The fact that Swami Vivekananda stayed on in the United States after the close of the Parliament while representatives of almost all other religions had sailed back to their respective countries raises some pertinent questions. What motivated him to remain in America? Did he take the decision of prolonging his stay after winning laurels at the Parliament or had gone with some definite objective in mind? Did he come to teach Vedanta to the West or to collect money for the downtrodden in India? Did he intend to synthesise the East and the West?

The questions are multiple and baffling. If one assumed that the big ovations which the Swami received at the Parliament goaded him to prolong his stay in America, one could very aptly ask: Was he being narcissistic? The taste of recognition usually whets the appetite for more. Did the Swami wish to satiate what the psychologists would describe as his "super ego" — by delivering regular talks in contact with a lecture bureau and making more contacts with the American elite thereby trying to broaden the area of his influence. Did he intend to exploit the morbid curiosity of Americans "for the abnormal, the occult" which had reached its paroxysm at the end of the 19th century — for amassing money or winning acclaim?

None of the Swami's biographers has so far explored this psychological aspect.

On the evidence of Swami Vivekananda's epistles it may be argued that attending the sessions of the Parliament
had not been his sole objective when he left for America. Even after reaching the shores of the Lake Michigan — from where he moved to the capital of Massachusetts — he was in two minds and wrote to his follower Ali Khanna from "freey centres" that he was not sure whether he would go back to Chicago to attend the Parliament. "I don't know whether I shall go back to Chicago or not. My friend's there urge me to represent India. But I refused as I would have to spend all my little stock of money in remaining more than a month in Chicago."

On the reason for Swami Vivekananda's reluctance to attend the Parliament, he wrote, "I have now to "fight against impossibilities," he wrote. "A number of times I had a mind to go out of the country and go back to India, but I am determined, and I have a call from above: I see no way but his cross, and I must stick to it, was, life or death..."

It seems that Swami Vivekananda had some definite aim in mind before he left the shores of India and the Parliament was "only something by the way... only an obstacle. In any case, I will do my duty..."

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[1] In an updated letter to Adi Shankara Ji (May 1893) Swami Vivekananda wrote: "I joined the Parliament of Religions which always pleased it when our people wanted to go for it. I care over telling you — that I can or can not join that assembly — and you may send me, even if you like. I will be over leaving me quite free." The Complete Works, Vol VII, p.464.

[2] He was one of the enthusiastic group of young disciples of Swami who raised money for the Swami's passage to America. For his life sketch see Srinivasa's article in The Nbravadin, January 1897.


[5] Ibid.

conceived the idea of the Parliament of Religions there was every possibility that the Swami would have undertaken a tour of the West. During the course of his wanderings (wanderings) in India Swami Vivekananda was convinced that no nation or individual could live a healthy life by holding itself aloof from other nations or individuals.

India remained locked in its spell of exclusion and seclusion for long. Imprisoned to outside influence it developed a myopic outlook and did not weed out obsolescent customs or traditions, or allowed the growth of new ideas. At the turn of the 19th century India looked like a mummy of a once Vivacious civilisation, diagnosing the ills of national life as arising from the long stagnation of Indian Society.

Swami Vivekananda once remarked that India's fate was sealed the day she discovered the word ‘leech’ and stopped communication with the outside world. Give and take was the law, he argued, and if India was to rise again she must bring out her treasures and throw them broadcast among the nations of the earth, 'and in return be ready to receive what others have to give.'

As early as September 20, 1892, Swami Vivekananda had expressed such ideas to Rishi Shanker Lal of Vrindavan: "We must travel; we must go to foreign parts. We must see how the engine of society works in other countries and keep free and open

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7. Swami Vivekananda to Madam, October 27, 1904, Ibid., p. 59.
communication with what is going on in the minds and other things, if we really want to be a nation again." 8

The idea remained only in his mind in the years that followed. So his famous disciple wrote from Yokohama on July 10, 1913: "Come be men! Come out of your narrow holes and have a look ahead. See how nations are on the march." 10

It can be plausibly argued that the purpose of Swami Vivekananda's longer stay in America was to study the future of the nation's 'The Seer of the Future' in the West. To study the influence of Western culture and to set in motion the process of acculturation which would bring India to "the mainstream of international life" and "over the hedges of isolation, which had clutched its body- polity for long. If Swami Vivekananda set such an objective in mind the question of prolonging his stay in America simply because he had won laurels at the Parliament does not arise at all. Nor did he become vain, histrionic. Instead of histrionic and haughty he attributed his success to the Almighty, "in rare he praised," he said, "who waketh the dumb a "Victor speaker" (मुक्त करोड़ी वाचा)." He wrote to Aシュvrami: "If I have done well, I owe it to the strength for it .... He who was guiding me on the snow tops of the Himalayas and the burning plains of India is here to help me and guide me. GLORY unto Him in the highest." 12

10. Ibid., p.10.
11. Ibid., p.21.
of his servants."

An artist seeks popularity. Swami Vivekananda never yearned for it. Like Robert South he likened it to the devil's stratagem: "Who like an expert wrestler, usually gives a man a lift before he gives him a throw." Popularity is pride in winning. To use Bolingbroke's terms, defeats its own end by bringing the man who seeks adoration and reverence, into contempt. His not pride to achieve a mess of men's society, but out of his wisdom, and out of paradise, in an out of court, and not out of his wisdom: heaven? Swami Vivekananda who believed in the philosophy of Karma Yama believed the lower criterion of fame for popularity which tantamounts to attaching the end with the fruits of one's actions. He had admonished his Indian disciples from America: "Calm and steady work and no newspaper humbug, no name-taking, you must always remember." 

