Chapter III

THE MAKING OF SWAMI VIVEKANANDA:
DAKSHINESHWAR TO BELUR

Swami Vivekananda was born on Monday, January 12, 1863 at 6:33:33 in the morning, a few minutes before the sunrise\(^1\) as Narendranath Datta in the family of Vishwanath Datta and Bhubeneshwari Devi. January 12 in 1863 was the beginning of Solar month of Magha. The Sun after reaching the southern tip of the ecliptic (dakshinayana) had entered into the radical sign of Capricorn (makara) and started its northern course (uttarayana). The horoscope of the child showed that the ascendant (lagana) was Capricorn, which is considered as a fiery and Saturnian sign. Jupiter’s excellent disposition in the tenth house combined with the static influence of the third drekkana of Dhanus revealed that he would have a strong physique, tall stature and clairvoyant vision. The Sun (Surya) along with Mercury (Budha) showed that he would travel abroad and become a celebrity by virtue of his intellectual powers. Jupiter’s navamsha rising and the position of Venus (Shukra) in the lagana as the lord of fifth and tenth houses indicated that he would have a magnetic personality and the predominance of Ruchaka Yoga in his horoscope revealed that he would be a king or an equal to a king.\(^2\)

An astrologer who saw the soles of Narendranath’s feet found that auspicious signs viz. conch shells and discuss were on his toes. Once in America, he jokingly referred to the marks of discuss (Chakra) on the soles of his feet and said that it was because of these that he had become a wanderer on the face of the earth.\(^3\) Swami Vivekananda’s hand–print which was taken during his visit to the West depicts that he possessed a conical hand which is characteristic of emotional and artistic temperament. The line of fate moving towards the mount of Apollo (making a sort of spearhead) shows that he was a mass of erudition, and achieved distinction in life.

\(^{1}\) The Life of Swami Vivekananda by His Eastern and Western Disciples, Volume I, Advaita Ashrama, Calcutta, 2000, p. 11.


\(^{3}\) The Wheeled Wanderer, Vivekananda Kendra Patrika, Kanyakumari, February 1979, p. 133.
Another sharp line rising from the Mount of Luna, and advancing towards the Mount of Apollo, is a pointer to his initiative power, oratorical skill, and popularity in India and abroad. The La Cruise Mystique in the middle of the hand reveals his taste for mysticism and the occult. A plethora of small lines on the Mount of Luna highlight his concern for the welfare of mankind. Since there was no conspicuous or marked sign on the Mounts of Venus or Mercury, he remained free from household responsibilities. Surprisingly, there is no clear indication that he would live only for a short span of thirty nine years.⁴

Narendra in his infancy did not have a quiet disposition. He would cry too often and too much. According to psychologists, high frequency and intensity of crying is predictive of later superior speech and intelligence. The cry baby is likely to be a bright baby while the quiet “good” baby is sometimes a brain damaged or feeble minded one.⁵ As a child, Narendra would poke into every nook and cranny, creep around under the bed and will do all types of childhood naughty things including the teasing of his sisters. The psychologists describe this type of attitude as eagerness. His mother used to say ‘I prayed to Shiva for a son and he has sent me one of his demons’.⁶ (Before Swami Vivekananda, Bubaneswari Devi had two daughters (Haramoni and Swaranmayi) and now she was longing for a son.⁷ Perhaps, that is why, the boy was first named ‘Vireshwar’ and was lovingly called as ‘Bileh’). Sometimes, when Narendra Nath’s mother got exhausted in her effort to curb the naughty behavior of her child, she used to pour a pitcher of cold water on his ‘dark’ head and he would calm down immediately.⁸

Narendra Nath’s father Viswanath Datta was a solicitor, who earned enough money to live in a good upper middle class family style. The Dattas, according to the family tradition, originally hailed from Datta Dariatona

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⁶ The life of Swami Vivekananda by His Eastern and Western Disciples, Volume I, p. 10.
⁸ The life of Swami Vivekananda by His Eastern and Western Disciples, Volume I, p. 12.
(Colliquically called *Dereton*), a village situated in the Kalka sub division of the district of Burdwan (West Bengal). During the Gupta period, the governor and officials were getting Sanskrit names. Many Sanskrit texts refer to the Kayasthas as officials of the Government. It is doubtful whether the term ‘Kayasta’ connoted a caste in original days. Like other castes, it was an occupational name. In the twelfth century, ministers of war and peace (*sandi–Vigrehika*) of the Sena rulers of Bengal, have surnames, which were used by Kayasthas of Bengal. Narendranath Vasu emphasizes that according to Sukrecharya and Medhetithis, a Sudra cannot be minister. Hence the ministers named Chose, Nag, Datta and Sinha could not have been Sudras.

The Dattas made a special mark on the history of Bengal and produced many able and scholarly persons in the family of Narendra Nath Datta, Ramnidhi Datta with his son Ramjiban Datta and grandson Ramsunder Datta moved from Dariatona to Calcutta and settled in Garh–Govindapur. Ramnidhi and Ramjiban held good posts. Ramsundar was the Dewan of a Zamindar. When the English East India Company acquired the village of Govindapur and built Fort William, the inhabitants of locality moved towards the North. Likewise, Ramnidhi and Ramjiban came to Simulia in North Calcutta and built a new building at the place, now a day called Madhu Roy Lane.

Ramsundar had five sons. Eldest one was Rammohan Datta who built a big house at the neighbouring place at 3, Gour Mohan Mukherjee Street. He passed his days in grand old styled aristocratic life. He had two sons and seven daughters. One of his brothers Kristo Datta had three sons amongst whom Gopal Chandra Datta became a famous public man who after

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9 Bhupendranath Datta, *Swami Vivekananda Patriot-Prophet*, Navbharat Publication, Calcutta, 1954, p. 73. The Damodarpur plates and much later Faridpur plates give the names of the officials with suffixes: Nag, Datta, Palit, Kundu, Pal etc. Perhaps these were parts of Sanskrit names, which became hereditary later on in Bengal.


13 Hansraj Rahbar, *Vivekananda The Warrior Saint*, p. 11. Narendra’s great grand father Rammohun Datta was a renowned lawyer at Calcutta Supreme Court of India.


15 *The Life of Swami Vivekananda by His eastern and Western Disciples*, Volume 1, p. 2.
Rammohan’s two sons were Durgaprasad and Kaliparsad. Former was well versed in Persian and Sanskrit and was married to Shyamasunderi, youngest daughter of Dewan Rajiblochan Ghose of North Calcutta. Shyamasunderi was a beautiful lady well learned in Bangla and wrote a big poetical work in Bengalee called “Gangabhakti Tarangini”. She had two children: first one was a daughter who died while seven years old. The son was born in 1835 and was named Viswanath. Durgaprasad turned monk while he was young. Shyamsunderi died of cholera. So Viswanath was brought up by his uncle Kaliprasad and his wife.

At the age of sixteen, Viswanath was married to the daughter of Nandalal Basu, the nephew of Ramtanu Basu of Simulia, Bhubaneswari Devi, born in 1841, who was the only child of her parents. So she inherited the share of the ancestral house of the Basus and four Cottahs of Land. Viswanath got his education from Gourmohan Addy’s school now-a-days called “Oriental Seminary”. It is said that at Gourmohan Addy’s School, he studied under a teacher named Rasikchandra whose second son Kali Prasad Chandra became the famous Swami Abhedananda of later days. In course of time, Viswanath passed ‘Junior’ and ‘Senior’ examinations. After graduation he engaged in some business but failed. Then he entered the firm of attorney Mr. Temple, as an articled clerk. In 1866, he passed the attorney examination and conjointly with Ashutosh Dhur, another new attorney, established an attorney’s office named “Dhur and Datta”. Later on, he separated and started a firm of his own. Besides English, he was well-versed in Sanskrit, Bangla, Persian, Arabic, Urdu and Hindi. However, some opined that he did not know Sanskrit, and, therefore, had not studied the Gita or the

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16 Bhupendranath Datta, Swami Vivekananda Patriot-Prophet, p. 89.
17 Hansraj Rahbar, Vivekananda The Warrior Saint, p. 12.
18 Bhupendranath Datta, Swami Vivekananda Patriot-Prophet, p. 89.
19 When Durga Prasad turned a monk, Kali Parsad had finished his monk’s life after six months. He thought that Durga Prasad’s mind will also be changed if brought back home. However, it never happened.
20 The life of Swami Vivekananda by His Eastern and Western Disciples, Volume I, p. 8.
21 Bhupendranath Datta, Swami Vivekananda Patriot-Prophet, p. 98.
22 The life of Swami Vivekananda by His Eastern and Western Disciples, Volume I, p. 5. The Bhuban Mohan Das father of Deshbandhu Chittaranjan Das was a colleague of Viswanath in articled clerkship.
Viswanath’s weakness with respect to his relatives started from his uncle’s family and continued with his friends and colleagues who cheated and swindled him.

With regard to his professional career, the formation of Lucknow Bar Association is to be traced from his suggestion. In a letter from Lucknow to his cousin Taraknath, dated 13\textsuperscript{th} June, 1872, he says that “At my suggestion the head of the Bar is going on Monday to call a meeting of us all for forming an association, and building a library and a hall.” During his last days he had diabetes and heart problem too. He breathed his last on Saturday night in the month of Magh, 1884. Viswanath died suddenly and his family found itself cut off from the rest of the world. Narendranath got no help from any side. Only once he officiated as a Headmaster for a month in the Bowbazar branch of the Metropolitan Institution. Even Sadharan Brahmo Samaj refused to adjust him against a vacant post in the city collegiate school owned by Samaj. Family stayed with maternal grandmother after Narendranath, on whom his father relied so much, left his family for good and turned a monk. Later in 1896, Narendranath’s younger brother Mahendranath Datta (born in 1869) went to England for study. He went to North Africa and travelled all over that region. Then coming back to India he went to Kashmir and came back to Calcutta after the demise of Swami Vivekananda. Youngest brother Bhupendranath Datta joined the revolutionary movement in 1903 and went to Jail in 1907 on charges of Sedition as Editor of the paper ‘Yugantar’ which was the organ of the revolutionary party of Bengal. After release, he went to U.S.A incognito.

