12 January, 1863 was the first day of the solar month of Magha according to the Hindu reckoning. The Sun after reaching the southern tip of the ecliptic (dakshinayana) had entered into the zodiacal sign of capricorn (makara) and started its northern course (Uttarayana). The Hindus all over India were making preparations for celebrating this day of Makara-Sankranti. But a Bengali Kayastha named Vishwanath set seriously in his Calcutta house. He had spent a restless night as his wife Bhuvaneshwari Devi was writhing under the pangs of birth. In the holy hours of dawn at 6:49 his face flushed up with delight after hearing that he had been blessed with a son.

The horoscope of the child showed that the ascendant (lagna) was Saggitarius (dhanus), a war-like and common-sign. The Lord Jupiter was in the 10th house and was powerfully aspected by Mars and hemmed in between Rahu on one side and the Moon and Saturn on the other. The predominance of Jupiterian factors plus the powerful aspect of Mars over lord of lagna indicated that he would have a strong physique, athletic form and tall stature. The fine disposition of lagnadhipati and Jupiters' naymasa riding showed that he would have an enrapuring personality. The position of the Sun in Lagna and the predominance of Ruchaka Yoga in his horoscope revealed that he would be a king or an equal to a king. Jupiters' excellent disposition combined with the
static influence of the third drakkana of dfianus' was to make him a man of intuition with the ability to prognosticate the future. The position of the 7th house showed that he would be a moralist and a Brahmachari. No one, however, predicted that he would become famous in the world. The child was first named Vireshwar and later Narendranath. He came into prominence in the world with the ascetic title of Swami Vivekananda.

The infant did not have a quiescent disposition—he would cry too often and too much. Even two nurses could not control his 'eminent energy.' One might have described him as a fretful, hypertonic, colicky or irritable infant who would refuse to be comforted by any means. But here lay the first signs of his future brilliance. Psychologists have shown that high frequency and intensity of crying is predictive of superior later speech and intelligence. "The cry baby is likely to be a bright baby while the quite 'good' baby is sometimes a brain-damaged or feeble-minded one."

1. Raman, B. V., Notable Horoscopes, pp. 224-32; Raman, Three Hundred Important Combinations, p. 54

2. Once an astrologer who happened to see the soles of Narendra's feet found that auspicious signs vis-à-vis Conch shells, discus, mace and lotus were on his toes. He prognosticated a promising future for him. Once in America he jokingly referred to the marks of discus (Chakra) on the soles of his feet and said that it was because of these that he had become a wanderer on the surface of the earth. See "The Wheeled Wanderer" in Vivekananda Kendra Patrika, February 1979, p. 133.

3. Ruch, Floyd L., Psychology and Life, pp. 92-93
During his childhood Narendranath was a "demon explorer" and would wear the family out in the process. He would poke into every nook and cranny, finger the carving in the furniture, tease his sisters, take out books from the bookshelf of his father, creep around under the bed, open out drawers and scramble up things and break pots and pans in his temper tantrums. But this was not an attitude which the psychologists would describe as "negativism" or nervousness — it was rather eagerness. If I prayed to Shiva for a son, his mother used to say "and he has sent me one of his demons." Little did she realise that her child's desire "to get into everything" was a sign that he was bright in mind and spirit. Sometimes when Narendra's mother would get exhausted in a bid to check the naughty behaviour of her child she used to pour a pitcher of cold water on his "dark" head and he would calm down immediately.

Heredity and environment are said to be the principal determiners of human development. The former refers to the totality of biologically transmitted elements that influence the structure of body and the latter alludes to the aggregate of conditions and factors which affect an organism from without. The action of these factors in determining the level

4. Ibid., p.402
6. Ibid.
of an individual's biological and social development is sometime expressed in the following formula:

\[ \text{Heredity} \times \text{environment} \times \text{time} = \text{Development level of man.} \]

The process by which an individual develops from a single-celled organism into an adult human being with his many billions of cells and his remarkable physical and mental capacities, is wonderfully complex. The great American biologist E. G. Conklin once said: "The development of a human being ... is the climax of all wonder."

Harendranath's heredity gave him a muscular body, brown complexion, "wast forehead, strong jaw, a pair of magnificent eyes, large dark and rather prominent with heavy lids whose shape recalled the classic comparison to a lotus petal." He boasted of his Tartar ancestors and loved to say that "the Tartar is wine of the race." He was not short-statured like Lao Tse or slim like Buddha but possessed a strong constitution. His pleasing silhouette made him an object of attraction wherever he went and partly contributed to his success in the west. In terms of Sheldon's classification of human beings

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7. Ruch, p. 69
9. Rolland, Romain, The Life of Vivekananda and the Universal Gospel, p.4
11. Indian religious reformer and founder of Buddhism(566-B.C. 480BC)
Narendranath may be said to have a somatotonic personality -
his physique showed predominant mesomorphy and his temperament
exhibited energy, assertiveness and athleticism. His
musical proclivities, his sweet voice, his intense humanism
and his propensity to lead a monastic life were inborn and
instinctive.

It is believed that the mechanisms of heredity serve in
much the same way as the programme of a modern electronic
computer. "Just as the programme tells the computer what to
do with the information fed into it, so the genes tell the
organism how to use the materials of the environment to grow
and develop and how to maintain a proper balance of internal
conditions."

