to make known the special contribution which it might make to the spiritual needs of the world at large.

The numerous religions and creeds which sent delegates to the Parliament of Religion were in the main ably represented. Some of the speakers, indeed, were religious thinkers of international reputation. But among all the men and women who took part in the sessions of the Congress, there was one who aroused a singular and absorbing interest, one whose work at the Parliament became the basis of a great world-wide mission.

This was a young Hindu *sannyasin*¹ who had come to Chicago without official credentials; he represented no recognized religious organization; he was utterly unknown to the world. When he appeared on the platform at the opening session, he had never made a public speech in his life, and he had no prepared notes. "Throughout the morning," says one account, "he kept putting off his turn to be introduced, whispering each time to the President, 'Let someone else speak first.' So again in the afternoon, until about five o'clock, when Doctor Barrows, rising, named him as the next speaker."

When he was introduced, he looked out upon a yawning audience which had sat through a tiresome day of manuscript reading. He hesitated, nervously. Then a sudden access of power and eloquence came upon him, and he began to speak. As by an electric shock, the assembly became galvanized into eager attention. Before half a dozen words had left his lips, the great hall was shaking with storms of applause as in a political convention, and when his brief extemporaneous address was concluded everyone began asking: "Who is this brilliant, eloquent, handsome, magnetic young Hindu, the Swami Vivekananda?"

In a letter dated Chicago, November 2, 1893, Vivekananda gives us in his own words a vivid picture of the scene at the opening of the Parliament and relates the circumstances attending his own introductory address:

"On the morning of the opening of the Parliament, we all assembled in a building called the Art Palace, where one huge and other smaller temporary halls were erected for the sittings of the Parliament. Men from all nations were there. . . . There was a grand

¹ Literally, "one who has renounced,"—the Hindu name for a man who gives up everything and devotes himself to the religious life either as a hermit or as a wandering pilgrim.

procession, and we were all marshalled on to the platform. Imagine a hall below and a huge gallery above, packed with six or seven thousand men and women representing the best culture of the country, and on the platform learned men of all the nations of the earth. And I, who never spoke in public in my life, to address this august assemblage! It was opened in great form, with music and ceremony and speeches; then the delegates were introduced one by one, and they stepped up and spoke. Of course, my heart was fluttering and my tongue nearly dried up; I was so nervous and could not venture to speak in the morning. Mazoomdar made a nice speech—Chakravarti a nicer one, and they were much applauded. They were all prepared and came with ready-made speeches. I was a fool and had none, but bowed down to Devi Sarasvati and stepped up, and Dr. Barrows introduced me. I made a short speech. I addressed the assembly as 'Sisters and Brothers of America,'—a deafening applause of two minutes followed, and then I proceeded, and when it was finished I sat down, almost exhausted with emotion. The next day the papers announced that my speech was the hit of the day, and I became known to the whole of America. Truly has it been said by the great commentator Sridhara—"Who maketh the dumb a fluent speaker." His name be praised!"

In this little introductory address which so captivated the great audience, Vivekananda said:

"It fills my heart with joy unspeakable to rise in response to the warm and cordial welcome which you have given us. I thank you in the name of the most ancient order of monks in the world; I thank you in the name of the mother of religions; and I thank you in the name of the millions and millions of Hindu people of all classes and sects.

"My thanks, also, to some of the speakers on this platform who have told you that these men from far-off nations may well claim the honor of bearing to the different lands the idea of toleration. I am proud to belong to a religion which has taught the world both tolerance and universal acceptance. We believe not only in universal toleration, but we accept all religions as true.

"I belong to a religion into whose sacred language, the Sanskrit the word *exclusion* is untranslatable. 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. We have gathered in our bosom the purest remnant of the Israelites, a remnant which came to Southern India and took refuge with us in the very year in

which their holy temple was shattered to pieces by Roman tyranny. I belong to the religion which has sheltered and is still fostering the remnant of the grand Zoroastrian nation.

"I will quote to you, brethren, a few lines from a hymn which I remember to have repeated from my earliest boyhood, which is every day repeated by millions of human beings: 'As the different streams have their sources in different places and mingle their waters 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.