It is evident that Swami Vivekananda did not express more over his success at the Parliament nor did he extend his stay for merely satisfying his ego. And it seems so he could not have wept over his "victory" on the day he was honoured by a rich man of Chicago. "Here he was entertained right royally", so record his eastern and western disciples. A wealthy room fitted with luxury beyond anything he could.
conceive was assigned to him. But instead of feeling happy
in this splendid environment, he was miserable. . . . As he...
lay upon his bed, the terrible contrast between poverty-
stricken India and opulent America oppressed him. . . . At
length, overcome with emotion he fell to the ground crying
out, "O mother, what do I care for name and fame when my
motherland remains wrack in utmost poverty.... Who will raise
the rustics of India! . . . Show me, O mother, how I can help
them."

It is sometimes asserted that Swami Vivekananda had a
puparly concern for the pitiable and varnished condition of
the wretched and wretched natives of India who appeared to
him as "emaciated figures of young and old in tattered rags,
whose faces bear deep-cut lines of the despair and poverty of
hundreds of years.... resembling men only in appearance, cru-
ched out of life by being downtrodden by their own people and
servile nations.... swarming on the body of India like so many
worms on a putrid, stinking carcass." It was to ameliorate
the lot of these people who bore sorrowfully in their eyes that
Swami Vivekananda thought of going to America to raise funds
for them.

A study of Swami Vivekananda's letters addressed to
his ideal from America, corroborates this view. He wrote
to his Amma on August 20, 1903: "Feel for the miserable and
look up for help.... I have travelled twelve years with this
load in my heart and this idea in my head. I have gone from
door to door of the so-called rich and great. With a bleeding
heart I have crossed half the world to this strange land.

seeking for help". In the same epistle he remarked that it was really difficult "getting into (American) society and taking yourself heard," but he pleaded that if his "patrons" could keep him in Europe for at least six months he would find a place he could float upon. In a stoical tone he observed: "I may perish or cold or hunger in this land but I beseech you, young men, this sympathy, this struggle for the poor, the humble, the oppressed... first I will try in America; and if I fail, try in this land: if I fail go back to India and wait for further commands from India..." 20

"prabhat kavi bapu vijnan" — "Great philosophers are always met with many obstacles". But Swami Vivekananda did not deviate from the course he had set for himself is evident from a letter he wrote to Ramakrishnananda on March 19, 1894: "I shall try to earn the wherewithal myself to the best of my sight and carry out a plan or die in the attempt. (निर्जल "वर विद्यामृगी विनाशे निषिद्ध त्याने — "Non death is certain, it is best to sacrifice oneself for a good cause."

"वैसे-वैसे दिखा चरस्त: — 'doing good to others (silently) like the sinner' — this is my religion", said Swami Vivekananda. He can't believe in a "hot or religion", he wrote to "vinoda

“which cannot wipe the widow’s tears, or bring a piece of bread to the orphan’s mouth.... Where should you seek for God - are not all the poor, the miserable, the weak, Gods...?”

On September 2, 1923 Swami Vivekananda asked Alasinga to urge the rich of Ceylon and other rich men to sympathise with the causes of India. "Tell them", he remarked, "how they are standing on the neck of the poor and that they are not fit to be called men if they don’t try to raise them up".

To his inner disciples he wrote that the fate of a nation depends upon the condition of its masses. "Can you raise them", he asked, "can you give them back their lost individuality". "Endow for ever", he exhorted, "sympathy for the poor, the lowest, the lowest, even unto death—this is our motto".

The condition of the masses of India thus seems to have remained the primary concern of Swami Vivekananda even in America. He wanted to accomplish this object by "raising funds for the development of Indian work" and by inspiring his disciples to take up the work of constructive social reform.

At the public meetings he addressed before the commencement of the Parliament of Religions, Swami Vivekananda asked for voluntary contributions from Americans for helping his countrymen. Connelley Simon records that he used to set

25. Ibid., p. 73.
overwhelmed by the generosity of his audience who seemed so happy to give to help people they had never seen so far away. However, Swami did not get as much money as he had expected. From his letters it appears that at least till the early September of 1903, Swami Vivekananda did not even find sufficient means to support himself what to talk of setting contributions for his project. "The expense I am bound to run into here is awful", he wrote to Mahin on August 20, 1903. "You see, I have spent £170 in notes and £30 in cash. It has come down to £130 in all... before you get this letter my money would come down to something about £70 or £60. So try your best to send some money".