The question as to how a 'naughty and restless boy' like
Naren was transformed into a world renowned Swami involves a
study of the environment in which he grew, the factors that
influenced his mind, shaped his character, unfolded his
hereditary potentialities and developed his psychomotor
abilities involving "strength, co-ordination and dexterity".

Five main factors chiselled his personality - the
family Samaskaras, his western education, his spiritual tra-
ing under Sri Ramakrishna, the trials and hardships of
adolescence and his wanderings in India. The family influence;
that impinged on his mind were: the monastic life of his
Grandfather, Durga Charan Datta, the religious leanings of

12. Brever James, A DICTIONARY OF PSYCHOLOGY, p.275; for details

See Sheldon W.H., Stevens, S.S. and Tucker, W.B., The

Varieties of Human Physique.

of his mother Bhuvaneshwari Devi and the humanism of his father, who despite being prodigal and epicurean by temperament did a lot for the poor and the down trodden. Narendranath inherited his "regal bearing" from his mother and the rational outlook from his father — the former immersed him in the Hindu lore by reciting passages from the scriptures especially the epics; the latter introduced him to the gospel of Christ and the poetry of Hafiz. Both Vishwanath and Bhuvaneshwari Devi loved music and had a sweet voice — a trait which was passed on to Narendra.

The signs of a thaumaturgic genius were visible in Narendra since his childhood. He was a prodigy like Mozart and remembered the aphorisms of Nāgīrīr Nayḍhabodha, a Sanskrit grammar, at the age of seven. He was also able to learn by rote the whole of the Ramayana done to music. At school and college he impressed everyone by his phenomenal memory. He possessed a keen intellect and never plodded through a book line by line in order to grasp its contents. "Sometimes I read the first and the last lines of each page and the content was known," he said. Narendra was polemical by nature and perhaps believed with Alexander Pope that true disputants were like true sportsmen; "their whole delight is in the pursuit."

14. Pen name of the Persian Poet Shams-ud-din Mohammed (C.1320 — 897
15. Famous Austrian Composer (1756-91)
16. Saradananda, Swami, Sri Ramakrishna, the Great Master, p. 720
17. Ibid., pp. 721-22
18. Tripp, Rhoda Thomas (Compiler) The International Thesaurus of Quotations, p. 52
intellectual activities Marendra practised physical culture both as a hobby and as a means to sound health. Did not the great Indian poet Kalidasa say: "The body is indeed the principal instrument of duty." He was proficient in gymnastics, horse-riding, swimming, boxing, wrestling, stick and sword play etc. The aesthetic streak in Marendra saved him from mistaking harshness for strength. He learnt dancing and music and could give superb performance on the stage. He was very good at poetry and acting and staged some plays at the platform of the Brahmo Samaj. In his childhood he had organised an amateur theatrical Company and presented plays in the worship hall of his home. He had a wonderful gift of eloquence and became a popular debater at the College. It was his oratorical skill which won him immense applause when he toured the west.

There were five marked stages in the religious development of Marendra's mind. First when he genuflected before the images of Rama, Sita and later Shiva thus adhering to what Feuerbach would describe as the anthropomorphic conception of God; secondly when he became an iconoclast from an iconoclast after coming into contact with the Brahmo Samaj; thirdly when he was allured by rational thought - the agnosticism of Herbert Spencer, the utilitarianism of J.S. Mill.

19 Cited in Lala Hardyal, Hints for Self Culture, p.116
20 Narvane, V.S., Modern Indian Thought, p. 83
21 It was the theistic organisation founded by Raja Ram Mohan Roy in Calcutta in 1828.
22 His Eastern and Western Disciples, p.17
the positivism of August Comte, the scepticism of David Hume and the pantheism of P.B. Shelley—and come to pay obeisance to the muse of Universal Reason disdaining the theism of the Samaj which could not reconcile 'the problem of evil in nature' with the goodness of an Omnipotent and Omniscient God. Fourthly when he realised that philosophical scepticism would nourish the mind but not the soul and may even extinguish his quest for the reality of existence and the attainment of the Supreme. Lastly his meeting with the saint of Dakshinamurty, Sri Ramankrishna, who assuaged his perturbed mind, answered his queries, and led him forth 'from doubt to certainty and from anguish to spiritual bliss.' It is worthwhile to mention that Narendranath had approached many religious luminaries of his time and asked them if they had realised God but none could give a satisfactory answer. When he put this question to the well known Brahmo Leader, Devendranath Tagore, he evaded the reply by observing: "My boy, you have the yogi's eyes." It was

23. Claude Alan Stark describes five stages in the spiritual development of Swami Vivekananda - inquisitiveness and scepticism - conversion to Advaita, conversion to bhakti, development of bhakti, effect of bhakti on his life and on his teachings. "It must be stressed," he says that while his spiritual growth spanned the spectrum from non-dualism to devout worship of the personal God, especially Kali, the Divine Mother, at no time did he reject non-dualism from theism; instead he espoused both as he passed from one to the other. This was his greatness. Starting as a pure nani, he walked gradually along the path of bhakti, to the wonderful result of gaining a harmony between the two which then found dynamic expression in the path of Karma where taking the world as a part of God, he worshipped its working in love for the welfare of beloved God in man." Swami Vivekananda as a Devotee" in, The Journal of Religious Studies, Vol. IV, Spring 1971, p.89.