With respect to Datta family’s relation with the society and its prevalent customs, Narendranath had the advantage of having been born in a

\begin{itemize}
\item Hanraj Rahbar, \textit{Vivekananda The Warrior Saint}, p. 25.
\item Bhupendranath Datta, \textit{Swami Vivekananda Patriot- Prophet}, p. 108.
\item \textit{Ibid.}, p. 111.
\item Bhupendranath Datta, \textit{Swami Vivekananda Patriot- Prophet}, p. 113.
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\item Bhubaneshwari Devi died of Meningitis on July 25, 1911, after returning from a pilgrimage to Puri accompanied by Swami Brahmananda of Belur Math. Previously she had made pilgrimages to Puri in 1900 and to North India in 1903 accompanied by Swami or a Brahmachari of the Math. Her life was a life of renunciation and service and she never got any recognition for her services.
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house where from Maharishi Dabendranath down to all notables of the time have visited on some occasion or the other. The great poet Iswar Chandra Gupta used to visit the house very often. His grandfather’s cousin Gopalchandra was a prominent member of Bethune society. His uncle Taraknath became Joint Secretary of Brahma Samaj. European ladies used to visit the house to instruct the ladies of the family. Viswanath was a liberal Indian with a synthetic mind. Thus, there was in Narendra’s home an atmosphere of intellectual and spiritual stimulation.29 Once Narendranath quarreled with his sister by charging her for giving him curry from which fish was taken out. Hearing this quarrel, his father shouted ‘His fourteen generations have lived on calves and snails. Now he has become a ‘Brahma Daitya’ and would not eat fish’!30 Bhubaneshwari Devi used to remit the rents if the tenants are not able to pay, no matter, whether the tenants were Mohammedan.

Apart from the monastic life of his grandfather, religious leanings of his mother and humanism of his father who, despite being prodigal and epicurean by temperament, did a lot for the poor and the down trodden, had influences on his mind. Narendra had his religious bearing from his mother and rational outlook from his father. The former immersed him in Hindu love by reciting passages from the scriptures, especially the epics; the latter gave him the opportunity to know about Jesus Christ and the poetry of Hafiz Shirazi. Human development is always determined by both heredity and environment.

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\text{Heredity } \times \text{ Environment } \times \text{ Time} = \text{Development level of man.}
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Narendra’s heredity gave him a muscular body, brown complexion, compact 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 the wine of the race’.31 Nothing escaped the magic of his glance. capable equally of embracing in its irresistible charm, or of sparkling

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with wit, irony or kindness of losing itself in ecstasy, or of plunging
imperiously to the very depths of consciousness and of withering with its
fury. But his pre- eminent characteristic was kingliness.\textsuperscript{32} His musical
proclivities, his sweet voice, his intense humanism, and his propensity to lead
a monastic life were inborn and instinctive.\textsuperscript{33} We can also relate the
mechanisms of heredity with the functions of modern computer. ‘Just as the
programmer tells the computer what to do with the information fed into it, 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.’\textsuperscript{34}
Though there were many incidents, conditions and circumstances which
shaped Narendranath’s personality, but these can be summarized into four
major factors like the influence of family on Narendranath’s mind
particularly during his childhood, education he got in English Institutions,
influence and Spiritual guidance of Shri Ramakrishna and his tour to India.

During childhood he used to sit before the images of Rama and Sita.
Later on, he would meditate before the image of Shiva. He was genius since
birth. He remembered the aphorisms of \textit{Magadabodha}, a Sanskrit grammar, at
the age of seven. Naren’s father too contributed in his education.\textsuperscript{35} He was
sent to primary school at the age of six. But he used some undecorative words
at home which he learnt in the school from his school mates. His parents
stopped him from going to school and his school education started at home.
But when he was seven years of age, he was again admitted to Metropolitan
Institution in 1871. He passed his entrance examination in 1879 in first
division and was admitted to Presidency College in 1880. At school and
college, he impressed everyone by his phenomenal memory and intellect. As
the college was a government one and the teachers were mostly Europeans,
the uniform of the college was European suit or Indian \textit{Chapkan} and trousers

\begin{footnotes}
\item[32] Rolland, Romain, \textit{The Life of Vivekananda and The Universal Gospel}, Advaita
\item[33] Satish K. Kapoor, \textit{Cultural Contact and Fusion: Swami Vivekananda in the
West (1893-96),} p. 6.
\item[34] Floyd L. Ruch, \textit{Psychology and Life}, p. 77.
\item[35] \textit{The life of Swami Vivekananda by His Eastern and Western Disciples, Volume}
I, p. 20. As to book learning he learnt from his mother the Bengali alphabet and
the first book of English by Pyaricharan Sarkar.
\end{footnotes}
and with a wristwatch on the hand.\textsuperscript{36} (Chapkan and wristwatch are at Belur Math). He suffered with Malaria in 1881 and could not complete his lectures and thus failed to appear in F.A. Examination. The General Assembly’s institution accepted him and he passed F.A. In 1883 he passed his B.A. Examination and took admission in the Metropolitan Institution for the study of law. During these days, on one side he was becoming more interested to search the truth philosophically, and on the other hand he was equally pursuing physical exercises. He was proficient in gymnastics, horse riding, swimming, boxing etc. He was a regular visitor of akhara for wrestling. He learnt dancing and music and acted in the plays on stages of Brahma Samaj which he joined in 1878. He was an ardent monotheist at that time. He also became a member of the “Band of Hope” group founded by Keshab Chandra Sen to wean away the young men from the path of smoking and drinking etc. During his General Assembly college days, he spent most of the time in his maternal grandmother’s house in a lane nearby..... The room in which he lived was very small and he used to call it ‘tung’.\textsuperscript{37}

Actually the two traits, restlessness and kindness were among the prevailing characteristics of Narendra’s family and Narendra himself.\textsuperscript{38} Narendra was gifted with an extra ordinary power of understanding and sharp intellect and was more inclined to read books on Literature, Philosophy and History. Even he learnt music from Ustad Beni – a Muslim and Kansi Ghoshal – a Hindu who used to play Pakhawaj in music consorts of Adi Brahmo Samaj.\textsuperscript{39} Before he passed the F.A. examination, he had read all about egoistic philosophy of Descarte, scepticism of Hume and Waine, the theory of evolution of Darwin, the theory of survival of the fittest of Herbert Spencer. In General Assembly Institution, he had a friend Brajendranath Seal who was senior to him in class. According to Romain Rolland, Brajendranath had been influenced by French Revolution and was an atheist. Later on, he became famous scholar of International repute. Both liked each other’s

\textsuperscript{37} Hansraj Rahbar, \textit{Vivekananda The Warrior Saint}, p. 29.
\textsuperscript{38} \textit{The Life of Swami Vivekananda by His Eastern and Western Disciples}, Volume I, p. 28.
\textsuperscript{39} Bhupendranath Datta, \textit{Swami Vivekananda Patriot-Prophet}, p. 155.
company and used to participate in Philosophical Club’s meeting to discuss philosophy.

At that time, the mental ‘Intelligent Quotient’ of Narendra had reached to that level that he would go through a book within no time. As he said himself, “Since then, when ever I took up a book, I do not find it necessary to go through it line by line in order to understand the author. I could grasp the point by reading the first and the last lines of a paragraph. Gradually, that power developed and it was not necessary to read the para also in the aforesaid way. I read the first and last line of each page and the content was known. Again, when the author was explaining a particular point of view with argument in any part of his book, I could understand his whole chain of reasoning by merely reading the beginning of his arguments”. These facts can be counter checked by the observations of Principal of General Assembly Institution William Hasty (or Hastie), who was a learned person apart from being a poet, a philosopher and a thorough gentleman. He was an admirer of the genius of Narendra and declared that he was the best student of philosophy and there was no student in any of the Universities of Germany and England, as talented as Narendra.

With the passing years, he started pondering over the questions like; what is the purpose of human life? Who is controlling the world? He will not leave any stone unturned to know about the truth. He was not to believe the things as such. Even in his childhood, stories of his finding Hanuman in a banana garden or climbing up a tree without any fear of devil are there to illustrate that these traits were there in him right from the beginning. He was very kind hearted too.

His quest of God was not going to be over by just talks. He wanted someone having direct experience. He had become a sceptic as a result of

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42 Swami Vishawashryananda, *Vivekananda for Children*, Advaita Ashrama, Calcutta, 1990, p. 5. Whenever a beggar came to his house, he will give something to him whatever comes in his hand without caring that thing is costly or cheap. Fed up with this his mother confined him to a room in the first floor. As his house was on the road side, Narendra stood near the window. When a beggar came and begged, viewed by the need of man, he took out a few valuable sarees and dropped those down to the beggar through the window.
listening to pedantic and sectarian harangues of preachers. In search of this truth, he joined Brahma Samaj along with his friends. Though he envied Keshab Chandra Sen and aspired to become like him, yet he did not join Keshab’s All India Brahma Samaj because he felt that they had abandoned the high ideals and traditions of Raja Rammohan Roy (whom he respected a lot). Keshab and his followers were influenced by Christianity and their conduct was contrary to the high ideals of ancient Hindu religion. He would attend the meetings of Sadharan Brahma Samaj. He criticized them saying that they lacked in dedication and renunciation. It is also prevalent that he put forward the question of God to Debandranath Tagore and asked him, has he seen God? But the latter evaded the question and advised him to meditate. One day, Debandranath Tagore advised him by saying ‘You have all the signs of a Yogi in your physiognomy. You can achieve peace and truth through meditation’. He was meditating with his friend who was not able to do so. A snake came, his friends ran away while Narendra was not aware of it and the snake slipped away. He also became frugal in meals, started sleeping on a mat and wearing a dhoti and covering his body with a chadar.

Now the fortune played a role and the meeting of Narendra with Sri Ram Krishna was coming closer which was not only to transform the life of a young man of eighteen, but even the future course of the society and the nation. According to Narendra’s classmate, Harimohan, one European Professor was not able to make the students understand Wordsworth—the poet and he left the room in distress. Soon Principal William Hastie came to the class and started lecturing. During his lecture, he said that Wordsworth used to get trance etc. He further said that such a man is living in Dakshineshwar (miles away from the college) who get trances. You go and see him. That was the first time the students of the class heard about Ramakrishna. Another reason is that Dr. Rama Chandra Datta—a relative of Narendra—told him that

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43 The Life of Swami Vivekananda by His Eastern and Western Disciples, Volume I, p. 56. In 1878, there was a split in the Brahma Samaj and a number of its members headed by Pandit Shivanath Shastri and Vijay Krishna Goswami formed Sadharan Brahma Samaj on May 15, 1878.
44 Hansraj Rahbar, Vivekananda The Warrior Saint, p. 30.
45 Swami Vishawashryananda, Vivekananda for Children, p. 4.
46 Hansraj Rahbar, Vivekananda The Warrior Saint, p. 31.
47 Bhupendranath Datta, Swami Vivekananda Patriot-Prophet, p. 155.
he visited here and there, why he did not visit Ramakrishna Paramhansa. Narendra’s mother said that it was Ram Chandra who brought Narendra to Ramakrishna. Their first meeting took place at the house of Suresh Chandra Mitra (or Surrendranath Mitra). In November 1881, Mitra had invited Ramakrishna Paramhansa to his house. On this occasion, Narendra was also invited to sing a bhajan. As soon as Narendra started singing, Ramakrishna went into ecstasy. After the song ended, Ramakrishna talked to Narendra and asked him to come to Dakshineshwar with his friends. When Narendra visited Dakshineshwar, Ramakrishna greeted him as an old acquaintance and made him sit on a mat near him. Narendra sang a song of Brahmo Samaj. When the song was over, Ramakrishna took him into a room and closing it from inside he said, “Is it proper that you should come so late? Should you not have once thought how I was waiting for you? Hearing continually the idle talk of worldly people, my ears have swelled up. From today, I shall have peace by talking to you as you are a true recluse“.