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

"Sectarianism, bigotry, and its horrible descendant, fanaticism, have possessed long this beautiful earth. It has filled the earth with violence, drenched it often and often with human blood, destroyed civilization and sent whole nations to despair. Had it not been for this horrible demon, human society would be far more advanced than it is now. But its time has come and I fervently hope that the bell that tolled this morning in honor of this convention may be the death-knell to all fanaticism, to all persecutions with the sword or the pen and to all uncharitable feelings between persons wending their way to the same goal."

Descriptions of Vivekananda and interviews with him filled columns upon columns in the newspapers. Here was a man, the product of a religion popularly supposed to set as its goal the utter negation of personality, who by the very force of an extraordinarily distinctive, attractive, and winsome personality, had brought America to his feet. What a paradox! How could it be explained? A tree is known by its fruits. It no doubt was subconsciously felt that a spiritual tree which could flower in a Vivekananda had not received a fair hearing. So it was that the public everywhere became eager to see and hear Vivekananda.

Immense crowds flocked to the Parliament to hear his subsequent addresses, and now the chairman purposely put him last on the program in order to hold the audience through the other speakers' addresses. "They patiently waited and waited," said a newspaper reporter, "while the papers that separated them from Vivekananda were read." Another journalist wrote: "This man, with his

handsome face and magnetic presence and wonderful oratory, is the most prominent figure in the Parliament."

Doors were opened wide to him wherever he chose to go. Finally, in response to the insistent demand for his message, he went on a speaking tour which carried him from coast to coast, lecturing and teaching. This work kept him strenuously engaged for some two years after the close of the Parliament. In his letters he speaks of the friendliness which was accorded him wherever he visited. Even orthodox clergymen warmed to him. On the other hand, he had a friendly meeting with Robert G. Ingersoll, who remarked to him that if a non-Christian religious teacher had ventured to visit America fifty years earlier he would doubtless have been killed. In the course of a lengthy conference with the members of the Harvard Graduate School of Philosophy, the young Hindu easily held his own with the pundits of America's oldest university.

"It is the life of teachers which is catching, not their tenets," says Walter Bagehot. Certainly, the character and charm of Vivekananda had much to do with securing a sympathetic hearing for his doctrines.

The influence which he thus exercised upon the religious thought of the country can hardly be overemphasized. From that period dates the widespread interest in Oriental religion, which is today one of the marked characteristics of American life. Vivekananda was the first great missionary in modern times from Asia, the homeland of religion, to the peoples of the West.

Hindu though he was, Vivekananda was deeply permeated by the best in Christianity. His talks abound with references to and quotations from Jesus, which show a remarkable familiarity with the New Testament. One of his loftiest discourses is on "Christ, the Messenger." In it he says:

"'The Kingdom of Heaven is within you.' Where goest thou to seek for the Kingdom of God? asks Jesus of Nazareth, when it is there, within you. Cleanse the spirit, and it is there. It is already yours. How can you get what is not yours? It is yours by right. You are the heirs of immortality, sons of the Eternal Father. . . .

"Let us . . . find God not only in Jesus of Nazareth but in all the great Ones that have preceded him, in all that came after him, and all that are yet to come. Our worship is unbounded and free. They are all manifestations of the same Infinite God. They are all pure and unselfish; they struggled, and gave up their lives for us,

poor human beings. They each and all suffer vicarious atonement for every one of us, and also for all that are to come hereafter.

"In a sense, you are all prophets; every one of you is a prophet, bearing the burden of the world on your own shoulders. . . . The great prophets were giants—they bore a gigantic world on their shoulders. Compared with them we are pigmies, no doubt, yet we are doing the same task; in our little circles, in our little homes we are bearing our little crosses. . . .

"Our salutations go to all the past prophets, whose teachings and lives we have inherited, whatever might have been their race, clime, or creed! Our salutations go to all those God-like men and women, who are working to help humanity, whatever be their birth, color or race! Our salutations to those who are coming in the future—living Gods—to work unselfishly for our descendants!"

Though uttered twenty-five years ago by a Hindu, such thoughts sound strangely like the latest statements of the faith of Christian Modernists!