24. His Eastern and Western Disciples, p. 30.
Sri Ramakrishna who answered the Naren’s question: “Sir have you seen God?” “Yes”, came a prompt reply, “I see him just as I see you only in a much intenser sense.”

Like St. Francis of Assisi who could not resolve the dilemma of choosing between “the life of the world” and “the call of the spirit” till his enlightenment, Narendra nath’s mind, too, was convulsed with two incongruous visions – the life of the senses and the life of the Sannyasin – till he met Sri Ramakrishna when he decided to take the latter course.

But Narendra nath did not accept Sri Ramakrishna as his ‘guru’ after his first meeting with him at Dakshineshwar in November, 1881. Unlike Mrs. Annie Besant whose views were metamorphosed after a single reading of Secret Doctrine by Mrs. Elwoodsky, Narendra’s rational mind weighed each idea of the Saint on the scale of Reason and Logic. He failed to understand why Sri Ramakrishna addressed him as ‘the incarnation of Narayana – born on earth to remove the misery of mankind.’ “He must be stark mad! Why am I but the son of Vishwanath Datta and yet he dares to address me thus?” he said to himself. The saint gazed into his eyes and fed him sweetmeats with his own hand, Narendra nath felt embarrassed and thought that he was a monomaniac of the class mentioned by Abercrombie and other English philosophers. But he was.

26 For a study of St. Francis of Assisi’s spiritual development, see Hayford, F.C. Mysticism – A Study and an Anthology, pp. 52-54; Thomas Henry and Thomas Dana Lee, Living Biographies of Religious Leaders, pp. 89-97.
27 See Mrs. Annie Besant’s Speeches and Writings, p. 22
28 Advaita Ashram, Life of Sri Ramakrishna, 332.
Impressed by his saintly virtues and simple teachings, "Even if insane", he said, "this man is the holiest of the holy, a true saint and for that alone he deserves reverential homage of mankind." After about a month Narendra nath visited Sri Ramakrishna again. "I thought he might do something queer as on the preceding occasion; he reminisced later. "But in the twinkling of an eye he placed his right foot on my body. The touch at once gave rise to a normal experience within me. With my eyes open I saw that the walls and everything rapidly in the room, whirled myself and vanished into nought and the whole Universe together with my individuality was about to merge in an all-encompassing mysterious void. I was terribly frightened and thought that I was facing death, for the loss of individuality meant nothing short of that. Unable to control myself, I cried out, 'What is this that you are doing to me? I have my parents at house?' He laughed aloud at this and stroking my chest said, 'All right, let it rest now. Everything will come in time.'" Narendra nath could not make out the nature of this experience. Whether it was mesmerism or hypnotism or something else? "How could a man who metamorphosed at will a strong mind like mine be dismissed as a lunatic" he thought. His curiosity about the Saint increased but he was determined not to give him another chance to exert a similar influence over him. However, he did not fare any better when he met him for the third time. Again, at the Saints' touch he lost all "Outward consciousness". While he was in that state, Sri Ramakrishna asked him various questions about his antecedents and whereabouts, his mission in the...
world and the duration of his mortal life. Narendranath's answers confirmed the Saint's revelation about him that he was an incarnation of God. When he woke up he was flabbergasted.

Narendranath's doubts about the sanity of the Saint were dispelled and he came to recognize his mystical powers which were beyond the grasp of his ratiocinative ability. The intellect surrendered but the instincts did not submit so easily. "Let a thousand people call you God but I shall certainly not call you God as long as I do not know it to be true .... Let others proclaim a thing as truth, but I shall certainly not listen to them unless I myself realize it as truth," he told his Master. Narendranath's attitude was akin to that of Nicolas Copernicus and George Berkley who did not accept some theories simply because the whole world adhered to them. Unlike Sri Ramakrishna he disdained idol worship especially that of Kali and poohpoohed at many of the injunctions of Hindu scriptures. He classed the Ashtavakra Samhita and other Advaita treatises among the heretical literature. The Gospel of Shankaraharya appeared to him as blasphemous. "I am God, you are God, all things that are born and die are God", he would blurt out, "The brains of the Aghis and Munis, the authors of such books must have been deranged; how otherwise could they have written such things?" At another occasion

31. Ibid., pp. 335-36.
32. His Eastern and Western Admirers, Reminiscences of Swami Vivekananda, p. 190.
34. Sardananda Swami, 743.
when Sri Ramakrishna had finished his talk about the oneness of Jiva and Brahman he went to his friend Hazra and cynically observed: "Can it ever be possible that the waterpot is God, the cup is God, whatever we see and all of us are God?" He recalled Rene Descartes' famous aphorism: cogito ergo sum (I think therefore I am) and his metaphysical dualism according to which the body and the soul were heterogeneous and interacted by means of the so-called pineal gland.