Narendra, a highly intelligent, scientific mind was considering it all madness and wanted to come out of the situation. He responded positively to the request of Ramakrishna to ‘come again and all alone’ though at heart he was deciding quite opposite. Narendra went to Dakshineshwar after a month just to have novel experience within him. He saw that the walls, and everything in the room, whirled into naught, and the whole universe together with his individuality about to merge in an all – encompassing mysterious void! He was terribly frightened and thought that he was facing death. He cried out, “What is this that you are doing to me? I have my parents at home“! Ramakrishna laughed aloud at this and stroking his chest said, “All right, let it rest now. Everything will come in time!” Narendra was testing each action of Ramakrishna on the touchstones of reason and logic. He could not be sure whether to call it act of hypnotism or not. However, his

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48 Asim Choudhuri, *Swami Vivekananda In Chicago New Findings*, p. 32. Also see, Christopher Isherwood, *Ramakrishna and His Disciples*.

49 The Life of Swami Vivekananda by His Eastern and Western Disciples, Volume I, p. 76. He further paid his respect to him with folded hands, as one of the seven Rishis, incarnation of ancient Rishi Nara, a part of Narayana.


curiosity about the saint increased. Narendra did not fare any better when he met him next time. Again, at the touch he lost all outward consciousness. While he was in that state, Sri Ramakrishna is said to have asked him various questions about his antecedents, about his mission in the world and the duration of his mortal life. Narendra’s answers confirmed the Saint’s revelation about him that he was an incarnation of God. The meeting of Sri Ramakrishna with Narendra appears to symbolize the meeting of the ancient culture with the modern, scriptural faith with imperious reason, mysticism with positivism. Behind their Indian skin and complexion were two souls, representing two different types of cultural groups, one clinging credulously to the scriptural ideology of old days and the other getting itself freed from all trammels of dogmas.  

However, Narendra’s doubts about the Saint still persisted. He acknowledged his mystical powers, which were beyond the grasp of his mental ability. The intellect surrendered but the instincts did not give up so easily. Narendra’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. At this stage, he was not favourable to idol worship and considered advert literature as heretical. He used to say, “I am God, You are God, all things that are born and die are God”. He would say further, “The brains of the rishis and munis, the author of such books must have been deranged; how otherwise could they have written such things....Can it ever be possible that the water pot is God, the cup is God, whatever we see and all of us are God”?  

It was not that Ramakrishna would make everyone his disciple. He would accept a disciple only after putting him to test. But he could guess Narendra’s qualities and loved him so much that he was not able to live without him yet he put Narendra to test. In fact, both were testing each other. Metamorphically speaking, the extra ordinary saint and the extra ordinary

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young man were like two stars, each revolving on his own axis, suddenly coming together. Before entering into a relationship of disciple and preceptor, both started evaluating and testing each other.\(^5\) One day when his old friend Rakhal Chandra Ghosal (who joined Brahmo Samaj with Narendra) was seen, entering into a temple with Ramakrishna, and offering obeisance to idols of gods and goddesses, by Narendra, latter rebuked Rakhal for violating the pledge of the Samaj and following fakehood. Then Ramakrishna replied, “If he now feels attracted towards God with a form, what can he do? If you do not like this form of worship, you may not practise it. But what right you have to hurt the feelings of others like this”?\(^6\) Ramakrishna never forced his views on anyone, rather considered himself as an equal among his disciples, as an intimate friend.

The relationship between the two was unique in many respects. Nowhere in the history, a disciple would argue with his master, but Narendra would not accept a Guru without testing him. Like Aristotle who said, ‘Dear is Plato but dearer still is Truth, he refused to yield to Ramakrishna so easily. But unlike Plato who called his pupil a fool that kicks his mother after draining her dry’.\(^7\) Ramakrishna described Narendra as pure gold without dross, a coin with no alloy whatsoever, ring it and you hear the truest sound. I see other boys somehow pass two or three examinations with utmost strain. There it ends; they are a spent–up force. But Narendra is not like that. He is the true knower of Brahma. He sees light when he sits for meditation. It is not for nothing that I love Narendra so much.\(^8\) When Narendra did not visit him he felt as if he were a fish out of water, “I cannot do without seeing him! …I wept so much but Narendra did not come. The longing to see him has produced a terrible anguish as if my heart was wrong; but he does not at all realize the intensity of the attraction. I feel for him… What will they (people) think that I, a man of such advanced age, am weeping and paining so much for him? But, I can by no means control myself”.\(^9\) Never did any Master

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56 *The Life of Swami Vivekananda by His Eastern and Western Disciples*, Volume I, p. 94.
57 Will Durant, *The Study of Philosophy*, p. 60.
shower so much love on his pupil.\textsuperscript{60} One day, well known spiritual luminaries of his time Keshab Chandra Sen and Vijay Krishna Goswami called on Rama Krishna. Narendra was also present there. Ramakrishna continued looking at them and talking as if in a trance. After they had left, he turned to his disciples and said, “If Keshab Chandra Sen had one power that made him famous, Narendra had eighteen such powers in the fullest measure; if Keshab’s and Vijay’s knowledge was like the flame of a lamp, Narendra incarnated the Sun of Knowledge in him”.\textsuperscript{61} The disciple for whom these remarks were made was not an ordinary disciple. He protested, “What are you saying. People will regard you mad man when they hear it”. Ramakrishna said pleasingly, “What shall I do, my child? Mother showed me all this; that is why I said so”.\textsuperscript{62} Narendra retorted “Who can say that Mother showed you these things and that they are not the fictions of 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”.\textsuperscript{63} The other devotees and disciples of Ramakrishna were annoyed with Narendra on account of his critical statements. In the beginning, they thought him to be conceited and arrogant. “The criticism of Narendra, and his passionate arguments filled him (Ramakrishna) with joy. He had a profound respect for his brilliant intellectual sincerity with his tireless quest for the truth. He regarded it as manifestation of Shiva power, which would finally overcome all illusions”.\textsuperscript{64}

No doubt, sometimes Ramakrishna was hurt by his sharp criticism without any consideration for others. Narendra stopped going to Brahmo Samaj after the later leaders showed discourtesy to Ramakrishna who came into the meeting of Brahmo Samaj to meet Narendra.\textsuperscript{65} In fact, now both

\textsuperscript{60} Satish K. Kapoor, *Cultural Contact and Fusion: Swami Vivekananda in the West (1893-96)*, p. 15.
\textsuperscript{62} Asim Choudhury, *Swami Vivekananda In Chicago New Findings*, p. 35.
\textsuperscript{63} Christopher Isherwood, *Ramakrishna and His Disciples*, Advaita Ashrama, Calcutta, 1982, pp. 202-03.
\textsuperscript{64} Romain Rolland, *The Life of Vivekananda and The Universal Gospel*, p. 68.
\textsuperscript{65} Hansraj Rahbar, *Vivekananda The Warrior Saint*, p. 44.
were in tune with each other beyond physical and mental barriers. Once Ramakrishna did not talk to Narendra for about a month. Narendra showed no signs of concern over this. One day when Narendra was sitting near Ramakrishna, the latter said to him, ‘How do you come here, when I do not talk to you’. Narendra replied, ‘I like you that is why I come here, not to talk to you’. Even at this stage, his mind was very restless being pulled apart between materialism of the modern times and the spiritualism of Dakshineshwar. Narendra never accepted personal enjoyment as the ideal of his life. His only aim was the realization of the truth. In order to adapt his mind to the pursuit of this ideal, he had melted in the crucible of knowledge just as gold is melted in crucible to give it the desired shape. However, he had not yet found the ideal person who would take this molten and glittering metal out of the crucible and give it a shape. As yet, he had not given the right to do so even to Ramakrishna. Narendra preferred to remain a non-believer instead of putting faith in the existence of God without personal experience.

A storm was in his mind: what is this simple hearted great man? Does he really have a distorted mind or why had he not been able to get any peace of mind? Or had even the great religious leaders of the day realized the truth? He had put the straight question to Ramakrishna (after failing to get convincing answer from many others) fearing that if he said ‘no’ then to whom he would go? But the reply came without any hesitation and convincingly, yes, I have seen God and have seen Him more plainly than I am seeing you now. He heightened the amazement of Narendra a hundredfold by asking him, “Do you also want to see him? If you follow my advice, I can show him to you also”.

Before his powers of mind surrendered to Ramakrishna’s spiritual heights, destiny wanted to put him to face more tests of practical life. Soon after his graduation in 1884, his father died leaving behind a heavy debt. Vishwanath earned a lot of money but spent much more than that. Narendra

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66 The Life of Swami Vivekananda by His Eastern and Western Disciples, Volume I, p. 99.
67 Hansraj Rahbar, Vivekananda The Warrior Saint, p. 47.
68 The Life of Swami Vivekananda by His Eastern and Western Disciples, Volume I, p. 77.
was besieged by his creditors. As this is the rule of the world, creditors will not allow you to live in peace and debtors you will not find. Far from being able to repay his debts, Narendra found it difficult even to provide food to the members of his family. He experienced poverty for the first time. Being eldest, the burden of his family was on his shoulders. Narendranath in distress got no help from any quarter. As he said, “I almost died of hunger. Bare foot! I wandered from office to office, repulsed by all. This was my first contact with realities of life. I discovered that it had no room for the weak, the poor, the deserted. Those who, in the past, would have been proud to help me, turned away their faces, although they possessed the means to do so. The world seemed to me the creation of a devil. One sultry day, when I could hardly stand on my feet, I sat down in the shade of a monument. Several friends were there, and one began to sing a hymn about the abundant grace of God. It was like a blow deliberately aimed at my head. I thought of the pitiable condition of my mother and brothers, and cried, “Stop singing that song! Such fantasies may sound pleasant in the ears of those who are born with a silver spoon in their mouth, and whose parents are not dying of hunger at home. Oh Yes, there was a time when I too thought like that. But now that I am faced with all the cruelty of life, it rings in my ears like mockery. My friend was hurt. He could not make allowance for my terrible distress. More than once, when I saw that there was not enough food to go round at home, I went out telling my mother that I was invited elsewhere, and I fasted. My affluent friends sometimes asked me to go to their houses to sing, but practically not a single one of them showed any curiosity about my misfortunes; and I kept these to myself”.