At the parliament of religions Swami Vivekananda ruefully regretted that he came to America to seek aid for his destitute people but was sorry to discover that it was difficult to get help from the 'wealthy in a Christian land'.

By the end of September 1903 Swami Vivekananda had realised that lecturing was "a very profitable occupation" in America and could help him in his future projects. Referring to his earnings from lectures of Chicago immediately after the close of the Parliament he wrote to Mrs Tannah Jools: "It is anything from 70 to 70 dollars a lecture, and just now I have been so well advertised in Chicago mainly by the parliament of religions that it is not advisable to give up this field now".

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27. His Eastern and Western Addresses, p. 44.
By the end of August 1894, Swami Vivekananda had earned about nine thousand rupees in Indian currency which, as he wrote to Alesina on August 31, 1894, "I will send over to you for the organization." He wanted him to start a society and a journal, and "build a temple in Calcutta which should have a library and some rooms for the office." He expressed full confidence in his plans for the social rejuvenation of India, as he observed: "Thus we shall progress look by look. This is a great field for my work, and everything done here prepares the way for my coming work in the land".

Should one conclude from these facts that Swami Vivekananda stayed in America only to raise funds for his countrymen or, as his Eastern and Western Admirers, p. 23. Waldo puts it, "to send help to his fellow Swamis in India..." Of course not. He had a message to give to the Western World which excelled in science and technology but lacked in spirituality. In his view, the modern Western civilization was "frankly materialistic" and never sought inspiration from religion which had "functioned as its antagonist." Its concept of man is merely as a biological organism, seeking organic

32. Ibid. It is evident from Swami Vivekananda's letters that he was constantly sending money to his disciples for social work. To give an example, he wrote to Swami Saradananda (Sharat) on May 20, 1894: "If you all like, you can give to Gopal Rs.500/- from the amount I sent for the bath. I have no more to send now. I have no more to send now". The Complete Works, vol.V, p.33
33. His Eastern and Western admirers, p.23.
satisfactions and organic survival. Such a philosophy may be
dominic progressive force in the short run; but it is fraught
with evil in the long run, firstly, because it "falls far short
of the truth about man as ascertained by a scientific and pen-
netrating study of man in depth which was undertaken by the
Vedanta in India; secondly because it does not explain ethical
or aesthetic phenomena or ethical experience, which involve
a view of man deeper than the ego centred in his organic indi-
viduality ". According to Swami narayanathanda Swami Viveka-
rananda stressed that "there were limitations in its philosophy
of man were bound to turn its successes into ashes in its
mouth at no distant time". 35

It was to usher in the process of give-and-take that
Swami Vivekananda stayed on in America. "As regards spirituality", he wrote to Haripad. Itra on December 23, 1893, "the Americans
are far inferior to us, but their society is far superior to
ours. We will teach them our spirituality and assimilate what
is best in their society. 36 Swami Vivekananda was not envious
for none nor did he intend to exploit the era of Americans
for the "Occult". His mission was to work "for the welfare
of the many, for the happiness of the many" (ब्रह्मांड जनलीकरण)
37

34. Swami ramakrishananda, "Swami Vivekananda: India's emissary
to the West" in Laksh Candra(ed.) India's contribution
to World Thought and Culture, p.572.
35. Ibid.
similar views in another letter he wrote to Swami namakrishananda on March 7, 1894: "Is our country is poor in
social virtue, so this country is lacking in spirituality. I
give the spirituality and they give me money". Complete
Was Swami Vivekananda a synthesist? Almost all his biographers say "Yes". I exchange in any form tantamounts to a synthesis one can very aptly tag this label to him. But as the East and the West were to learn from each other and not nerve themselves into one entity, the question of Swami Vivekananda being a synthesist does not arise.

The Chicago Parliament - 'a grand intermingling of religions', a salutatory of an unprecedented era of good will soon ended on September 27 with Cardinal Newman's invocation: "Lead kindly light" and President Bonney's farewell who exhorted the gathering, in the Hall of Columbus to join in "the Anthem of the Angels": "Glory to God in the highest, Peace on earth, Goodwill among men." 39

For two years Chicago had remained the home of all the arts; its forums thronged with the devotees of every science.

"Aile from the science-haunted alleys of the White City, 'civilisation on her luminous wings soared phoenix-like to Jove; and astonished we led all to look up to and talk of Him who is the author of all good". The din and bustle of the City was over after the closing of the Parliament of Religions. But a new wave of Oriental thought started blowing and carried on its great the seeds of Vedanta. At least the Chicago elite seems to have been attracted by it. Foremost among the Orientals was Swami Vivekananda, who unlike very others of his corps,

38. Younton(ed.) p.35.
40. Ibid. p.8.
played on in America after the Parliament. Some of the richest men of Chicago invited him to their sessions.