Ananda would not argue with a Buddha or a Govinda-pada with a Sandapada. But Saranda did. He was a better intellectual than either of the two and did not apotheosise his Guru as they did. He saw him as any other human being, only more virtuous and ennobled. Like Aristotle who said: "Achives Plato, sed in his vacia veritas—'ear is Plato but dearer still is truth." Narendranath's enquiring mind recognised his qualities of heart but refused to yield before his mind so soon. He, however, did not prove an Aristotle to his Plato, but spread the gospel of Sri Ramakrishna once he had accepted it. Unlike Plato who called his pupil "a fool that kicks his mother after draining her dry," the saint of Bakhshishwar described Sarada as "pure gold without base—alacoin with no stiiv whatsoever—it cut you hear the slightest sound." Thearamananae never mistook his outspokenness for vanity, his self-confidence for arrogance, his boundless vision for arrogance and his austere love of truth for a raw intellect.

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35 ibid. p. 73.
36 Abheshal ... and radin ... *a dictionary of philosophy*, p. 117.
37 Sandapada was the famous monistic philosopher who became the grandson of Shankaracharya's teacher Govindapada.
38 Durand, **The Story of Philosophy**, p. 60.
39 Benn, **The Greek Philosophers**, vol. i, p. 283.
the Saint of Dakshineshwar described Naren as "pure gold without dross" - a coin with no alloy whatsoever: ring it and you hear the trues t sound. The Paramhansa never mistook his outspokenness for
true self-confidence for arrogance, his boundless v i o u r for insolence and his austere love of truth for a raw intellect. He
and in wereendra "a man of pure sativa" who belonged to "the abode of the indivisible" and one of the "seven Rishis"...his fondness for his pupil took an almost epileptic form. At times he would
become speechless at his sight and go into a trance. If werenendra did not visit him he felt as if he was a fish out of water.
"Oh! I cannot do without seeing him!... I wept so much but
w e n d r a did not come! the longing to see him has produced a tearful anguish as if my heart was wrong; but he does not at all
feel the intensity of the attraction I feel for him.... that will they people, think that I, a man of such advanced age, am
weeping and panting, so much for him.... but I can by all means control myself. Never did my master answer so much love on
for his pupil.

Sri saradananda was to werenendra what Govinda was to
dicotyrama for satsantrya to satyakama. Comparing werenendra to
other spiritual luminaries of his time he once remarked that
if eshah saddhananda had one power that made him famous, werenendra had eighteen such powers "in the fullest measure"; if eshah's and

41 wife of ori umakrishna, p.370.
42 Saradananda, Swami, p.750.
43 Ibid., p.749.
44 Ibid., p.745.
46 The famous Vedantic philosopher sankaracarya(circa700-538A.D) was initiated into the ascetic order founded by Ved vyas' son,
47 by the learned monk Govinda. The name of satyakama-a Vedic teacher of unknown origin-occurs in the ukhandogya upanishad. He learnt the truths of Indian
48 scriptures at the feet of one Gauja Haridrumata.
Vijay's knowledge was like the flame of a lamp, Narendranath incarnated the Sun of knowledge in him; if his devotees were like pots or pitchers, Naren was like "a huge water barrel"; if they were like pools or tanks, he was "a huge reservoir like the Haldarpukur"; if they were like "minnows or smelts or sardines, he was 'a huge red-eyed carp". Sri Ramakrishna found some of his devotees like lotuses with ten petals, some like lotuses with sixteen petals, some like lotuses with a hundred petals but Narendra was "a thousand-petalled one".

Any young man would go hysterical after hearing such eulogising comments about him. But Narendranath was made of a different stuff. He would not yield simply because he was praised before all and Sundry. Perhaps he remembered Charles Caleb Cotton's words: "Applause is the spur of noble minds, the end and aim of weak ones". His position was like that of "the young favourite of a Renaissance Pope". Would he yield to the temptation of being called as the most loveable disciple of the Godman of Bengal and let his queries drown in blind faith or his quest for truth in gross obscurantism? He rebelled. When Sri Ramakrishna observed that his revelation about him descended from the Goddess Kali he retorted: "Who can say that Mother showed you these things and that they are not the fictions of

49. Ibid.
50. Gupta, Mahendranath, p.793.
51. Ibid.
52. The International Thesaurus of Quotations, p.715.
your brain?....Science and philosophy have proved beyond doubt that our eyes, ears and other organs of sense very often deceive us, especially when there is a desire in our mind to see a particular object as endowed with a particular quality. You are affectionate to me and want to see me great in everything; this is perhaps why such visions appear to you. The Master was, however, sure that Naren would one day see the Divine in him and become a great preacher.

For full six years Narendranath tried to break through the citadel of Sri Ramakrishna's concepts with the sharp weapons of his Western Logic and Reason. But he failed. His powers of mind were no match to the Master's puissance of the Soul. Slowly and gradually his resistance gave way at a song, a glance, a touch, a parable, till he attained bliss in absolute surrender. His scepticism turned into faith and his questioning mind was set at rest. He sensed the unity of all existence and came to see Siva(God) in every jiva(human being). He learnt the truth that different creeds were like many rivers flowing in various directions but leading to the same ocean. He also felt that religion was a matter of realisation, not theory. Image-worship was no more to be detested- but to be considered the first step on the way to spiritual realisation. Man was not to be regarded as a 'sinner' but a spark of the divine fire, a drop from the ocean of cosmic consciousness. The goal of every human being ought to be the realisation of that divinity within him.