During this grave crisis, her mother’s faith (who was the main force behind Narendra’s character building) was shaken. When, one day, Narendra was offering prayer, she shouted; Shut up boy, from your childhood you have done nothing but chanting the name of God! It is God who had done all this”. These words tore at his heart. He came down from the dizzy heights of Advaita Vedanta. He was reminded of the words of Ishvar Chandra

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70 Romain Rolland, *The Life of Vivekananda and The Universal Gospel*, p. 262.
Vidyasagar— If God is really merciful and benevolent then why lacs of people have died in the famine without food. In sheer exasperation, he fell back on the works of John Stuart Mill, David Hume, Camte and other western philosophers as a last refuge.\(^{72}\)

As Narendra started arguing with the people his belief against the existence of God, he not only earned the notoriety of being anti-God, but also was maligned by people who gave exaggerated accounts of his falling in the company of wicked people, of consuming liquor and possessing a bad moral character. These accounts of his untrue notoriety started pouring into the ears of disciples of Ramakrishna too. However, Ramakrishna had heard of it all from them, but did not express himself either way till Bhabanath wept and said to him, ‘It was beyond our dream that such would be Narendra’s lot’. He said, “Silence! You fellows! Mother has told me, he can never be such. If you mention it again, you will not be able to put up with your presence”.\(^{73}\)

This was just a temporary 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 influence of religious Sanskaras, and his contacts with Ramakrishna. Narendra himself said, “At Dakshineshwara, I was sitting in a room along with others. Just then the master went into ecstasy looking at me, and all of a sudden he came to me, caught hold of me with affection and, with tears rolling down he started singing the song—’I am afraid of speaking out to you and equally afraid of not speaking. In have a doubt lest I should lose you’. This was something unique between the two. Afterwards, sending away all others, he called me at night and said, ‘I know, you have come to the world for Mother’s work. You can never live a worldly life. But remain in your family for my sake as long as I live’.\(^{74}\)

Narendra tried to earn something by working at an attorney’s office and translating a few books. As earnings were insufficient, he requested the Master to pray to the mother for giving relief to his brothers from their sufferings. The Master said, “I have already prayed but the Mother does not


\(^{73}\) Ibid., p. 805.

\(^{74}\) *The Life of Swami Vivekananda by His Eastern and Western Disciples*, Volume I, p. 127
listen to me as you have no faith in her. Now listen to me. Today is Tuesday, if you go to the Kali temple tonight Mother will grant you whatever you ask for. My mother is the supreme spirit and the Shakti Brahman himself. There is nothing she cannot do if she gets pleased.’\(^{75}\) At Sri Ramakrishna’s insistence he went thrice to the temple of Goddess Kali to ask for help for his family. But he could not make that prayer. All he could ask for was knowledge of the Truth and devotional life. However the Master gave the assurance that your family will never be in want of plain food and clothing’.\(^{76}\) This incident is said to have left a deep imprint upon Narendra’s mind. It enriched his spiritual life, for he gained a new understanding of the Godhead and its ways in the Phenomenal Universe.\(^{77}\) Narendra started singing the songs of Mother Kali. Tarapada Ghosh, one of Sri Ramakrishna’s disciples say that afterwards on many occasions we heard Narendra say, ‘ever since our first meeting it was Master alone, and no one else, not even my own mother and brothers, who always had uniform faith in me. That faith and that love of his bound me to him forever. It was the Master alone who knew how to love and he did love, while others of the world love for the sake of their self interest.’\(^{78}\) Narendra who earlier hated idol worship, ultimately put his faith in idol worship too. It was a case of love prevailing over reason.

However, there arose some questions too. Ramakrishna had a wide acquaintance among the well to do persons and why he did not make any effort to help Narendra. Was he so much possessive of Narendra or he knew with his super human powers that this boy would overcome all this and was destined for other greater cause. Any how, these years of struggle enriched his spiritual life because he gained a new understanding of the Godhead and its way in the phenomenal Universe.\(^{79}\) Slowly and gradually, his resistance gave way at a song, a glance, a touch, a parable, till he attained bliss in absolute surrender. He learnt the truth that different creeds were like many rivers flowing in various directions but leading to the same ocean. Man was

\(^{75}\) Hansraj Rahbar, *Vivekananda The Warrior Saint*, p. 54.


not to be regarded as a sinner but a spark of divine force, a drop from the ocean of cosmic consciousness. Narendranath’s trials and tribulations enabled him to see the logic that could reconcile divine graciousness to the misery of the world. As he watched the gloom of poverty, he began to understand the problems of the poor.

By 1884, all the disciples of Ramakrishna had come to him. He was warning them against sex, wealth and the pleasures of worldly life. He was guiding them towards the path of devotion. Only Narendra could understand this. He said to Shivananda, “Today I have heard a great truth spoken. I shall be announcing this living truth before that Vedanta can be brought into the home. The first thing that we should understand is that it is God alone, who is present before us in the form of living beings and all creation. Therefore, serving God in the form of living beings is devotion of the highest order”.  

In 1885, Ramakrishna was afflicted with cancer of the throat. His treatment was under Dr. Mahendralal Sarkar, a renowned homeopath of the city. As the disease was showing no signs of abating and becoming more acute, he was first kept in a house in Calcutta and then in a garden house in Kashipur. Narendra gave up his job of Headmaster in the month of August 1885 which he had got in a newly opened branch of Metropolitan school at Champatala locality, on the recommendation of Ishvara Chandra Vidyasagar. He started living in the Kashipur house along with other disciples. He also utilized this time in studying works such as Upanishads, Arhtovakra Samhita, Panchadashi, Vivekchudamani etc. too.

At this moment, Narendra was yearning with a strong desire in his heart to be able to enter into Nirvikalpa Samadhi. One day he said it to Ramakrishna that he wanted to remain immersed in the sea of true happiness through Nirvikalpa Samadhi. Ramakrishna reacted angrily, but when Narendra again insisted with tears in his eyes, “I can have no peace of mind unless I can achieve Nirvikalpa Samadhi and I shall not be able to do anything else without this. Sri Ramakrishna replied, ‘It is not your own

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80 Hansraj Rahbar, *Vivekananda The Warrior Saint*, p. 54.
volition that you will do these things. Mother will hold you by the neck to do all that you may not willingly do it, but your bones will do it” and then granted permission by saying “Go, you shall achieve it”.

One evening while sitting for meditation, Narendra entered into *Nirvikalpa Samadhi* all of a sudden. Other disciples thinking him dead approached Ramakrishna who remained quiet. When Narendra came back to normal state, he bowed before Ramakrishna who said, “That is enough for now. It is all locked and the key will be with mother. The lock will be opened again when you have finished your work”.

Sometime after, Ramakrishna Order was founded at Kashipur. Ramakrishna adorned the young disciples with Saffron clothes and initiated them to the order of *Sannyasis*. He addressed their leader Narendra and asked “Will all of you be able to put aside your pride and go to the streets with a begging bowl”? All of them did so in the streets of Calcutta where they had been born and had rosy dreams about the future. All that they got as alms, they placed before the Master and accepted the *prasad* given by him.

Though for sometime the condition of Sri Ramakrishna showed recovery yet it started deteriorating later on. During this time, Naren directed their activities and prayers. They begged the Master to join them in praying for his recovery, and the visit of Pandit Sasadhar, who shared their faith, gave them an opportunity to renew their entreaties. Several days later Vivekananda said, ‘My teaching is finished. I cannot interact with people any

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84 *The Life of Swami Vivekananda by His eastern and Western Disciples*, Volume II, p. 651.
85 *The Life of Swami Vivekananda by His eastern and Western Disciples*, Volume I, p. 221.
86 Christopher Isherwood, *Ramakrishna and His Disciples*, p. 295. ‘The Scriptures’, said the Pandit to Ramakrishna, ‘declare that saints like you can cure themselves by their will power’. Ramakrishna replied, ‘My mind has been given to God once and for all. Would you ask me to get it back?’ His disciples reproached him for not wishing to be restored to health. But Ramakrishna said sweetly, “Do you think my sufferings are voluntary? I wish to recover, but that depends on the mother; then prey to her. It is easy for you to say that, but I cannot speak these words, I will try what I can do. After few hours he of course said, “I said to her mother, I can eat nothing because of my suffering. Make it possible for me to eat a little. She pointed you all out to me and said, ‘What! Thou can’t eat through all these mouths!’ I was ashamed and could not utter another word?”
longer; for I see the whole world is filled with the Lord. So I ask myself, whom I can teach’.

Ramakrishna gave up his mortal frame at 1:02, Monday morning on 16th August, 1886. He had already passed his everything to Narendra. Ramakrishna was afraid that if Narendra was not equipped with the knowledge of Vedanta, his talent will remain one-sided and that he might use such talent in founding his own religion or sect. The torrent forming the remarkable destiny of Vivekananda would have been lost in the bowels of the earth, if Ramakrishna’s glance had not, as with one blow of an axe, split the rock barring its course, so that, through the breach thus made, the river of his soul could flow. Had Narendra not came in contact with Ramakrishna Paramhansa, perhaps the harmony between the past and present form of Dvaita, Vishishtadvaita and Advaita and between the past and the future would not have developed in his mind. But what was to be had to be. Only three or four days before his Mahasamadhi, Ramakrishna seated in front of Narendra, looked intently into the eyes of his dear disciple and fell into deep trance. Naren felt the powerful impact of a tremendous force passing into his own body and soon lost all body consciousness. When, after a while, Naren came to himself, the Master was found shedding tears. Ramakrishna softly replied, ‘Oh Naren, today I have given you my all and have become a fakir (beggar). By the force of the power transmitted by me, great things will be done by you, only after that will you go to whence, you come’.