II

How had Vivekananda happened to appear in America as a visitor to the Parliament of Religions? To answer this question, it will be necessary to acquaint ourselves with the circumstances of his early life.

Narendra Nath Dutt was born at Calcutta in 1863, was educated at the local university, and in 1884 received the degree of B.A. At this time there was living in the famous temple garden at Dakshineswara, on the eastern bank of the Ganges about four miles north of Calcutta, the great religious mystic known as Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa. The young student joined the group of disciples which gathered about Ramakrishna in the temple garden. He became a special favorite of Ramakrishna. In India a student of philosophy and religion regularly attaches himself to some great teacher as his *Guru* or master. It is thus that spiritual knowledge is handed on from generation to generation, rather than by the study of books.

A peculiarly intimate relationship developed between the eager young disciple and the venerable seer. In the record of the discourses of Paramahansa, compiled by another disciple under the title *The Gospel of Ramakrishna*, we have many delightful glimpses of the disciple Narendra at the feet of his guide.

The name *Vivekananda*, which Narendra on becoming a *sannyasin* adopted as that by which he wished to be known in religion, is composed of two Sanskrit words meaning "bliss in discrimination," words rather meaningless to the western ear, but the technical significance of which will be readily understood by anyone who has made a study of Hindu philosophy. To the end of life, Vivekananda lovingly referred to Ramakrishna as "My Master." Many distinguished European scholars visited the seer to discuss with him the problems of philosophy and religion. Professor Max Müller was so impressed by Ramakrishna that he published an appreciative study of the Hindu saint in *The Nineteenth Century*. To this day he is widely revered in India as a true Avatar or Divine Incarnation. He taught the oneness of God. "God is One," he said, in a discourse with his disciples, "only His names are different. Some call Him by the name of Allah, some God, some Brahman, others Kali, others again Rama, Hari, Jesus, Buddha." All religions he would gladly accept as paths leading to the same goal, and he looked upon Realization as the great goal of the religious life.

When Ramakrishna passed from earth in 1886, his devoted disciples, including Narendra, longed to take up the Master's work and to carry his message not only to all India but to the outside world as well.

Such was the background of the young Hindu when, in the spring of 1893, clad only in the orange robe of a *sannyasin*, and bearing a pilgrim's staff, he set out alone for America by way of China and Japan. In a sketch published after his death, one of Vivekananda's disciples wrote: "He had been chosen for this mission by a few earnest young men of Madras who, firm in their belief that he, better than anyone, could worthily represent the ancient religion of India, had gone from door to door soliciting money for his journey. The amount thus collected, together with contributions from one or two princes, enabled the youthful monk, the then obscure Swami Vivekananda, to set out on his long journey."

The disciple goes on to say:

"It required tremendous courage to venture forth on such a mission. To leave the sacred soil of India for a foreign country means far more to a Hindu than we of the West can realize. Especially is this the case with a *sannyasin*, whose whole training is away from the practical, material side of life. Unused to handling money, or to any mode of travel save on his own feet, the Swami was robbed and imposed upon at every stage of his journey until, when he

finally reached Chicago, he was nearly penniless. He had brought with him no letters of introduction and knew no one in the great city. Thus alone among strangers, thousands of miles from his own country, it was a situation to daunt even a strong man; but the Swami left the matter in the hands of the Lord, firm in his faith that divine protection would never fail him."

In less than two weeks, exorbitant hotel keepers and others had reduced his funds almost to the vanishing point. In a letter some time later he tells how crowds, attracted by his quaint dress, followed him on the streets, hooting at him. His situation was desperate. "For a moment a wave of discouragement and doubt swept over him and he began to wonder why he had been so foolish as to listen to those few hot-headed schoolboys of Madras."

In his extremity, with no prospect but that of "starvation in the street," if he remained in Chicago, he left the city. He resolved to go to Boston, and, if he met with no change of fortune, abandon his mission and return to India.