Narendranath's ideas were revolutionised; his spiritual dilemmas

54. Sardananda Swarai, p.754.
were almost resolved. But that was not the end of his turmoils.

In the early part of 1884 after Narendranath had taken his B.A. examination, his father died bequeathing a heavy debt. The family fell under a severe pecuniary crisis. Narenda, being the eldest male member was compelled to search for means to feed seven or eight persons. He could not get a suitable job even after passing B.A. So he joined the Law classes. He wore rags and sometime went to his college without taking food. His relatives did not lend him a helping hand. Only one friend sent occasional anonymous aid and he remained grateful to him for life. Charmed by his beaming countenance two wealthy women are alleged to have fleeced him into matrimony so that he could overcome the poverty of his family. But he snubbed them with "bitter contempt and sternness". For some time he worked against a temporary vacancy in the office of an attorney and translated a few books. But without getting a permanent job he could not make adequate arrangements for the maintenance of the family. He felt forlorn and desperate in a world "managed" by God. The taste of poverty was bitter. He came down from the dizzy heights of the Advaita philosophy which he had transcended alongwith Sri Ramakrishna. The age-old metaphysical question: Why did God not kill the devil? began to haunt him. He pondered, did God

56. Narendranath, then eighteen years old, was preparing for the F.A. Examination of the Calcutta University. He passed the Entrance examination in 1879 and became a student of the Presidency college. After a year he joined the General Assembly's Institution founded by the Scottish General Missionary Board, now famous as Scottish Church College. He passed the First Arts examination in 1881 securing second division.

57. Nikhilananda Swami, Vivekananda, a biography, p.41.

58. Sardananda Swami, pp.803-4. The identity of the said women has not been disclosed by the biographers of the Swami.
really exist? If so did he hear the plaintive prayer of man? Why was there no response to his prayer? Why was so much of evil in the creation of a benign creator? Why was there so much calamity in the kingdom of one who was all bliss? In sheer exasperation he fell back on the works of Mill, Hume, Bain Covete and other western philosophers as a last refuge.

But this was just a passing phase. Atheism rose like a wave on the ocean of his mind and fell without a bang. The flickering lamp of his faith in God started burning steadily under the shelter of his religious Samaakaras and his contacts with Sri Ramakrishna, "God certainly exists", he thought "and the means to realize Him also certainly exists; otherwise what is life for, what is it worth? That path has to be searched out, however great the pain and misery the search might entail".

Narendranath wanted to rise above the mental states of happiness and misery and even planned to renounce home for ever— a step which Sri Ramakrishna forbade him to take. At the instance of his Guru he went thrice to the temple of Goddess Kali to ask help for his family. But he could not make that prayer. "What a trifling thing have I come to ask of Mother!" he thought, "It is, as the Master often says, just like the folly of asking a king, having received his grace, for gourds and pumpkins. Ah, how low is my intellect". All he could ask was for knowledge of the Truth and devotional life. Afterwards Narendranath requested Sri Ramakrishna to pray for his family. He refused

59. Ibid., pp.804-5.
60. Ibid.
61. Ibid., p.808.
but gave the assurance: "Well, they will never be in want of plain food and clothing".

The above incident left a deep impression upon Naren's mind; "It enriched his spiritual life, for he gained a new understanding of the Godhead and Its ways in the phenomenal universe". To quote Swami Nikhilananda: Naren's idea of God had hitherto been confined either to that of a vague Impersonal Reality or to that of an extracosmic Creator removed from the world. He now realized that the Godhead is immanent in the creation, that after projecting the universe from within Itself, it has entered into all created entities as life and consciousness, whether manifest or latent. This same immanent Spirit, or the World Soul, when regarded as a person creating, preserving and destroying the universe, is called the Personal God, and is worshipped.

62. Ibid. There is one point that the hagiographers of both Swami Vivekananda and Sri Ramakrishna never raise. Aubrey Menon asks, why did Sri Ramakrishna, who had, by this time a wide acquaintance among the well-heeled did not exert himself to find his favourite a job. "Was he afraid of being lonely when Vivekananda signed the book each morning to get behind his Babu's desk? Or did he know with the super-egoistical insight of the holy that Vivekananda was the only one among his friends who could ensure his being remembered after he was dead". Aubrey Menon rejects the story of Swami Vivekananda going to the temple of Kali for help at the instance of Sri Ramakrishna. "I don't believe a word of it", he says. "In the first place, Ramakrishna was face to face with a fiery tempered Bengali youth forced, despite his natural pride, to ask urgent help from a man who had embarrassingly pressed his attentions on him. If Ramakrishna had brushed him off with a curt advice to pray, he would have got, I fancy, a reply which would have sent him off into another of his public trances. Secondly, while Vivekananda might well have prayed to Kali in his troubles (he had been on his knees in a dozen houses already), he would not have switched to a pretty-please prayer for himself. All his life poverty horrified him. He himself said that it caused him to have a bleeding heart, and there was no irony in his use of the phrase, whatever may have happened to it since". The New Mystics, pp. 140-41.
by different religions through such a relationship as that of father, mother, king or beloved. These relationships he came to understand, have their appropriate symbols and Kali is one of them.