"I have no more wants now", wrote Swami Vivekananda to Blaizina on November 2, 1903. "I am well off, and all the money that I require to visit Europe I shall get from here... All the time I am living as a vagabond of somebody or other. There is a curiosity in this nation such as you meet with nowhere else.... I must remain in this country at least through the winter and then go to Europe. The Lord will provide everything for me."

The epistle which runs into five pages of The Complete Works indicates four things: first, that Swami Vivekananda was financially quite secure and not 'out of pocket' as before; secondly, he had a clear programme to visit the West; thirdly, he was no more isolated in America inquisitive about the and had a few admirers; and lastly, he had found America inquisitive about the eastern philosophy and religion.

Before launching his lecture tour to different parts of America, Swami Vivekananda remained in Chicago for about two months where he was the honoured guest of John A. Logan and the
removes family most of the time. During his stay he moved in
and around the city delivering discourses at clubs and att-
tending social parties.

Though the Eastern and Western Disciples of Swami
Vivekananda are not sure about the exact date of the re-
encounter of his lecture tour it seems to have begun after
three days of the closing of the Parliament of Religions.

The American newspapers show that Swami Vivekananda
had been engaged by a lecture bureau to deliver talks in
different parts of America. But he soon found that he was

44. Swami Vivekananda was a guest of the Sivas family at 541,
North Ave., Chicago. From time to time, their ::'relates::: he
marks wrote, "more excellent hosts, treating him than the
first as a cherished member of the family and understanding
him, perhaps not fully, but far better than best. The
place was about a block and a half from Lincoln Park, and
there Swami sometimes went to sit in the sun and open
air... he made their home his headquarters during almost
all of 1893, before the pivot of his activities moved
eastward to the Atlantic "Coast". New Discoveries, pp. 117-19.

45. is Eastern and Western Disciples, p. 316.

46. Swami Vivekananda never mentioned the name of this bureau
in his writings or speeches. Sister Geherine ( formerly Miss
Greenstreet of Detroit) recorded in an extract that after
the Parliament of Religions, the Swami was induced to place
himself under the direction of Fred's Lecture Bureau. See
his Eastern and Western Discourses, p. 174. The Appeal Avalanche
of January 21, 1894, however, mentioned that Swami Viveka-
anda was under contract with the Clanton Lecture Bureau
of Chicago for a term of three years. See "Facilities of the Daily in
The Complete Works, I. I I I, pp. 128-9. Burke, pp. 175-76. "The Louise Burke contends that as there is
no record of a man's lecture bureau which existed in
Chicago in 1890", Fred's may have been "merely another
way of designating the Clanton Lecture Bureau which did
utterly unsuited for such a career. As S.W.Waldo records in his memoir, he could not speak to oronscuous audience on the topics nearest to his heart, and the life of ceaseless travel was too strenuous for a contemplative nature like his own. It was at great sacrifice sacrificing that he severed his connection with the Bureau. Another reason for breaking this contract seems to have been the lacking fear in his mind that he was being defrauded of the money he was earning. He wrote about it to Alasimga on July 11, 1904: "I was created by a 47

48 Russian Lecture Bureau. I have given them up". The contract which was to last for three years survived only for about nine months. Towards the end of 1903 Swami Vivekananda might have felt that

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Lehre bureau, concert series etc. were more or less "necessary evils". But by the middle of 1904 he had cultivated good relationship with none of the most prominent among the American elite who could arrange his lectures at different places.

Swami Vivekananda's lecture engagement began with

Veston — a city in North East Illinois on Lake Michigan, near Chicago — where he delivered three talks along with Dr. Carl von Fersen who had been a delegate to the Parliament of Religions from Sweden. Introducing Swami Vivekananda to the Veston public, the Veston Press, a weekly journal described him as a brilliant Indian monk who had reigned the centre of attraction at the Parliament of Religions "not only by his "Veston Gable Press", but by his steady counterchange, his

48. "The Life of Swami Vivekananda," p. 197; Carter, in the

perfect unconsciousness and his marvellous eloquence in accordance with his philosophy. Six years later the Chicago Periodical Journal referred to the Sashi's devotion to mathematics and remarked that the "institution" of Christianity would be contrasted with the "stirring" of Vishnuism.

The topics on which Swami Vivekananda spoke were "Indu dharma" (December 28), "Veda" (October 3) and "Religion and Science" (October 5). The venue was a conversational church and the entry was through a ticket — 11 cents for one lecture and a season for all the three days.

Altruism — a term also originated with Locke, the notion of asceticism on which was adopted by certain "frontiersmen" in the moral sublime as a novel to a monk, was discussed at length by Swami Vivekananda. While the monk tried to show the spirit of altruism in Christianity by illustrating the life of St. Francis of Assisi — the spirit of pure Christianity in the Middle Ages who had successfully ruled as a despot between the poles of heaven and the Pope on one side, Swami Vivekananda, without resorting to isolated examples, delineated altruism as a religious duty of every Hindu to live for others — its associated virtues being charity (dharma), mercy (dharma), friendliness (mitra), hospitality (mitra) and non-injury (akama).