On the train en route East he chanced to meet an elderly lady, a resident of Boston, who, learning of the predicament in which this strange young Oriental found himself, gave him the shelter of her home. There he met a Harvard Professor. Vivekananda's later correspondence identifies him as J. H. Wright. After a four-hour discussion with Vivekananda, the Harvard savant earnestly urged upon him the importance of his returning to Chicago and participating in the approaching Parliament of Religions. When Vivekananda explained his difficulties, the professor pointed out that the president of the Parliament was his personal friend, and he lost no time in giving Vivekananda a letter of introduction in which he declared that he had found this young Hindu "more learned than all our learned men put together."

Presented with the letter and with a ticket to Chicago, Vivekananda returned thither and was at once accepted as a delegate to the Parliament. In a letter dated July 11, 1894, he pays tribute to Professor Wright "as having been the first man who stood as my friend."

Then came the opening of the Parliament and Vivekananda's extraordinary transition overnight into a personage of international interest.

After the close of the Parliament, as we have already indicated, Vivekananda was persuaded to go on a lecture tour of the country. While his audiences were everywhere most enthusiastic, the work

proved distasteful and he soon gave it up, although by its continuance he could, had he chosen, have accumulated a financial fortune. He then began speaking informally to small parlor audiences. But this form of instruction seemed to him superficial and was in turn abandoned.

Lionized as he was, Vivekananda never allowed his head to be turned. On all hands we have testimony of his modesty, his courtesy, his gentleness, and his innate tactfulness in dealing with all sorts of individuals.

One who was closely associated with him has written:

"It was given to me to know him in an intimate way for a period of several years, and never once did I find a flaw in his character. He was incapable of petty weakness, and had Vivekananda possessed faults they would have been generous ones. With all his greatness he was as simple as a child, equally at home among the rich and the great, or among the poor and the lowly.

"While in Detroit he was the guest of Mrs. John J. Bigelow, the widow of the ex-Governor of Michigan and a lady of rare culture and unusual spirituality. She told me that never once during the time he was a guest in her house (about four weeks) did he fail to express the highest in word and action, that his presence was a 'continual benediction.'

"His manner was that of boyish frankness and naivete, and very winsome. . . . He was the 'man of the hour' in Detroit that winter. Society smiled upon him and he was much sought after. The daily papers recorded his comings and goings; even his food was discussed. . . . Letters and invitations came pouring in and Detroit was at the feet of Vivekananda."

His first lecture in Detroit was delivered in the Unitarian Church. The scene, doubtless typical of countless others, is described by an eye-witness as follows:

"The large edifice was literally packed and the Swami received an ovation. I can see him yet as he stepped upon the platform, a regal, majestic figure, vital, forceful, dominant, and at the first sound of the wonderful voice, a voice all music—now like the plaintive minor strain of an aeolian harp; again, deep, vibrant, resonant—there was a hush, a silence that could almost be felt, and the vast audience breathed as one man. . . . His was the grasp of the 'master mind' and he spoke as one with authority. His arguments were logical, convincing, and in his most brilliant oratorical flights never

once did he lose sight of the main issue—the truth he wished to drive home.

“He fearlessly attacked principles, but not personal matters. One felt that here was a man whose great heart could take in all of humanity, seeing beyond their faults and foibles; one who would suffer and forgive to the uttermost. In fact, when it was given to me to know him more intimately, I found that he did forgive to the uttermost. With what infinite love and patience would he lead those who came to him, out of the labyrinth of their own frailties and point out to them the way out of self to God. He knew no malice.”

In Jewish synagogues, too, did Vivekananda deliver his message and received a no less cordial welcome. Two years later, after a brief visit to England, he was in Detroit again, speaking in a leading synagogue. The occasion is thus described:

“His last public appearance in Detroit was at the Temple Beth-El of which the Rabbi Louis Grossman, an ardent admirer of the Swami, was the pastor. It was Sunday evening and so great was the crowd that we almost feared a panic. There was a solid line reaching far out into the street and hundreds were turned away. Vivekananda held the large audience spellbound, his subject being: ‘India’s Message to the West,’ and ‘The Ideal of a Universal Religion.’ He gave us a most brilliant and masterly discourse. Never had I seen the Master look as he looked that night. There was something in his beauty not of earth. It was as if the spirit had almost burst the bonds of flesh, and it was then that I first saw a foreshadowing of the end. He was much exhausted from years of overwork, and it was even then to be seen that he was not long for this world.”