The period of trials and tribulations enabled Naren to see "the rationale that could reconcile Divine graciousness with the misery of the world". As he had watched the gloom of poverty, he began to understand the problems of the poor. Would he be able to wipe out tears from the eyes of the downtrodden? he thought. Perhaps he could—by renunciation and service. His mind grew anthropocentric—for should he not see God in man?

The idea of serving the humanity, however, remained in an embryonic form till he began his tour of the country. After the death of his Master at Cossipore in August 1886 Narendranath founded the Ramakrishna brotherhood at Baranagore where spiritual disciplines were practised. Around this time he visited Antpur where he took the vow of Sannyasa along with his brother disciples on the eve of Christmas. Towards the end of 1888 he made short trips to Varanasi, Saket, Lucknow, Agra, Vrindaban, Hathras, Rishikesh and the Himalayas. At Sarnath he felt exalted at the sight of the dilapidated Buddhist Vihars. Amidst the ruins of the stupa of Ashoka where Buddha is believed to have delivered his first sermon the Dharma Chakra Pravartana.

64. Sri Ramakrishna had been removed from Dakshineswar to Cossipore for treatment on December 11, 1885. It was the last phase of Narendranath's training under him. Before his death Sri Ramakrishna is said to have transmitted his powers to Narendranath. "By the force of the power transmitted by me", he observed, "great things will be done by you; only after that will you go to whence you came". His Eastern and Western disciples, pp.147-48.
(setting in motion the wheel of Religion), he felt like a Kaundanya and reminisced the Four Noble Truths and Eight Fold Path of the Sakya muni. At Agra, the splendour of Taj Mahal—'queen of architecture'—virtually reduced him to tears. While in Ayodhya he was appalled at the sight of desecrated temples of Lord Rama and his consort Sita and realised the harm fanaticism could do to the sacred relics. At Vindaban he relived the epic of Lord Krishna through the Bhagvata Purana and worshipped at the famous shrine of Gopeswar Mahadeva. The natural surroundings of Rishikesh landed him in the Eldorado of serenity. Narendranath had haughty discussions with some "pandits" at Varanasi, known as the supreme centre of Hindu religion and Sanskrit learning. "I am going away", he is said to have remarked, "but I shall never come back until I can burst on society like a bomb, and make it follow me like a dog". He went into retreat in the deodar-shaded glens of the Himalayas and enriched his knowledge of Sanskrit and the Vedas.

In 1889 Narendranath visited Allahabad where the three great rivers— the Ganges, the Yamuna and the mythical Sarasvati—meet. According to the Puranas the three Gods of the Hindu

65. One of the first disciples of Gautama Buddha.
66. Rolland, p.17.
67. The city of Ayodhya suffered considerably during muslim rule. When Babar visited it, he destroyed the temple commemorating the birth of Lord Rama and built a mosque on the site which exists to this today and is known as Babar's mosque. Another shrine "Tret Kā-Thakur" where Lord Rama performed the Ashvamedha Yajya and set up images of himself and Sita, suffered irreparably during the period of Aurangjeb who threw these idols in a river.
68. Rolland, p.18.
trinity reside in a special sense at "Prayag". "Brahma is in
the form of a Salmali tree at Pratishtana near-by, once the
capital of the lunar race of kings; Siva has assumed the form
of the undying banyan at Prayag, and Vishnu is there as Madhava
to whom a temple has been dedicated". It appears Narendranath
was well aware of the religious and historical significance
of this place. Rama and Sita visited it to meet the sage Bharadvaaja before going to the Dandaka forest. The Pandava brothers
of the Mahabharata fame are believed to have spent at least part of their years of exile at a nearby place. Mahatma Buddha
preached his ethics here. Kumarila Bhatta chose this place to
found the Purva-mimamsa School of philosophy. Shankaracharya visited it during his triumphal march around India. Akbar the
Great launched his Din-i-lahi from Prayag which he rebuilt and renamed Allahabad. According to His Eastern and Western disciples the Swami was well received by the Bengalis of the town who were "astounded at his learning and wonderful character".
He severely criticised the social abuses and iniquities of the Hindus especially the degeneration of caste system. It was here
that he first heard of Parhari Baba, the famous saint of Ghazipur and went to see him in the third week of January 1890. Later,
in an article, he expressed his "deep debt of gratitude" to him.