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52. Chicago Journal, October 29, 1903, p. 110, 119.
53. Vincenzo Prati, November 30, 1903, p. 110.
The topics for the next two chapters were different for both the Brahmans. While in one such on "harm Sattvam- 
and" "Mandala Pravatana", Swami Vivekananda explained the
philosophical aspects of Sattvam. The Brahmans in other did not
accept the Swami's discourse on Sattvam which he described
as the quintessence of Hindu philosophy. The Swami teaches
that only the ultimate principle is "atemporal, whole and unsplit".
The ultimate principle alone has real existence, and all mono-
theism or other illusion (maya) is only formal, although the
illusion is "the delusion" by itself is not possible (कृपया).

Swami Vivekananda wrote:

"The invisible is the whole, the visible too is the whole.
Once the whole are visible to which of infinite extension
is come out. The whole consisting the same even though is
infinite I mean one come out of it."

54. Swami Vivekananda, "The Integral Hindu Science of

55. The Navajavali, p. 170-175.

56. As quoted in Swami Vivekananda, "the Invocation" (p.

57. The same, p. 170.)
Swami Vivekananda's discourse on Re-INCarnation left the audience at the Non-Formal Church spell-bound. The index presented that the speech was "very interesting"--the views being those that are not often heard in this part of the world."

Swami Sivananda tried to establish that the Re-incarnation theory was not a philosophical fiction but a scientific truth. The main point to be decided, he agreed, was as to whether we were and a past. To know that we have a present is feel sure of a future. But how can there be a present without a past? In every case the period that matter exists and continues to exist, existence is merely a change in appearance.

Swami Vivekananda suggested that some regarded God as the creator of something and took this as a sufficient reason for existence. But in every thing we must consider the everything comes and everything matter exists. The case occurring is prove that there is a future prove that time is a God. It is necessary that there should be some other than God's will. Reality is not able to the sufficient cause. Who could ask why are we not conscious of any reality existence?
Jnati Vivekananda clinched the position by remarking: "In cases where there are distinct root-cause of a past, Valmiki's line: 'a part of the theory'."

It would be interesting to mention that even Saint Paul had expanded this theory when he said to the disciples: "And the spirit is God". Commenting on Saint Paul's solo site of Deuteronomics merged with Jesus in the Trine. He also wrote that the Holy Spirit is called the Holy of the Incarnation as "sanctly self-existent". Colossians Book of Ephesians: "In Christ all the fullness of the Godhead is a person of the Godhead in the path line". In modern times the Re-interpretation theory were to be accepted by philosophers and writers of science such as Locke, Hume, Burke, and Leibniz; in other times, I e., since Paul and John were considered it as "incontrovertible".

The Vietnamese author Quoc Duyen was a great admirer of Swami Vivekananda. As a local daily reported: "He has attracted a great deal of attention on account of his erudite attire in modern colors, by his erudite prose and by his brilliant oratory and wordful exposition of Hindu philosophy".  

61. The melody Mozart is a spector color instance. He wrote Sonatas at the age of fourteen and in public at the age of fifteen composed his first opera at the age of seven. Without the retrospective theory, we will have to think in what way the incident as an incident be carried into a theatre of science and fame it bears! Chiranjeeva Rau: "The Holy Gospel," p. 62.

62. Ibid., pp. 61-62.

While Swami Vivekananda wore the laurels at Evanston, it seems he could not cut much ice at Streator — a city in North Illinois — at a distance of ninety miles from Chicago. The talk which he delivered at the "Lumb Opera House" on Thursday, October 9, was well attended. The topic was the ethnology and customs of the people of India.

Unlike the contemporary isolationist W. D. Howells who had held that an ethnologist who spoke of Aryans as Indo-European races was as "reckless as a linguist who spoke of a Polynesian dictionary or a Sanskritic philology between the Aryan races and their descendants in the new world", Swami justified the institution of Kshatriya or four castes as established by Samas the Hindu law giver — and took pride in describing the four castes or classes in the life of a Hindu, namely Brahmacarya, Vaishishta, Vaisropaka and Sanyasa. Alluding to the great antiquity of India he observed that it had "watched for centuries the eccentricities of the world flash across the horizon and sink into oblivion."

Swami Vivekananda's defence of "caste" left many convinced about the efficacy of a social system which was the "Streator Daily Free Press" reported, "keeps three-fourths of..."
the people in utter and humiliating subjection". His criticism of Americans "for not educating the Indians whom Columbus found in a state of savagery" while the same paper remark that Swami Vivekananda "exhibited a lack of knowledge of conditions". Though the Strenuous Daily described the talk as "interesting" it ruefully observed that it was "lamentably short" in which "much was left unsaid than much that was said."