The passing away of Ramakrishna proved a great shock to all his disciples and cut off the bond that had hitherto held them together. There were two kinds of people among the disciples of Ramakrishna; one who entered the monastic life and became Sannyasis (they were twelve) and the

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87 Romain Rolland, The Life of Vivekananda and The Universal Gospel, p. 266.
88 Christopher Isherwood, Ramakrishna and His Disciples, p. 304.
89 Romain Rolland, The Life of Vivekananda and The Universal Gospel, p. 215.
90 Hansraj Rahbar, Vivekananda The Warrior Saint, p. 63.
91 Swami Vivekananda Centenary Memorial Volume, Replacement of Numeric Publishing Codes, Calcutta, 1963, p. 61. After the demise of Sri Ramakrishna he came back home, and gave his clothes to wash. Later, he asked mother whether he has preserved the bones tied in the chadar. The mother answered that she found some charcoals tied in a corner of the chadar and threw them off. He said, “Alas! These were the bones of Ramakrishna”.
92 Hansraj Rahbar, Vivekananda The Warrior Saint, p. 64.
other were householders. *Sannyasis* were young and without any means, and could not rent any house where they could live together. The incipient organization was thus threatened with dissolution when Surendranath—a lay devotee—hired for them a dilapidated house in the Baranagore locality. He also volunteered to arrange for their food and other necessities. Some of the disciples who had gone back home were persuaded by Narendra to come back and thus the nucleus of a monastery was set up. The young *Sannyasis* were satisfied with whatever they got. They were happy to eat the frugal meals consisting of rice and boiled vegetable using leaves as plates. They regularly practised meditation, worship and chanting. Narendra continued to visit his own house and regularly visited the monastery till the end of December 1886. In the end of December 1886, on the day of Christmas, young *Sannyasis* took the vow of leading a life of renunciation, celibacy and poverty, with a view of the realization of God in a ceremony. However, each of them gave up his worldly name and assumed a suitable name for a monk ending in *ananda* in the third week of January 1887.\(^9^4\)

Many times people will criticize them rudely. Parents of young *Sannyasis* will persuade them to return home. As Vivekananda himself said later on, “We had no friends who would listen to a few boys, with their crank notions! Nobody, at least in India, boys are nobodies. Just think of it – a dozen boys, telling people of sublime ideas, saying they are determined to work their ideas out in life. Why? Everybody laughed. From laughter, it became serious, it became persecution .... And the more we were derided, the more determined we became”\(^9^5\). Monks were passing their days in dire distress. Some times the *math* was without a grain of food. If some rice was collected by begging, there was no salt to take it with! On some days, there would be only rice and salt, but nobody cared for it in the least. They were simply being carried away by a tidal wave of spiritual practice. Boiled *Bimba* leaves, rice and salt, this was the menu for a month at a stretch. Oh those

\(^{93}\) For details see Christopher Isherwood, *Ramakrishna and His Disciples*, p. 218, 310.

\(^{94}\) Bhupendra Nath Datta, *Swami Vivekananda Patriot-Prophet*, p. 158.

\(^{95}\) *Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, Volume VIII, p. 80.
wonderful days. The austerities of that period were enough to dismay supernatural beings, not to speak of men.\

The unprecedented enthusiasm of monks for spiritual exercise triumphed over the miseries and dismal surroundings. Naren, with whom dream itself was action, would not allow them to be torpidly engulfed in meditation. He made this period of conventional seclusion a hive of laborious education, a high school of the spirit. The superiority of his genius and his knowledge had from the first given him a tacit but definite guidance over his companions; although many of them were older than him. The last words of the Master, when he took leave of them, encouraged Naren: “Take care of these boys”! Naren resolutely undertook the conduct of the young seminary, and did not permit it to indulge in the idleness of God. He kept its members ever in the alert. He spent two years in consolidating this newly founded monastic organization.

Although the learning of books is an essential part of one’s education, yet the young Sanyasis were dying to go out of the confines of the monastery to experience knowledge. Their Guru, Sri Ramakrishna, had read no books but acquired all knowledge about the Shastras. Two of the Sanyasis quietly slipped out and went on a pilgrimage. Then, on one day Saradaprasanna (Swami Trigunateetananda) left the monastery leaving behind a letter, “I am going to Vrindavan on foot. It has become impossible for me to live here. Who knows when my mind would change? I often dream of my parents, my home and my relatives. I am being tempted by maya. I have suffered a lot; so much so that once or twice I was compelled to go to home to meet my family members. It would not be proper to continue here anymore. There is no alternative to my going away to some other country to save myself from the clutches of maya”. Now it appeared as if the chain would break. Naren, in spite of his anxiety to maintain the ties uniting the brotherhood, was himself tormented with the same desire to escape. Ultimately, it was decided that a part of the group would always remain at the monastery, while the other

98 The Life of Swami Vivekananda by His Eastern and Western Disciples, Volume I, p. 210
brothers followed the ‘call of the forest’. Shashi (Swami Ramakrishnananda) was one of them who never quitted the hearth. He was the faithful guardian of the Math, the immobile axis, the coping stone of the dove co te, where to the vagabond wings returned.\footnote{Romain Rolland, \textit{The Life of Vivekananda and The Universal Gospel}, p. 9.}

Narendra himself left on a pilgrimage in 1888 after obtaining the blessings of widow of Sri Ramakrishna, Maa Sarada Devi. As a parivrajaka—wandering monk while passing through many places, he reached Kashi and started living in Dwarkadas Ashram and met Pandit Bhudeva Mukhopadhy. At Varanasi, these days, Swami Bhaskarananda\footnote{Hansraj Rahbar, \textit{Vivekananda The Warrior Saint}, p. 68. Bhaskarananda even stated criticizing the character of Ramakrishna which Narendra (Swami Vivekananda) could not tolerate. Bhaskarananda praised him in the presence of his disciples and devotees.} was greatly valued for his erudition. But Narendra contradicted him, on the issue that no one ever been able to wholly give up the temptations of wealth and sex, by giving the example of Sri Ramakrishna. He returned to Baranagore and realizing the necessity of understanding the disparity of culture, language, lifestyle, manners etc., he exhorted his fellow disciples to move out and understood different people.

He again visited Kashi where he met Prabhadas Mitra a great scholar of Sanskrit and \textit{Vedantic} philosophy and had great respect for him.\footnote{Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda, Volume VII, p. 411.} While in Saketa (Ayodhya) he was appalled at the sight of desecrated temples of Lord Rama and his consort Sita. At Sarnath, he felt shocked at the sight of the dilapidated Buddhist Viharas and at Agra, the splendor of Taj Mahal, queen of architecture virtually reduced him to tears. On the way to Vrindavan, he, seeing a man smoking a pipe on the road side, requested for puff, but the man refused saying that ‘I am a \textit{bhangi} (sweeper)’. On hearing this he hastily moved on. After a few steps he was overwhelmed by feeling of self reproach, that ‘Why this hatred for a \textit{Bhangi} or \textit{Mehtar} when you have entered \textit{Sannyas} after relinquishing your caste, your lineage and all dignity? Why this feeling of caste superiority’?\footnote{\textit{The Life of Swami Vivekananda by His Eastern and Western Disciples}, Volume I, p. 217.} He came back, filled up the pipe with tobacco and had a smoke with great love and relish. Now all thoughts of untouchability...
were banished from his mind. At Vrindavana, he relived the epic of Lord Krishna through the *Bhagavata Purana* and worshipped at the famous shrine of Gopeshwar Mahadeva. The natural surroundings of Rishikesh landed him in the El Darado of bliss. From Vrindavan, he came to Hathras where he had a chance meeting with Station Master Saratchandra Gupta, (later Sadananda) on the small railway station. A man one minute complete stranger, the next impelled by the attraction of his flame to leave all and follow him, and remain faithful till death. Now both set out together on their journey. Sadananda fell ill and Narendra carried him on his shoulders. Afterwards, he himself fell ill and came back to Hathras where they were nursed back to health by Sarat’s family and others. Ultimately he came back to Baranagore.

He was not only making himself acquainted with all *Vedic* literature but also the study of Sanskrit scriptures was emphasized in the *Math*. At the same time, he was also aware of the happenings in Europe. It is clear from the letter dated 13th December, 1889, “A kind of scientific Advaitism has been spreading in Europe ever since the theory of conservation of energy was discovered but all that is *Parinamavada*, evolution by real modification. It is good you have cleared the distinction between this and Shankara’s *Vinertabad* (progressive manifestation by unreal superimposition). I can’t appreciate your citing Spencer’s Parody on the German transcendentalists; he himself is fed much on their doles. It is doubtful whether your opponent Gaugh, understands his Hegel sufficiently”.

In fact, he was getting ready for a big task and that is why, he could say at Varanasi earlier “I am going away; but I shall never come back until I can burst on society like a bomb, and make it follow like a dog”.

Narendra visited Allahabad in 1889 where the three great rivers – the Ganges, the Yamuna and the Saraswati meet. He was well received by the Bengalis of the town who were dazzled by his learning and amazing character. He severely criticized the social abuses and inequities of the times.

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especially the degeneration of caste system. During this journey, he first heard of Pavhari Baba, the famous saint of Ghazipur and went to see him in the third week of (21st) January 1890. After meeting him, he pondered whether he should follow footsteps of Pavhari Baba. But decidedly, the path of Pavhari Baba was not the path for him. In Gazipur, Narendra always talked about uplifting of the society and the nation. He even asked the Baba to come out of the cave to save the world.

He had now resolved to undertake a journey of the entire country from the Himalayas to Kanyakumari. He accordingly broke loose at the beginning of July 1890. He desired to cut himself free from all ties and to go into retreat in the Himalayas. But of all good things, solitude is the most difficult to achieve. Social life makes a thousand claims on those who flee it. And how much more when the fugitive is still a young prisoner! Naren discovered this to his cost and also at the cost of those who loved him! Akhandananda accompanied him to the Himalayas, there he fell ill. At Almora, Naren found Saradananda and Kripananda. A little later Turiyananda also joined. He left them at Meerut near the end of January 1891; their anxious affection followed him to Delhi. In February 1891, he left Delhi alone. This was the great departure. Like a driver 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 Sannyasi in Saffron robe among a thousand others. But the fires of genius burned in his eyes. He was a prince despite all disguise.

His itinerary led him through Rajputana, Alwar (February to March 1891), Jaipur, Ajmer, Khetri, Ahmedabad and Kathiawar (end of September 1891) Junagar and Gujarat, Parabondar (a stay of eight-nine months), Dwarka, city of temples close to the Gulf of Cambay, the state of Baroda, Khandwa, Bombay, Poona, Belgaum, (October 1892), Bangalore in the state of Mysore, Cochin, Malabar, the state of Travancore, Trivandum, Madura. He travelled to the extreme point of the immense pyramid, where is the

106 The life of Swami Vivekananda by His Eastern and Western Disciples, Volume II, p. 181.
108 Hansraj Rahbar, Vivekananda The Warrior Saint, p. 81.
109 Romain Rolland, The Life of Vivekananda and The Universal Gospel, p. 15.
Varanasi of Southern India, Rameswaram, the home of the Ramayana, and beyond to Kanyakumari, the sanctuary of the Great Goddess (end of 1892).  