In July 1890 Narendranath sought the blessings of Sri Sarda
Devi, the holy consort of Sri Ramakrishna, to free himself from

69. India's sacred shrines and cities (anonymous), p.347.
70. Ibid.
71. His Eastern and Western disciples, p.181.
72. See "Sketch of the life of Parhari Baba" in The Complete
the Baranagore monastery and leave for the solitude of the Himalayas. "This was the great departure", says Romain Rolland. "Like a diver he plunged into the Ocean of India, and the Ocean of India covered his tracks. Among its flotsam and jetsam he was nothing more than one nameless Sannyasin in saffron robe among a thousand others. But the fires of genius burned in his eyes. He was a prince despite all disguise". Narendranath tramped the country from the Himalayas to Cape Comorin. He visited various places of pilgrimage and historical interest in U.P., Rajasthan, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Mysore, Kerala, Madras and Hyderabad. To quote His Eastern and Western disciples: "During his travels he realised the essence of Buddhism and Jainism, the spirit of Ramananda and Dayananda. He had become a profound student of Tulsiidas'. He had learned all about the saints of

73. Rolland, p.20.
74. Narendranath wandered without plan—today a beggar quite uncertain of his next meal, tomorrow the guest of a Maharaja, lodged in a palace. His biographers feel that he remembered the admonition of the Dhammapada:

"Go forward without a path!
Fearing nothing, caring for nothing,
Wander alone, like the rhinoceros!
Even as the Lion, not trembling at noises,
Even as the Wind, not caught in the net,
Even as the lotus leaf, unstained by the Water,
Do thou wander alone, like the rhinoceros!"

—His Eastern and Western Disciples, p.206; Nikhilananda, pp.88-89. Narendranath is said to have spent some time with the Tibetan races of the Himalayas who practised polyandry in those days. See Rolland, p.25.

75. One of the earliest teachers of the Bhakti Movement (circa 1360-1470 A.D.).
76. Founder of the Arya Samaj (1824-83 A.D.) His motto was "Back to the Vedas".
77. The famous saintly poet (1532-1623 A.D.). He wrote more than a dozen works but is chiefly known for his Eastern Hindi Version of the Rama, called the Rama-charita-mansa (the lake of Rama's deeds) which maintains "a consistently pure and lofty moral tone and is as well known in northern India as the Bible in Europe".
Maharashtra and the Alwars and Nayanars of Southern India. From the Paramahansa Parivrajakacharya to the poor Bhangi Mehtar disciple of Lalguru he had learnt not only their hopes and ideals, but their memories as well. The songs of Guru Nanak alternated with those of Kira Bai and Tansen on his lips. The stories of Prithvi Raj and Delhi jostled against those of Chitore and Partap Singh, Shiva and Uma, Radha and Krishna, Sita-Ram and Buddha.... His whole heart and soul was the burning epic of the country, touched to an overflow of mystic passion by her very name. Besides studying the multifarious systems of Indian philosophy Narendranath found his motherland groaning under poverty and misery. He saw God "struggling in humanity"—in the dusty and hungry plains of India, in the mangled and mutilated remains of a proud race which had given the message of freedom and immortality of self to the world at the dawn of civilisation. His heart boiled at the inertia of his countrymen. He wanted to instil fresh blood into the dry bones of Indian society. But he was torn between the propensity to achieve the blissful state of a Buddha and the desire to deliver the masses from the predicament of grinding poverty and social backwardness.

Which way shall he go? Towards self-gratification or social work?

78. Founder of the Sikh religion (1469-1545 A.D.).
79. Famous Hindi poetess, mystic and a great devotee of Lord Krishna (circa 1450-1547 A.D.).
80. One of the great musicians and singers of northern India who adorned the court of Emperor Akbar (1550-1610 A.D.).
81. His Eastern and Western disciples, p. 285.
The dilemma was resolved when he visited Kanya Kumari—the southernmost tip of India’s mainland which marks the confluence of three waters: the Bengal Sea, the Indian Ocean and the Arabian Sea. After paying obeisance to the idol of Mother Kumari he swam across the high seas to a rock, known for its religious significance*. "The ocean tossed and stormed about him; but there was even a greater tempest raging in his mind". The emaciated figures of his countrymen “swarming on the body of James like so many worms on a rotten-stinking carcass” flashed across his mind. He was reminded of "the lusterless eyes of the hunger stricken", the inhumanity of the rich, the complacency of the western educated youngmen towards social ills and evils, the political subjugation of India and the inadequacy of reform movements. But he was equally aware of the rich

83. From ancient times the Rock has been regarded as a sacred place. In Puranic tradition it has been known as 'Shripada Parai', meaning the arai (which is the Tamil word for rock) that has been blessed by the touch of Shripada (which stands for the feet of the Goddess, in Sanskrit). There is on the Rock, a projection, similar in form to a human foot and a little brownish in complexion, which has traditionally been revered as a symbol of the Shripadam. According to the same legend stated earlier, it was on this Rock that Goddess Kanya did ascetic practices. It was because of its special significance and sanctity that Swami Vivekananda, an ardent devotee of Kali and Durga was prompted to sojourn there for meditation and Sadhana. It is also widely believed that the original Kumari Temple was on the Rock or somewhere near it and that the Rock itself was a part of the Mainland; but sometime in the distant past, the sea encroached upon the Mainland and turned the Rock into an island, with the result that the old temple had to be rebuilt on its present site. Whatever truth there may be in the above tradition, one thing is certain that the Rock has been venerated by Shakti worshippers, through the ages as a place of great spiritual efficacy for taking up Sadhana. See "Tale of the Vivekananda Rock Memorial Kanya Kumari" in Lokesh Chandra and others (eds.) India's Contribution to World Thought and Culture, p.VII