It is not known about Swami Vivekananda's activities in Chicago. Nevertheless it is clear that he was having a very busy schedule. On Mrs. Cantatt Woods he wrote on October 10, 1903: "I have or a course every day in this week". Two weeks later he wrote to Professor Wright as he was keen to speak on Buddhism at the ladies' Fortnightly Club which was the most influential in the city. In an optimistic vein he observed: "I am very popular in Chicago. So I want to stave here a little more and get money". The Swami was not overestimating himself.

The contemporaneous American press testify to his popularity and characterise his stay in Chicago as a continual banquet. The reason for Swami Vivekananda's popularity are not far to seek. A good number of Americans had shed their prejudices against Oriental religions in the last decade of the 19th century. "We are glad you came, O wise men of the East",

70. Ibid.
said Rev. Auguste Chapin in his valedictory address at the Chicago Parliament. "With your wise words, your large toleration and your gentle voice, we have been glad to sit at your feet... We are glad to have seen you face to face, and we shall count you henceforth more than ever our friends and co-workers in the great theme of religion".

Lady Americans had become genuinely interested in oriental thought after the close of the Parliament. "The most available means of obtaining it", said Lucy Stone, "was through the addresses and lectures of Svasti Vivekananda who is still in the city".

Dr. Stone describes Svasti Vivekananda as an intrepid, sincere, grave, intelligent, gentle face in the setting of yellow and his deep, musical voice impressed the audience in his "Svasti", proving his oratorical skill and ability; "he speaks without notes, presenting his facts and his conclusions with the mostest art, the same art in sincerity and vividness, and riveting interest to a rich inspiring oration". He wonders, he says, in reference to "a new idea of Indian civilization".

Dr. Stone's description of Svasti Vivekananda and his activities at Chicago seems to be a laudable but not detailed. Though some mention is made of "taken up by the literary circle" and "his preaching and lectures in Chicago, until the life of...

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76. Ibid.
Buddha and the doctrine of his faith have grown familiar to us; she did not mention the name of any literary club or church nor about the exact dates on which he spoke, not even the titles of his speech.

Nevertheless one can make out from the report that Swami Vivekananda must have discussed a wide variety of topics—ranging from a discussion of Hindu philosophy to a justification of India's social system, from the precepts of Buddha to the role of Christian missionaries. It also appears that he criticised Christianity in a mild way, for as Lucy Monroe reported: "he has something Jesuitical in the character of his mind, but though the little sarcasms thrown into his discourses are as keen as a rapier, they are so delicate as to be lost on many of his hearers."

Besides delivering lectures, giving private interviews and attending social gatherings, Swami Vivekananda studied Western civilisation, enquired into the factors responsible for the material advancement of America and reconnoitered the pattern of school education in Chicago. "He thus seems to be fully awake to what was the chief purpose of his mission—to interpret the East to the West and the West to the East with a view to finding out a means to their fusion and reconciliation."

While Swami Vivekananda received appreciation from many quarters and impressed such different celebrities of time as John

77. Ibid.
78. Dhar, p.494.
D. Rockfeller and Mme Emma Calve he was opposed by orthodox Christians. But he remained calm and unruffled, for did not his contemporary American poet Arthur Guiterman say: "The stones that critics hurl with harsh intent/ A man may use to build his monument".

During his tour of the Mid-Western parts of America, Swami Vivekananda visited the states of Wisconsin, Minnesota and Iowa. He delivered lectures at three big cities—Madison, Minneapolis and Des Moines, confabulated with the Peripatetics, Unitarians and Congregationalists and had the honour of occupying the church platform with a pastor. As the Iowa State Register remarked: "Vivekananda and his cause found a place in the hearts of all true Christians".

Swami Vivekananda left Chicago for Madison—the capital of Wisconsin—on November 20, 1893 and spoke on the religions of India at the Congregational Church that evening. Though the Wisconsin State Journal reported the lecture in less than a hundred words, it described it as "extremely interesting".

79. An opulent industrialist and philanthropist of America (1874-1860). The immense financial resources built up by him were devoted to a variety of philanthropies including the endowment of the University of Chicago (1892), the Rockefeller Institute of Medical Research (1901), the General Education Board (1902), and the Rockefeller Foundation (1913). Morris, M.B., Encyclopedia of American History, p. 773.


81. Swami Vivekananda did not visit St. Louis as stated by His Eastern and Western Disciples. See Burke, p. 147.

82. Ibid., pp. 130-38.

83. Cited in His Eastern and Western Disciples, p. 317.
containing 'much of sound philosophy and religion'. The Journal remarked that even though Swami Vivekananda was a pagan, Christianity could follow many of his teachings. "His creed is as wide as the Universe taking in all religions and accepting truth wherever it may be found".