During Wanderjahre, Lehrjahre (years of travel, years of apprenticeship), he was not only being transformed but his ideas and thoughts were also being consolidated. His experiences were so varied that no aspect of life of human being seems to be untouched. He was moving free from any bondage or ties and every moment he was feeling a new face of life. He said, “So things went on …. Sometimes one meal at nine in the evening, another time a meal at eight in the morning, another after two days, and always the poorest and worst thing. Who is going to give to the beggar the good things he has? And then, they have not much in India. And most of the time walking, climbing, just to get a meal. They eat unleavened bread in India and sometimes they had it stored away for twenty to thirty days, until it is harder than bricks and then they will give a square of that I would have to go from house to house to collect sufficient food for one meal! The bread was so hard. It made my mouth bleed. Literally, you can break your teeth in that bread. Then I would put in a pot and pour over it water from the river. For months and months, I existed that way but it was telling on my health”.

During his travels, he realized the essence of Buddhism and Jainism, the spirit of Ramananda and Dayananda. He had become a profound student of Tulsidas. He had learned all about the saints of Maharashtra and the Alwars and Nayanars of Southern India. The songs of Guru Nanak alternated with these of Mira Bai and Tansen on his lips. The stories of Prithvi Raj and Delhi jostled against those of Chittore and Pratap Singh, Shiva and Uma, Radha- Krishna, Sita- Ram and Buddha. His whole heart and soul was the burning epic of the country.

Wanderjahre was a unique education for him. He was not only the humble little brother, who slept in stables in the pallets of beggars, but he was on a footing of equality with every man, today a despised beggar sheltered by pariahs, tomorrow the guest of princes, conversing on equal

110 Ibid., p. 15.
111 Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda, Volume VIII, p. 84.
112 The life of Swami Vivekananda by His Eastern and Western Disciples, Volume II, p. 285.
terms with Prime Ministers and Maharajas, the brother of the oppressed bending over their misery, then probing the luxury of the great, awakening care for the public weal in their torpid hearts. He became as conversant with the knowledge of the Pandits as with the problems of industrial and rural economy, whereby the life of the people is controlled, ever teaching, ever learning, gradually making himself the conscience of India, its unity and its destiny. He received no less than he gave. His vast spirit never for a single day failed to widen its knowledge and its experience, and it assimilated all the rivers of thought scattered and buried in the soil of India, for their source seemed to him identical.\textsuperscript{113}

If he got a chance to learn Sanskrit grammar at Khetri he did, if he got a chance to learn Mohammedan and Jain culture he did so. Sometimes incidents taught him. When Maharaja of Khetri invited him to a musical entertainment by a dancing girl, he refused to attend. The dancing girl was disappointed and sang a song of the great Vaisnava Saint Suradas.

\begin{quote}
"O Lord, look not upon my evil qualities!
Thy name, O Lord is same-sightedness,
One piece of iron is in the image in the temple;
And another is the knife in the hand of the butcher;
But when they touch the philosopher's stone;
Both alike turn into gold".
\end{quote}

On hearing this, he was reminded of the Vedantic doctrine that the divinity dwells in all and knows no distinction of caste, creed, colour or sex. As he said later on, “The incident removed scales from my eyes. Seeing that all are indeed the manifestations of the One, I could no longer condemn anybody”.\textsuperscript{114}

In Sept 1892, when he was going to Pune by train, three Maharashtrain young men were travelling in the same compartment with him. Having discussion on Sannyas, two were favouring the western style while the third one was favouring Sannyas. Narendra too joined them in discussion and said that Sannyasis are the loftiest manifestation of Indian culture and have protected the highest national ideals in times of adversity. However, some

\begin{footnotes}
\footnotetext{113}{Romain Rolland, \textit{The Life of Vivekananda and The Universal Gospel}, p. 17.}
\footnotetext{114}{Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda, Volume VII, p. 251.}
\end{footnotes}
self serving hypocrites had debased it, but the institution itself could not be blamed for that reason. After reaching Pune, third young man took Swami Ji to home and he lived there for some days. The young man was no other than Bal Gangadhar Tilak. However, this view is being contradicted by some other historians.

By the time, he reached Kanyakumari he had seen India, the land of religion savaged by famines, disease and misery. Some with surplus wealth and power were living luxurious life at the cost of other millions of people who were not having even food to eat and clothes to wear. Not only this, lower classes having been deprived of their rights and due to unkindly treatment meted out to them by the upper class, especially priestly class, they had started cursing Hindu religion itself and were ready to embrace other religion. He started thinking over the role of thousands of Sannyasis, who were sustained by the food given by these people to them. Now the destiny was testing him, giving him two choices; self gratification and social work. He was to choose one. He swam across the mighty Indian Ocean to reach at the holy Kumari rock. The ocean tossed about him; but there was even a greater storm distressing him. The emaciated figures of his fellow citizens ‘swarming on the body of India, like so many worms on a rotten, stinking carcass’ flashed across his mind. The poverty of India, inhumanity of the privileged classes, false superiority complex of western educated people condemning everything Indian, political slavery and the reformers touching only the stem of evils, not the roots, the fear of Indian rich cultural heritage meeting the tragic end of other great ancient civilizations disturbed him. He started crying with flood of tears in his eyes. He went into a state of trance and is said to have enlightenment, the highest ring of spiritual realization. He was convinced that India had a mission to enrich the world with the elixir of spiritualism. The world needs India as much as India needs them. Indian concern is the concern of world too. An appeal from India to Europe and America began to take shape in the mind of the solitary thinker. It was for

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115 Hansraj Rahbar, *Vivekananda The Warrior Saint*, p. 86.
117 Romain Rolland, *The Life of Vivekananda and The Universal Gospel*, p. 19. His first battle had been won. He had seen the path he was to follow. His mission was chosen.
this reason, and hopes to find more means for the salvation of the poor of India, that Vivekananda decided to go to America.\textsuperscript{118}

He came back to Indian continent and passing through Ramnad and Pondicherry reached Madras on foot. In the first weeks of 1893 he publicly proclaimed his wish to conduct a mission in the West.\textsuperscript{119} It was in Madras that he founded his first group of devoted disciples who dedicated themselves to him. His devotees began to collect funds for the voyage. Even the Rajas and Maharajas offered him help. But he said that for funds appeal should be to the middle classes for ‘I am going on behalf of the people and the poor’.\textsuperscript{120} When the money was collected, he refused to accept and asked to distribute it among the poor. His biographers argue that he was waiting for the guidance from the above and when it came, he thought of inducing his decent admirers again.\textsuperscript{121} Should this attempt fail, he decided to travel even on foot via Afghanistan,\textsuperscript{122} Iraq etc. The Maharaja of Khetri and Mysore agreed to provide him with the passage money. Maharaja Ajit Singh of Khetri gave him his Dewan (Prime Minister) to escort him to Bombay where he embarked. At the moment of departure, he put on the ‘robe of red silk and ochre turban to fascinate American Idlers and the name of Vivekananda’ (\textit{Viveka} means discrimination and \textit{ananda} means bliss) which he was about to impose upon the world.\textsuperscript{123}

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{118} From the historic southern end of India there are two great flights in the Indian History. First a great leap of mythological Hanuman– the god. Second of Swami Vivekananda who traversed the vast land of India upon the soles of his feet and reached here fully exhausted and from the holy rock embraced the whole of India.

\textsuperscript{119} In a lecture delivered at Hyderabad in February, 1893: \textit{My Mission to the West.}

\textsuperscript{120} \textit{The life of Swami Vivekananda by His Eastern and Western Disciples}, Volume II, p. 73.

\textsuperscript{121} Satish K. Kapoor, \textit{Cultural Contact and Fusion: Swami Vivekananda in the West (1893-96)}, p. 27.

\textsuperscript{122} Romain Rolland, \textit{The Life of Vivekananda and The Universal Gospel}, p. 25.

\textsuperscript{123} \textit{The Life of Swami Vivekananda by His Eastern and Western Disciples}, pp. 199-200. According to Swami Abhedananda, Narendra adopted the name of Vividishananda at the time of ritualistic initiation into \textit{sannyas} in January, 1887. During his travels in India he changed the names twice– first to Vivekananda (February 1891-October 1892) and then to Sachchidananda (October 1892-May 1893).
\end{flushleft}
He left Bombay on May 31, 1893 by ship *S. S. Empress of India*\(^{124}\) and went by way of Ceylon, Penang, Singapore, Hong Kong and then visited Canton and Nagasaki. Thence, he went by land to Yokohama, seeing Osaka, Kyoto and Tokyo. He went from Yokohama to Vancouver and thence by train in the middle of July to Chicago. During the whole journey, he was watching everything very minutely. His insight was so penetrating that he could see the furthering events. Chinese hard work, Japanese growth in the fields of manufacturing, development of transport, consolidation of army, their national pride, he was very much able to understand and just after twelve years, Japanese were able to defeat the mighty Russians. His knowledge was widening, his experiences were becoming richer and richer and the pain for the Indian masses was equally increasing. Now he was preparing himself to exhort the Indian people to come up and face the challenges.

In America he was a subject of curiosity for everyone. He was being cheated and victimized. Many a times he would lose heart but destiny had not brought him to America for losing heart but winning the hearts of millions of people just after two months. The initial intoxication ceased when he came to know after twelve days from the Information Bureau of Universal Exposition at Chicago that Parliament of Religions would open in the first week of September. World Fair was organized to mark the fourth Centenary of Columbus discovering America. Therefore, it was named World Columbus Exhibition. It started from 1\(^{st}\) May, 1893 and continued for six months. It was housed in 400 big buildings, with participants from 46 countries.\(^{125}\) Besides this, separate conferences were held on various fields of human endeavour like education, philosophy etc. and these were attended by about seven lakh persons and about six thousands papers were presented.

Vivekananda had to face many hardships during this time especially when he learnt that it was too late for registration of delegates and no registration would be accepted without official references which he had none. All the rosy ideas started melting and he even thought to return to India many

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\(^{124}\) *Swami Vivekananda and the Emergence of India Through Spiritual Culture, Photographs of Swami Vivekananda*, Compiled by Vedanta Society of Northern California, Sri Ramakrishna Math, Chennai, 2007, p. 32.