Some time before this period, following a lecture arranged by the Brooklyn Ethical Association, Vivekananda had established himself in a humble lodging-house in New York City, where disciples gathered to hear and question him. His classes became so large that they quickly overflowed the limited accommodations. “Students,” we are told, “sat on the dresser and on the corner marble wash-basin, and still others on the floor, like the Swami himself, who, thus seated cross-legged after the manner of his own country, taught his eager students the great truths of Vedanta.”

This was the work which he found most congenial, this the environment in which he felt most at ease. “At last he felt that he was fairly started on his mission, which was to deliver to the west-

ern world the message of his Master, Sri Ramakrishna, which proclaimed the truth and fundamental unity of all religions."

The throngs of students who came to him made necessary the securing of larger quarters, and throughout a season the Swami taught without charge all who came. To help meet the financial expenses of these free classes, he accepted engagements for lectures on secular subjects.

During the summer of 1895, the Swami spent several weeks at Thousand Island Park, where one of his disciples maintained a summer home amid scenes of great natural beauty. Here Vivekananda found rest and refreshment, and here he gave intimate talks to a select circle of friends and students. Through long summer evenings the little group sat on the cottage veranda looking out over the moonlit islands to the far Canadian shore, while Vivekananda discoursed on God and the soul, on realization and immortality, on the Vedas, and on universal religion.

One of this group later wrote:

"None of us can ever forget the uplift, the intense spiritual life, of those hallowed hours. The Swami poured out all his heart at those times; his own struggles were enacted again before us; the very spirit of his Master seemed to speak through his lips, to satisfy all doubts, to answer all questioning, to soothe every fear. Many times the Swami seemed hardly conscious of our presence, and then we almost held our breath for fear of disturbing him and checking the flow of his thoughts. He would rise from his seat and pace up and down the narrow limits of the piazza, pouring forth a perfect torrent of eloquence. Never was he more gentle, more lovable, than during these hours. It may have been much like the way his own great Master taught his disciples, just allowing them to listen to the outpourings of his own spirit in communion with himself."

And again:

"Often playful and fun loving, full of merry jest and quick repartee, he was never for a moment far from the dominating note of his life. Everything could furnish a text or an illustration, and in a moment we would find ourselves swept from amusing tales of Hindu mythology to the deepest philosophy. The Swami had an inexhaustible fund of mythological lore, and surely no race is more abundantly supplied with myths than those ancient Aryans. He loved to tell them to us and we delighted to listen, for he never failed to point out the reality hidden under the myth and story, and to draw from it valuable spiritual lessons."

On April 15, 1896, Vivekananda sailed again for England; establishing himself in London he was soon busily at work. Late in the summer of that year he travelled extensively on the Continent. A letter speaks of "a beautiful time with Professor Deussen in Germany," who, it appears, accompanied him back to England. In a letter written from his London lodgings he writes: "Max Müller is getting very friendly. I am soon going to deliver two lectures at Oxford."

At last, Vivekananda was ready to turn his steps homeward. On his arrival at Colombo, Ceylon, on January 15, 1897, he was given an ovation by the Hindu community.

In that once popular Christian revival hymn, "From Greenland's Icy Mountains to India's Coral Strand," Ceylon odiously described as an island "where every prospect pleases, and only man is vile."

It may be somewhat enlightening, therefore, to note the address of welcome which was presented to Vivekananda by the Hindus of Ceylon:

"Revered Sir: In pursuance of a resolution passed at a public meeting of the Hindus of the city of Colombo we beg to offer you a hearty welcome to this Island. We deem it a privilege to be the first to welcome you on your return from your grand mission in the West.

"We have watched with joy and thankfulness the success with which the mission has, under God's blessing, been crowned. You have proclaimed to the nations of Europe and America, the Hindu ideal of a universal religion, harmonizing all creeds, providing spiritual food for each soul according to its needs, and lovingly drawing it unto God. You have preached the Truth and the Way, taught from remote ages by a succession of Masters whose blessed feet have walked and sanctified the soil of India, and whose gracious presence and inspiration have made her through all her vicissitudes, the Light of the World.