From Madison, Swami Vivekananda went to Minneapolis—a city in South East Minnesota. The Peripatetic club which had sponsored Swami Vivekananda's visit was the most influential in the city. Its members belonged to the Aristotelian school of philosophy and were well read in the Western system of thought. The word Peripatetics is taken from the Greek peripatetikos, which means "performed or performing while moving about". The name derives from the fact that Aristotle taught philosophy while walking in the Lyceum of Ancient Athens. For nearly one thousand years the peripatetic school remained a great centre of "antique science". Its most important leaders after Aristotle's death were Theophrastus of Ephesus (C.371-286 B.C.), Strato of Lampsacus (C.305-270 B.C.), Andronicus of Rhodes (1st Century B.C.) and Alexander of Aphrodisias (end of 2nd century A.D.—beginning of 3rd Century A.D.). Though the American Peripatetics had come very close to materialism, they believed with Aristotle that the ultimate source of all motion was God "the unmoved Prime Mover", "the model of morality", the most perfect of philosophers. "thought thinking itself". It may be noted that 84. Wisconsin State Journal, November 21, 1893, facsimiles in The Complete Works, Vol.III, p.481; Burke, pp.130-31. 85. Famous for his works in Botany. 86. Known for developing the materialist trend in Aristotle's philosophy. 87. Famous for publishing and editing Aristotle's works. 88. Like Strato he gave a materialistic colour to Aristotle's philosophy.
Aristotle regarded all nature as successive transitions from "matter" to "form" and back. In matter, however, Aristotle saw only the passive principle and attributed all activity to "form" to which he reduced the beginning of motion and its aim. The fact that the Peripatetic club played host to Swami Vivekananda shows that its members had not deviated from the Aristotelian way of thinking. Swami Vivekananda delivered two lectures on Hinduism at the first Unitarian Church. The first lecture on November 24, 1893 was attended by a distinguished group of people, which included beside Peripatetics, "ministers of varied denominations, as well as students and scholars". Dressed in his oriental garb "with crafan on head, orange-colored coat, confined at the waist with a red sash and red nether garments", Swami Vivekananda expounded the Hindu religion in its pristine form—bereft of all superstitions and dogmas, delineated the divinity of human soul and described religion as "the manifestation of divinity already existing in man". Explaining the origin of the wicked and virtuous proclivities in human beings, he observed that the present marked a line of demarcation between the past and future and of the two tendencies in man. "If the good preponderates, he will move to a higher sphere, if the evil has power, he degenerates... What elevates him is virtue, that which degenerates is evil".

It may be noted that the Hindu concept of good and evil seems similar to that of Zoroastrianism which proclaims the doctrine of incessant struggle in the world between two opposite

89. Rosenthal and Yuell (eds), A Dictionary of Philosophy, pp.30-31
91. Ibid.
forces: good personified by Ahura Mazda (the Lord of Light) and Evil represented by Ahriman (the Prince of darkness). But while Zoroastrianism leaves man utterly bewildered and despondent—a helpless victim of the forces of good and bad—without suggesting him the means to get out of this maze, Hinduism offers the concept of Samkhya Yoga to rise above these forces. "The one fixed in equanimity of mind" says the Gita, "frees oneself in this life from vice and virtue alike"(92). The conception of good and bad belongs to the realm of mind. He who is not identifying with the stormy sea of the mind, will not be thrown up or sunk down by the huge waves of vasanas. When Yoga, "the art of working without desire", is pursued, the karma Yogin becomes detached from all the existing "vasanas" in himself, both good and bad.

When Swami Vivekananda addressed the Minneapolis audience a second time, he was given a place along with Dr. H. M. Simmons at the platform of the Unitarian Church. After the prayer was read Dr. Simmons quoted the Hindu and Muslim scriptures to show how these were in harmony with St. Paul's utterances 'on faith, hope and charity'. Never before a priest had sat with a pagan on the pulpit and recited oriental scriptures with reverence. "Ye shall know the truth", says the Bible "and the truth shall make you free". At least liberal Christians like Dr. Simmons had realised the truth that the gems of wisdom did not lie only on the shore of occidental mind but were strewn on the other side too. Swami Vivekananda began his speech with a famous Jaina

93. Chinmayananda, Swami, p.118.
story in which five blind men touched the different parts of the body of an elephant and quarrelled with one another over what it was like. One of them likened it to a wall, the other to a piece of rope, the third to a serpent, the fourth to a pillow and the fifth to a fan. The dispute was settled when a man with right vision told them that all of them were right—the trouble was that they had touched the elephant at different points. "The wall was the side, the rope was the tail, the serpent was the trunk, the toes were the pillow" and the ears were the fan. "Religion", said Swami Vivekananda, "had become involved in such a quarrel. The people of the West thought they had the only religion of God and the people of the East held the same prejudice. Both were wrong; God was in every religion".