\(^{125}\) Hansraj Rahbar, *Vivekananda The Warrior Saint*, p. 97.
times. He requested his friends in Madras for official reference. This came to be known to the Theosopsists, and the Theosophists wrote, ‘Now the devil is going to die; God bless us all’.126 But the devil proved to be different. He himself came to Boston to save money. Swami Vivekananda started living at Miss Katherine Abbott Sanborn’s farm. The lady took him to a women’s meeting where he made his first speech. Accepting the advice of women, he changed the style of his dress. He got a long black coat, sparing the Saffron cloak and turban for addressing meetings. Perhaps the Evening Transcript of Boston was the first American daily and the Framingham Tribune, the first American weekly to report on Swami Vivekananda’s activities in their issues of August 23 and 25, 1893 respectively. Former alluded to his visit to Sherborn Reformatory. The latter hailed him as ‘The Indian Rajah’.127 The Sanborns introduced him to Professor J. H. Wright,128 Professor of Greek at Harvard University. Professor and Mrs. Wright were captivated by his erudition and eloquence. Mrs. Wright wrote, “He was a most gorgeous vision and one of the most interesting people I have yet come across”.129 Professor Wright solved Swami’s problem and put himself entirely at his disposal and gave him a letter of recommendation to the chairman of the committee on the selection of delegates. He wrote, “Here is a man who is more learned than all our learned professors put together and to ask you for your credentials is like asking the Sun to state its right to shine”.130

Swami Vivekananda returned to Chicago but lost the address of the Committee. He spent the night in an empty box on the railway freight yards. He moved door to door to know about the address, but he was rudely dismissed from some of the houses, insulted by servants till he sat on the road

126 Marie Louise Burke, Swami Vivekananda in the West, New Discoveries, Volume I, p. 21.
128 Ibid., p. 40.
130 The life of Swami Vivekananda by His Eastern and Western Disciples, Volume II, p. 297.
side exhausted. To his delight, a lady, Miss Mary Hale, assuming that he may be a delegate to the Parliament of Religions, invited him to her house and later on accompanied him to the Parliament of Religions where he was accepted as a delegate.

Swami Vivekananda’s entry into the Parliament of Religion has another kind of debate also. Whether it was fate or chance! How a poor young monk reached America crossing the big oceans when in India crossing a river was considered a sin, knowing nothing, preparing nothing, without recommendation, with no sources to survive, habitually missing the things, which even fortune, provided him; he still managed to represent his country’s vast cultural heritage in the Parliament of Religions? This question assumes greater significance particularly when Swami Vivekananda himself planned to return India many times. The questions invoked the age old, unsolved, metaphysical dispute between the fatalist and the free willist, the relying on chance and the rationalist depending upon his brain and brawn.

The Parliament of Religions opened on Monday, September 11, 1893 at 10.00 a.m. in the Hall of Columbus, at the Art Institute of Chicago, by ten strokes upon the new Columbian Library Bell, on which were written the words ‘Peace on Earth, Goodwill to all men’. But amongst them all it was the young man belonging to no sect, rather India as a whole, who drew the glance of assembled thousands.

Regarding his experiences of the first day of the Parliament, including his own address, he wrote to Alasinga in November, 1893 “Imagine a hall below and a huge galaxy above, packed with six or seven thousand men and women representing the best culture of the country, and on the platform

131 Hansraj Rahbar, *Vivekananda The Warrior Saint*, p.100. This lady along with her mother George W. Hale later became great devotee of Swami Vivekananda. He used to call her as mother also.
133 *Ibid.*, p. 44. In the centre on the stage was sitting Cardinal Gibbons. Round him to left and right were grouped the Oriental delegates; Pratap Chander Mazumdar representing Brahmo Samaj (along with B. B. Najarkar of Bombay), Dharmapala representing Buddhists of Ceylon, Vir Chand Gandhi representing Jainism; Professor C. N. Ckakarvarti with Annie Besant representing Theosophical society. Other Indians present were Sigghu Ram, an appeal writer from Multan, Jinda Ram, President of Temperence Society, Muzaffargarh and Purshotam Bal Krishna Joshi, a hereditary high priest from Bombay.
learned men of all the nations of the earth and I, who never spoke in public in my life, to address this august assemblage! ...of course my heart was fluttering and my tongue nearly dried up; I was so nervous, and could not venture to speak on that morning. Mazumdar made a nice speech, Chakraborty, a nicer one; and they were much applauded, and came with readymade speeches. I was a fool and had none, but bowed down to Devi Saraswati and stepped up, and Dr. Burrows introduced me. I made short speech, addressing the assembly as “Sisters and Brothers of America” – a deafening applause of two minutes followed and then I proceeded, and when it was finished I set down, almost exhausted with emotion”.\(^{135}\)

The unknown Hindu Monk had now become a celebrity almost overnight. Mrs. S. K. Bladgett, on calling her impressions of Swami Vivekananda’s address, observed, “I saw scores of women walking over to the benches to get near him, and I said to myself, well, my lad, if you can resist that onslaught you are indeed a God”.\(^{136}\) Even the Church women of Chicago are reported to have almost fought with each other for the honour of shaking hands with the Swami.\(^{137}\)

His brief speech struck the note of Universal toleration, so characteristic of Hindu thought. A Jewish intellectual remarked that he realized for the first time that his own religion, Judaism, was true and that the Swami had addressed his words on behalf of not only his religion, but all religions of the world.\(^{138}\) Though he was not the first speaker to sing the song of Universal tolerance, some other speakers had already made such observations. But he very cleverly, along with Universal tolerance, touched the superiority of Indian culture, and thought. More importantly, he was not a representative of an independent country but a young man of slave country and poor people. He could establish the authority of his country in the fields of religion and spirituality at a time when Christian missionaries were sent to India to make it civilized. This historic event encouraged the Indians to raise

\(^{136}\) Reminiscences of Swami Vivekananda, His Eastern and Western Admirers, p.245.
\(^{137}\) The Madras Mail, Madras, February 25, 1897.
their head high and infused the feeling of strength and self respect among them and thus laid down the platform on which a free India was to emerge.

Hereafter, he spoke for many times both at the plenary sessions of the Parliament and at the scientific sessions.\textsuperscript{139} The American Press recognized him as ‘Undoubtedly the greatest figure in the Parliament of Religions’. ‘After hearing him we feel how foolish it is to send missionaries to this learned nation’. Even at this juncture, his heart was crying for his nation and millions of the poor and downtrodden Indians. After, as before, success, his test was a difficult one. Having been succumbed to poverty, he was now in danger of being overwhelmed by riches. In order to serve the cause of his unfortunate India, to free himself from the tutelage of his rich protectionists, he accepted the offer of a lecture Bureau for a tour of United States; the East and the Middle West; Chicago, Des Moines, Minneapolis, Detroit, Boston, Cambridge, Baltimore, Washington, New York etc. But later on, he left it also. He would not tolerate the slightest domination.\textsuperscript{140}

By 1895, Vivekananda had finished writing his famous treatise on Raja Yoga, dictated to Miss S.E. Waldo (afterwards Sister Haridasi). In summer of 1895, he initiated some of his western disciples, such as Marie Louise (Abhyananda), Lein Landberg (Kripananda), S. E. Waldo (Sister Haridasi), Min Greenstidel (Sister Christine)\textsuperscript{141} etc. Later on J. J. Goodwin who was the self appointed Secretary of Swami Vivekananda or as he would call him – ‘my right hand’. It is especially to him that we owe the preservation of the seed sown in America.

From August 1895 to December 1895, he visited England. He stayed three times in England; from September to Nov 1895 (then came to Paris), from April 1896 to July 1896 and from October 1896 to December 16, 1896. The impression made on him in England was even deeper than that made by

\textsuperscript{139} Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda, Volume I, pp. 3-23. On Sept 15, he spoke on ‘Why we disagree’; on Sept 19, ‘Paper on Hinduism’; on Sept 20, ‘Religion not the crying need of India’. Sept 20, two lectures on ‘Orthodox Hinduism and Vedantic Philosophy’, ‘The Modern Religion of India’; on 26th September, ‘Buddhism the fulfillment of Hinduism’ and on September 27 at the final session of the Parliament lecture was delivered.

\textsuperscript{140} Romain Rolland, The Life of Vivekananda and The Universal Gospel, p. 62.

\textsuperscript{141} For details see, Satish K. Kapoor, Cultural Contact and Fusion: Swami Vivekananda in the West (1893-96), p. 351.
America and much more unexpected. In Europe, he had the meetings with Max Mueller, Professor of Comparative Philosophy, Oxford University and Paul Deussen. The outline of the meeting with the former was that Swami Vivekananda commissioned Saradananda to classify the sayings of Sri Ramakrishna on various subjects such as *Karma* (action), *Vairagya* (renunciation); *bhakti* (devotion), *jnana* (knowledge) etc. Max Mueller incorporated these sayings in his esteemed book, *The Life and Sayings of Sri Ramakrishna* which aroused immense interest in the West. Towards the end of July 1896, he left for Switzerland and visited Geneva, Montreal. He, from there, was not only in touch with his friends in America and England but also guiding and inspiring the brother monks in India. On August 6, 1896, he wrote to Alassinga “The *Brahamvadin* is a Jewel – it must not perish. Of course, such a paper has to be kept up by private help always, and we will do it. Hold on a few months more”. What ever he was learning in the west was eager to use for the welfare of his Indian people.

He cut short his itinerary in Switzerland at the invitation of the renowned German Orientalist, Paul Deussen, Professor of philosophy at the University of Kiel. On his way he visited Heidelberg, Coblenz, Berlin etc. Well versed in Sanskrit, Paul Deussen was the only oriental scholar in Europe who could speak it fluently. Deussen was so much anxious to be with him that he travelled with him to Holland and then to London. ‘During this time Swami Vivekananda visited Max Mueller again at Oxford. Should one say that the three mighty rivers of human minds were merging as ‘triveni’ in the desert of material culture’! In England, he delivered so many lectures on various topics of philosophy and *Vedanta*. He became so popular that his discourses were attended by some members of the royal household. He himself was satisfied with his work in England. He wrote to Mrs. Ole Bull.

Things are working very favourably here in England. The work is not only popular but is also appreciated. His English friends Captain and Mrs.

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Sevier had decided to accompany him to India and construct an *ashrama* in the Himalayas to fulfill the cherished dream of his life. Miss Henrietta Muller had also decided to go to India. Miss Margaret Elizabeth Noble (later on Sister Nivedita) was among the fairest flowers of his work in England.