"To the inspiration of such a Master, Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa Deva, and to your self-sacrificing zeal, western nations owe the priceless boon of being placed in living contact with the spiritual genius of India, while to many of our own countrymen, delivered from the glamour of western civilization, the value of our glorious heritage has been brought home.

"By your noble work and example you have laid humanity under an obligation difficult to repay, and you have shed fresh lustre upon

our Motherland. We pray that the grace of God may continue to prosper you and your work, and we remain, Revered Sir," etc.

Vivekananda's progress through India was marked by a whole series of similar ovations.

But his years of exhausting labor in strange lands had told heavily on Vivekananda. He seemed to realize that his days were practically numbered. In a letter dated from Almora, in the Hamalayan region, July 9, 1898, he said:

"The way is long, the time is short, evening is approaching. I have to go home soon. I have no time to give my manners a finish. I cannot find time enough to deliver my message. . . . I feel my task is done,—at best, only three or four years more of life is left. . . ."

The year 1899 found him extremely ill. It was hoped by his friends that a sea voyage might do him good. In July he sailed from Calcutta for London, where a number of his disciples, both English and American, were on hand to welcome him at the dock. After a month of rest in the English capital, Vivekananda sailed again for America, accompanied by a Hindu companion and some American friends. One of the latter tells of the voyage across the Atlantic:

"There were ten never-to-be-forgotten days spent on the ocean. Reading and exposition of the *Gita* occupied every morning, also reciting and translating poems and stories from the Sanskrit and chanting old Vedic hymns. The sea was smooth and at night the moonlight was entrancing. Those were wonderful evenings; the Master paced up and down the deck, a majestic figure in the moonlight, stopping now and then to speak to us of the beauties of Nature. 'And if all this *Maya* (illusion) is so beautiful, think of the wondrous beauty of the reality behind it!' he would exclaim."

For several months he lectured and taught once more in America, revisiting many cities and renewing countless friendships. One who saw him at Detroit on July 4, 1900, writes: "He had grown so thin, almost ethereal,—not long would that great spirit be imprisoned in clay. . . . I never saw him again. . . . Of that time I cannot bear to think. The sorrow and the heartbreak of it all still abides with me; but deep down underneath all the pain and grief is a great calm, a sweet and blessed consciousness that Great Souls do come to earth to point out to men 'the way, the truth, and the life'."

Vivekananda returned to India only to die. Devoted disciples, English and American, as well as Hindu, were with him to the end. His love for America was abiding and found continual expression. Indeed to many it seemed significant that the close of Vivekananda's life, in the summer of 1902, at Belur, fell on the anniversary of American independence, July Fourth. He was not yet forty years of age when his voice was stilled and his pen laid away forever.

The influence of Vivekananda, however, lived on.

Vedanta Societies which sprang up as a result of his American mission, notably in New York and San Francisco, have perpetuated Vivekananda's teachings in this country.

Vivekananda, though he sometimes prepared manuscripts, was always most at home in extemporaneous address and informal conversation. He did not care to look at reports of his talks, handed to him for approval. The only book which seems to have been published with his personal co-operation is the well-known volume entitled "Raja Yoga" (The Royal Way of Attainment) which is still in print in America. Since his death, however, a Mayavati Memorial Edition of the Works of Vivekananda has been published by his disciples in India, filling seven large volumes. The amount of material thus gathered together and its range are alike astonishing. It consists of essays, lectures, sermons, narratives, letters, interviews, informal conversations, translations from the Sankrit and Bengali, and poetry.

The education of the youth of India particularly of the girls, was especially close to the heart of Vivekananda. "Education is what they need," he said, "we must have a school in Calcutta."

This dream was realized a few years later by Miss Margaret E. Noble, a lady of Irish Protestant extraction and the strong force of character which usually goes with it, who had met Vivekananda in London. At first strongly antagonistic to his teachings, she ultimately became an earnest disciple. As the Sister Nivedita (The Dedicated One) she established a school in the heart of Calcutta's Hindu quarter.

Through these and other agencies the work of Vivekananda has been carried on, and the seed sown at the Chicago Parliament of Religions in 1893 has continued to bring forth fruit.