He criticised the Christians for being mercenaries, the matter of religion. "They were always begging of God—'oh, God give me this and give me that; oh God, do this and do that'. The Hindu, he observed, however, worshipped God "for love's sake, not for what he gives us". He challenged the right of Westerners to lay exclusive claim to the possession of God. "If you have him", he asked, "why is that so much criminality exists, that nine out of ten are hypocrites. He regretted that most of the people in the West attended the Church simply because it had become a fashion to go there once a week. Arguing his point he observed: "No nation, no people, no religion has God until it is willing to worship him for love's sake".

95. Ibid.
The Minneapolis Journal of November 27, 1893 reported that Swami Vivekananda was "interrupted by spontaneous applause" during his speech. Justifying the plethora of superstitions in Indian society, he asked: "but what nation does not have them?" He derided the Christian missionaries who thought that "India knows not God" and came to India not "with love in their hearts" but with "dogma". In conclusion he observed that God was not any nation's monopoly.

From Minneapolis Swami Vivekananda went to Des Moines— the capital of Iowa in the South central part of the state— and spoke three times on Hindu religion and philosophy— twice on November 27 and once on 28th instant. The local press described them "to be of the era-making type". On the afternoon of November 27, Swami Vivekananda gave an informal talk on the manners and customs of India at the house of Dr. and Mrs. H.O. Breeden. As Des Moines News reported, "Afterwards he submitted to a running fire of questions from the guests, his witty and often sarcastic retorts proving highly entertaining". Later in the evening Swami Vivekananda spoke on "The Hindu Religion" at the Central Church. Instead of discussing its precepts and doctrines he created a dichotomy between "Religion" and "Sect" and sought to establish that the word Religion embraced all religions while Sect comprised only those who wrapped themselves up "in their mantle of charity" and said: "we are right; you are wrong". He held that one could be a true Christian only if one loved all other religions.

96. Ibid.
98. Ibid.
99. Ibid.
Swami Vivekananda made it clear that he did not come to America for converting Christians into Hindus. Rather he pooh-poohed the idea of conversion by asking as to how a sinful man could become holy overnight after being converted?

"Whence comes this change", he remarked in a lampooning tone. "The man has not a new soul for the soul must die. You say he is changed by God. God is perfect, all powerful and is purity itself. Then after this man is converted he is that same God minus the purity he gave that man to become holy". It is clear that Swami Vivekananda was alluding to the role of Christian missionaries who went about converting people least realising the futility of their mission.

It may not be out of place here to expatiate upon the Christian concept of "conversion". The word is a derivation from the Latin conversio which means "a change of heart and life". In case of such a change occurring in a "heathen" or "infidel" the term signifies an acceptance of the truth of Christianity. In a person already baptised into the Church of Christ, it is understood to mean a turning back into the forsaken path of righteousness. It seems that Swami Vivekananda was referring to both of these senses in his lecture.

Swami Vivekananda delivered a lecture on "Reincarnation" on November 28, 1893. The venue as before was the central Christian church. Announcing the lecture the local newspaper invited: "Those who heard the gifted Hindu monk last night will

100. Ibid.
101. Ibid.
be glad of a second opportunity and those who did not are to be congratulated on the fact that they can still hear him. 

Don’t fail to go". Though the said daily did not report this lecture, it nevertheless stated that Swami Vivekananda had shown the people of Des Moines how possible it was "to honestly view the problems of life from a point of view different from that of a busy practical American". Besides delivering lectures at Des Moines Swami Vivekananda met many prominent people in the city, "who found their time well spent". His replies to religious and metaphysical questions "came like flashes of lightning and the venturesome questioner was sure to be impaled on the Indian's shining intellectual lance".

Swami Vivekananda's visits around Chicago and the Mid-Western states completed the first phase of his itinerary in America. Some took him as a celebrity and paid obsequies in the most humble way. Those who were genuinely interested in oriental religions saw in him a great preceptor- a St. Francis of Assisi- who could open the Gordian knots of their religions, metaphysical and epistemological queries, with his profound knowledge and convincing ability. Many were surprised to see a "pagan" delineate the precepts of his religion in impeccable English- which could put to shame an Oxonian- sprinkled with quotes from Sanskrit texts, spiced with amusing anecdotes, replenished with logic and delivered in a musical voice-"like

105. Iowa State Register, cited in His Eastern & Western Disciple, p. 317.
a violoncello, grave without contrasts but with deep vibrations'. Some were simply flabbergasted when he created a juxtaposition between science and Hinduism thereby proving that his faith was a personification of truth. And truth never changes. Some listened to his discourses but did not follow him. Others followed him without listening to him even once. He made news wherever he went. Never before had an oriental received so much coverage in the Chicago and Mid-Western journals as Swami Vivekananda. At some places he was hooted because of his 'queer' oriental dress but not hated. The fact that Christian missionaries of all denominations had something to say for or against him, shows that his presence was being felt in religious circles. His criticism of Christianity was mild, not wild, and his lampoons were directed more towards missionaries than against the institution of Church.

The first itinerary stabilised Swami Vivekananda's financial position, enhanced his prestige, and provided the leaven which set into motion the process of the spread of Hindu thought in America.