By the end of 1896, he decided to go back to India. Four tickets were booked (for Swami Ji, Goodwin and Seviers) for Prinz Regent Luitpold\(^{147}\) which was to leave Naples for Ceylon on December 30. During his farewell on December 13, given by his friends and disciples, he assured them meeting again. When Chairman of the Committee asked him how he felt about his motherland now, after staying in the luxurious, powerful West for about three and half years, he replied, “India, I loved before I came away. Now the very dust of India has become holy to me, the very air is now to me holy, it is now the holy land, the place of pilgrimage, the *tirtha*.”\(^{148}\)

In India his success in the Parliament of Religion reached late but once it was known, it spread throughout the country. On September 5, 1894, a year after the Parliament of Religion at Chicago, a meeting was held in the Town Hall of Calcutta; all classes of the society and all sections of Hinduism were represented to celebrate the success of Vivekananda. His brother monks at Baranagar were recalling the old prophecy of Ramakrishna that Naren will shake the world to the foundations. Certain political parties tried to make profit out of his work, but Vivekananda refused to take part in any movement. He said categorically that let no political significance be ever attached falsely to any of my writings or sayings’.\(^{149}\) When he arrived on January 16, 1897, a mighty shout arose from the human throng covering the quays of Colombo. A procession was formed with flags at its head. Religious hymns were chanted. Flowers were thrown before his path, rose water or sacred water from the Ganges was sprinkled. Incense burned before the houses. Hundreds of visitors, rich and poor, brought him offerings.\(^{150}\) Rajas drew his chariot. Covering the places like Rameswaram, Ramnad, Madura, Kumbakenam, he

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\(^{147}\) *Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, Volume IX, p. 91.
\(^{148}\) *The Life of Swami Vivekananda by His Eastern and Western Disciples*, Volume II, p. 444.
\(^{149}\) Perhaps he thought that it would not be proper to directly indulge in politics at this stage when the fellow citizens are not aware up to that extent.
\(^{150}\) Romain Rolland, *The Life of Vivekananda and The Universal Gospel*, p. 87.
reached Calcutta via sea from Madras. All along the way, he held that not himself but his cause was honoured. He scattered his seed to the winds in a series of brilliant speeches, the most beautiful and heroic India had ever heard, sending a thrill through her land, on the way. At Calcutta his reception was no less magnificent than at Madras. On February 28, 1897, there was a presentation to the Victor, an address of welcome from the city before an audience of 5000, followed by patriotic discourses from Vivekananda.  

Soon after, freeing himself from these celebrations, he concentrated on his monastic order. Though there was difference of opinion between him and his brother monks who were not yet ready to take the ideal of social and national service and were happy in the quiet life of peaceful meditation. This difference of opinion continued as many times, his brother disciples would argue with him on this and many times he retorted with bluntness also. But ultimately, they followed Vivekananda on account of the love they bore for him and that Ramakrishna had shown for him. He was the Master’s anointed. He asked them to preach Vedanta and do service to others in the whole of the country. First to go was monk Ramakrishna, who had never left the ashrama for a single day in twelve years. He went to Madras. Swami Akhandananda went to Murshidabad where famine was raging, and devoted himself to the relief of the victims.

On May 1, 1897, all Ramakrishna’s monastic and lay disciples were summoned to Calcutta to the home of Balaram. Vivekananda spoke to them on the need of an organization, a concept whose best utility he saw in the West. Being a sharp mind, he knew the shortcomings of democracy also. So he was clear that to begin with, it will not have Republican system. He himself was acting in the name and under the sign of Ramakrishna. On May 5, 1897, some resolutions were passed regarding the formation of Ramakrishna Mission, its aim and objectives, methods of action, activities and formation of Maths and Ashrams. Math was transferred from Alambazar to Belur Math with due ceremony on December 9, 1898 though occupied in January, 1899.

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151 For details see, Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda, Volume III, p. 306
152 Hansraj Rahbar, Vivekananda The Warrior Saint, p. 98. Before him, Swami Saradananda and Swami Abhedananda had been to the west at the call of Swami Vivekananda.
Shortly after Belur Math was established, Ramakrishna Mission Association ceased to function as an independent organization and Math authorities themselves carried on the philanthropic and charitable work originally undertaken by the Mission Association.\(^{153}\) He started two journals as chief organs of the Mission. An English Journal *Prabudha Bharata* (Awakened India) was started in Madras in July 1896. Later on, Advaita Ashrama was founded at Calcutta (now Kolkata) and is still being published from here. The second journal *Udbodhan*, a fortnightly in Bangla, was started on 14\(^{th}\)January, 1898. Later on it became monthly.

From May 1897 to the end of 1897, he had a tour of North India. He visited Lucknow, Bareily, Ambala, Amritsar, Dhamshala, Mussoree, Kashmir, Jammu, Lahore and Dehradun. At Dehradun, he organized a daily class of his disciples and companions. He also made a trip to Delhi, Alwar, Khetri, Kishengarh, Ajmer, Jodhpur, Indore and Khandwa.

Due to broken health, he proceeded to Darjeeling on 30 March 1898. But returned to Calcutta\(^{154}\) due to plague and was even ready to sell the Math for the plague victims Next year when again plague broke out, whole of Ramakrishna Mission was put into action. Swami Sadananda and Swami Shivananda and Sister Nivedita supervised the whole management. He himself came to live in a poor locality to inspire courage in the people and cheer up the workers. He called the meeting of students in April 1899 and reminded them of their duty in times of calamity. After the plague was over, he along with European disciples went to Kashmir and stayed with Mrs. Ole Bull at Anantnag. Accompanied by Sister Nivedita he made a pilgrimage to Amarnath Cave (August2, 1898). The Maharaja of Kashmir in token of his respect and reverence for Swami Ji, offered to establish a monastery and a Sanskrit College. But the proposal was vetoed by the British Government. On September 30, he visited temple of Kshir Bhavani\(^{155}\) and had a remarkable experience of getting free from the world spiritually.


\(^{154}\) Life of Swami Vivekananda by His Eastern and Western Disciples, Volume II, p.328.

\(^{155}\) Ibid., p. 361.
At the end of 1898, he decided to go to the west second time, and actually started on June 20, 1899, accompanied by Sister Nivedita and Swami Turiyananda and reached London on July 31. At this time he said, “The last time they saw a warrior. Now I want to show them a Brahmin”. And then proceeded to New York, California and then to San Francisco, lecturing all the way, sometimes to the audience of more than 2000. At San Francisco, a ‘centre of Vedanta teaching’ under the charge of Swami Turiyananda was established and at Oakland and Alameda two centres were opened.\textsuperscript{156} Vedanta society under Swami Abhedananda was already doing good work. He left for Paris on July 20, 1900 to participate in the Congress of the History of Religions organized as a part of Paris Exposition Universelle.\textsuperscript{157} He met Patrick Geddes,\textsuperscript{158} the biologist Jagdish Chandra Bose whom he admired and defended, Hiram Maxim,\textsuperscript{159} father Hyacinthe, Madam Layson, Jules Bois, Madame Emma Calve. After spending about three months in Paris he proceeded to Egypt, visiting Vienna, Constantinople and Athens.

Two things are remarkable during Swami Vivekananda’s second visit to the West. First, he was now gradually being more detached from the external world. Secondly, his views about American civilization changed to a great extent. During the first visit, he was inspired by the power, material, prosperity, organization and democracy of America. But now he was disgusted with the cruelty of wealthy businessmen, their greed, selfishness and struggle for privilege and power. America, he confided to Miss Macleod, would not be the instrument to harmonize East and West.\textsuperscript{160} He arrived at Belur on 9\textsuperscript{th} December, 1900\textsuperscript{161} without prior intimation.

When he reached Belur, he heard the news of death of his old and faithful friend Mr. Sevier (died on Oct 28, 1900),\textsuperscript{162} so he left for Mayavati to see Mrs. Sevier on 24\textsuperscript{th} Jan, 1901 and on his way he heard of death of

\textsuperscript{156} Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda, Volume IV, p. 218.
\textsuperscript{157} Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda, Volume VII, p. 379, 80, 396.
\textsuperscript{158} Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda, Volume IX, p. 157.
\textsuperscript{159} Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda, Volume VII, p. 149. He was very much interested in Swami Vivekananda.
\textsuperscript{160} Swami Nikhilananda, The Life of Swami Vivekananda, pp. 163-64.
\textsuperscript{161} Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda, Volume II, p. 558.
\textsuperscript{162} The Life of Swami Vivekananda by His Eastern and Western Disciples, Volume II, p. 570.
Maharaja of Khetri, one of his most devoted friends. On January 24, 1901, he came back to Belur. On March 18, he proceeded for a tour to East Bengal and visited Dacca and also went to the pilgrimages in Assam; as his widowed mother had expressed an earnest desire to visit them. He was suffering from both asthma and diabetes and his health was going from bad to worse, but his spirit was always vigorous. Still at the request of Japanese artist Okakura he went in his company to Bodh Gaya. From there to Varanasi for the last time and laid the foundation of what later became a great organization known as Ramakrishna Mission Home of Service. This tour during January – February 1902 was his last wandering. In February 1902, the festival of Ramakrishna brought together more than thirty thousand pilgrims to Belur. Swami Vivekananda having fever and swelling of the legs watched the celebration from window.

As his last time was approaching and he by dying, realized the vanity of pride, and discovered that true greatness lay in little things, the humble, heroic life”. As I grew older, he had said to Nivedita, ‘I find that I look more and more for greatness in little things … and he looked death in the face unafraid and was fully prepared as he had already discharged him of all the duties of the Math and Mission”. He said, “how often a man ruins his disciples by remaining always with them! When men are once trained, it is essential that their leader leaves them; for without his absence they cannot develop themselves”!

On the supreme day, Friday, 4th July, 1902, he was more joyous and energetic. In the morning, contrary to his habit of opening everything he shut the window and bolted the door and meditated alone from 8– 10 ‘o’ Clock. After wards he sang a beautiful hymn devoted to Kali. In the evening he had a walk with Premananda. He suggested opening a Vedic college because the

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163 Ibid., p. 579. On the morning of January 18, 1901, the Raja had fallen from 86 feet high tower of Shikandara, Emperor Akbar's mausoleum near Agra, and died instantly.
166 Romain Rolland, The Life of Vivekananda and The Universal Gospel, p. 137.
study of *Vedas* will help in eradicating superstitions. He addressed the monks too. At 7 ‘o’ clock, he went into the room and sat in meditation. Forty five minutes later he called in the monk to open all the windows and started taking rest on the bed and remained motionless…. At about 9.10 pm he turned around and gave a deep sigh. His eyes were fixed in the middle of his eyelids!…. There was a little blood in his nostrils, about his mouth and in his eyes…. Physicians were called who arrived after two hours and declared that death was due to heart failure and apoplexy. But the Monks kept the firm belief that great soul had left its bodily frame by an act of will’. 169 He had lived up to his words: “I shall not cross forty”.

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169 Romain Rolland, *The Life of Vivekananda and The Universal Gospel*, p. 139.