

## Swami Vivekananda – A Vedantic Scientist

“Brothers and sisters of America” These five words helped Swami Vivekanand open the doors of the Western world to the teachings of the Vedanta and yoga. Once labeled as the ‘modern day Shankaracharya’, Vivekanand became a major force in the revival of Hindu Dharma and helped it achieve an international status. With understanding of modern science and a solid base of Vedantic knowledge, Swami Ji was able to provide a new pedestal for Hindu Dharma through the entire world.

As a bright young student, Vivekanand studied all major Hindu texts, including the Vedas, from a very young age. He made an effort to study the scriptures not just to gain knowledge, but to understand and interpret them in modern context. While learning the shastras, he correlated and interpreted the Vedantic teachings in a scientific manner. During one of his speeches, he translated a Vedic mantra and described the creation as Shrishti, which is nothing but a projection of divinity. He quoted the Katha Upanishad and stated that ‘IT, the praana (energy), vibrates without vibrations.’”

Similar to the Hindu rishis, Swami Ji used a combination of Vedantic knowledge and scientific basis to understand and explain the concept of big bang theory. With the help of Vedic references, he determined that, "Two major elements of the creation, named energy and matter, can consolidate into one great energy called 'mahat' i.e. Cosmic Mind." He emphasized that ‘mahat’, or the cosmic mind (chetana), becomes the basis of all the Shrishti. Swami Vivekananda’s readings and translations helped determine that mahat is the bedrock over which the entire structure of the Universe resides. The purpose of Swami Ji's scientific explanations, with a base of Vedantic principles, was to spiritually elevate the common people.

Swami Vivekananda took charge to spread the influence of Vedantic philosophy and yoga in the Western World with a very practical approach. His Chicago address, along with his other speeches, consisted of 11 basic topics: Laws of creation, why should people suffer, mind and the matter, life after death, evolution of the soul, how to get rid of problems, nature of god, how to worship god, mukti, science and religion, and universal acceptance of all religions. These topics were so fundamental that people of all religions could relate to them, no matter their differences. These were also subjects that could be scientifically discussed and justified,

regardless of varying beliefs. In a matter of 20 minutes, Vivekanand gave an in-depth explanation of each subject, talked of the pros and cons of Hindu Dharma, and explained each topic in relation to the Vedas.

As a Vedantic activist, he once said “Truths confined in our scriptures, monasteries, and the ashrams must be brought out and scattered over the land so that these truths may run like fire all over the country.” Swami Ji firmly believed that by gaining a basic understanding of Vedas, science, and the structure of our society, every person has the ability to positively affect the world. He prescribed a simple formula to the youth, which holds true even today: “Uthishta Jagrat....” (उठो, जागो और तब तक नहीं रुको जब तक लक्ष्य ना प्राप्त हो जाये.) “Arise, awake, and stop not till the goal is reached.” In order to serve society, youth must have physical, intellectual, and spiritual strength. Swami Ji is the perfect inspiration for today’s generation, by emulating his thought processes and determination, we can use modern scientific advancements with the foundation of Vedas to sustain and move our Dharma and Sanskriti forward.

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