cultural heritage of India and did not want to see it droop like "the spiritual reserves" of Phoenicia, Syria, Babylonia, Assyria, Greece and Rome. Should not he exhort his countrymen to rise from their slumber and work for the rejuvenation of India? The thought stirred him deeply and became the mission of his life. While pondering over the ancient glory and the present degradation of his country he went into a state of Samadhi (trance) and is said to have received illumination—"the highest experience of spiritual realisation". The idea of becoming one with the Absolute in the Nirvikalpa Samadhi gave place to the desire for serving "the outcast Narayanas" (Gods), "the starving Narayanas" and "the millions of oppressed Narayanas" of his country. His eyes looked through a mist of tears across the great waters. But he kept up hope and hit upon an idea: "We are so many Sannyasins wandering about, and teaching the people metaphysics— it is all madness. Did not our Gurudeva use to say, "An empty stomach is no good for religion"? He then took the crucial decision to go abroad to fulfill the mission of his life. Before leaving for America in 1893 he acquired the ascetic name of Swami Vivekananda.

Why did Swami Vivekananda go to America? The answers to the question cover a wide range— varying from God's will to the dialectics of historical materialism. Some of his biographers

85. His Eastern and Western disciples, p.254.
suggest that he went to America to preach the gospel of Vedanta. He was convinced that a materialistic culture contained the seeds of its own destruction; hence the West needed India to deepen its spiritual outlook. The argument does not seem convincing in the light of Marie Louise Burke's *New Discoveries*. It is significant to note that the idea of teaching Vedanta to the West did not evolve in Swami Vivekananda's mind until the latter part of 1894, and prior to that time he was guided mainly by two motives—first, to raise funds for ameliorating the material condition of India, and incidentally, "to provide for his own support"; during his stay in America, and secondly, to give the Americans a true picture of Hinduism and to remove current misconceptions regarding his motherland.

Swami Vivekananda's decision to go to America was not sudden; the idea of going to the West had flashed in his mind even when he was, to use Rolland's words, "the pilgrim of India". The more he brooded over the miserable plight of "the politically prostrate, economically atrophied and culturally bewildered people of India", the more strongly he felt the need to go to the West to discover ways and means to mitigate the sufferings of his countrymen.

88. Prominent among Swami Vivekananda's biographers are His Eastern and Western Disciples, Swami Nikhilananda, Romain Rolland, S.N. Dhar, Bhupendra Nath Datta and Marie Louise Burke.
90. Rolland, pp. 21-23.
91. Tajasananda, Swami, "Swami Vivekananda and his message" in *Centenary Volume*, p. 75.
His plans were fairly vague at this time. It was towards the end of 1891 that a "Liberal and far-seeing Pandit" at Porbander, impressed with the Swami’s intellectual attainments, exhorted him to go abroad. "Swami ji", he said, "I am afraid, you cannot do much in this country.... You ought to go to the West where people will understand you and your worth". Round about this time, he heard of the Parliament of Religions which was going to be held at Chicago in 1893. It was about the month of July 1892 that Swami Vivekananda became serious about his intention to be present at the Parliament of Religions. He told his host, Babu Haridas Chatterjee, at Khandwa that if anyone helped him with the passage money, he would go to attend the Parliament. Towards the end of October 1892, Swami Vivekananda expressed the same view to the Maharaja of Mysore. But his plans were still not mature and he declined to accept the offer of the Maharaja to cover all his expenses to America.

It was in the course of his subsequent meditation at Kanya Kumari in the same year that the idea of going to attend the Parliament matured into a sacred resolve. During the last days of the year 1892 Swami Vivekananda wended his way to Madras where he gathered around him a group of enthusiastic young men. He publicly announced his intention of going to America, and his devotees began to collect funds for the trip.

92. His Eastern and Western Disciples, pp.226-27.
93. Ibid., pp.229-30.
94. Ibid., pp.241-55.
95. Tejasananda, in Centenary Volume, p.76.
96. Vivekananda’s Eastern and Western Disciples record that on 13 February, 1893, he delivered a lecture at the Mahaboob College on "My Mission to the West". The contents of this speech are not known. See pp.275-76.
But when the money was collected for his voyage he refused to accept it and asked his disciples to distribute it among the poor. Swami Vivekananda's biographers argue that he was waiting for "the guidance from above" and when it came, he thought of inducing his "Princely admirers" again, and should this attempt fail, he decided to travel 'even on foot via Afghanistan, Iraq etc'. The Maharajas of Khetri and Mysore agreed to provide him with the passage money; the former also presented him a beautiful robe "that was", to use Rolland's words, "to fascinate American Idlers".

Before his departure for America, Swami Vivekananda met two of his brother disciples, Brahmananda and Turiyananda, at the Abu Road and personally explained to them "the Imperious call of suffering India", that forced him to go: "I have now travelled all over India....But also, it was agony to me....to see with my own eyes the terrible poverty and misery of the masses, and I could not restrain my tears. It is now my firm conviction that it is futile to preach religion amongst them without first trying to remove their poverty and their sufferings. It is for this reason- to find more means for the salvation of the poor of India- that I am now going to America". At the end of May 1893, Swami Vivekananda sailed from Bombay, via Ceylon, Penang, Singapore, Hongkong and Japan to Vancouver; from there he went on by train to Chicago.

97. Nikhilananda Swami, p.54.
100. Ibid., pp.30-31; Nikhilananda, p.294.