

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA

Genius par Excellence

By M J AUDI

In India to-day once anybody is elected or appointed to the office of the state or having a fat purse, he or she poses as paragon of virtue and wisdom. We are reminded of Dryden's lines:

A man so various that he seemed to be
Not one, but all mankind's epitome
In the course of one revolving moon
was chemist, fiddler, statesman and
buffoon.

Ancient India has to her credit truly great men and women. We do not see their likes in modern India. Doubtless, colonialism is one of the causes of this decline and fall. Between ancient and modern times, wave after wave of colonialism tossed India. Dazed by their colonial masters, Indians began aping them and in the process lost their moorings.

National degradation was complete during the last phase of colonialism. The British rule was hailed as a gift of God by many from Rammohan to Ranade. Tilak and Gandhi laboured to lift the nation from such a shameful situation. The experiment of *Swaraj* shows that they laboured in vain. The Indians continue to suffer from the disease of imitation. One son of modern India could not bear her degeneration. That was Vivekananda.

Vivekananda was born on 12 January 1863 and died on 4 July 1902. This short life shines by its total dedication to the cause. It was pure as crystal. It was not tainted by hypocrisy and selfishness, the twin defects of leadership in modern India.

Ramakrishna Paramahansa instinctively picked him to accomplish his mission. It was to restore India's lost glory and to free humanity from bondage. Those were the days when educated Indians were organising themselves to fight British colonialism. A few exceptions apart, many looked at it as an opportunity to promote their personal prospects and build family fortunes. In the Indian National Congress, they found a proper platform. The Congress enabled them to have the best of both worlds.

Vivekananda, on the contrary, practised what he preached. He was not like those who live luxuriously and preach austerity to others. He pondered over the causes which had thrown India from the heights of culture to the depths of degradation. For her sake, he became a sanyasi, a moving monk. At 29, Vivekananda concluded: "Patriotism means not a mere sentiment or even love of

the motherland, but a passion to serve our fellow-countrymen. If you want to find God, serve Man. To reach Narayana, you must serve the *Daridra-Narayanas*, the starving millions of India".

Vivekananda realised that people cannot advance spiritually without good food, decent clothes and clean shelter. A healthy body is a pre-requisite for a healthy soul. The poverty of people was the root cause of India's degradation and poverty was the product of exploitation.

One incident shaped his outlook towards the exploiters. At Varanasi, as the Swami was returning from the temple of Durga, he was pursued by the monkeys. Fearing the attack, he ran. A fellow sanyasi bade him to stop and "face the brutes". He stopped and the monkeys fled. Ever since, the Swami

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urged people to detect and face the brutes among mankind that are sweet in speech and fine in dress but more dangerous than the manancing monkeys because their living rests upon the exploitation of the weak and the innocent.

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dous. Their successors, Vivekananda asserted, were capable of commanding great heights provided they imbibed the values of their forefathers.

By integrity of character and purity of mind, he raised India's name and fame in the world. As a true spokesman of India, Vivekananda has no equal and no rival. In the United States, the Swami learnt that without credentials, none could be a delegate to the Parliament of Religions. By chance, he came to know Prof. Wright of Harvard University. In his letter of introduction to the chairman of the Parliament, Wright wrote: "Here is a man who is more learned than all our learned professors put together". The organisers felt that to ask for Vivekananda's credentials was as absurd as asking the sun its right to shine.

The Parliament of Religions opened on 11 September 1893 in Chicago. Swami's simple and sincere words at once conquered the audience. That was India's finest hour. Vivekananda spoke of a religion that was "vast as the sky and deep as the ocean". Hindu Philosophy is a cream of noble thoughts that inspire nobler deeds to realise the highest self. The Swami explained the difference between the Hindu religion and other religions.

Except the Hindu religion, every religion centres upon the life of its founder. If one claimed that he was the son of God, the other claimed that he was God's last messenger. When they died, their divine parentage was usurped by organized hierarchy. The prime preoccupation of many religions is the kingdom of earth and not the kingdom of God. No wonder, between them there is subtle but ferocious competition to win converts. Their final goal is the conquest of the world through conversions and conversions can take place only through force and fraud.

The Hindu religion is free from their vices and devices. It is repelled by the idea that there should be a broker between God and Man. Hindu Philosophy is not based upon passing personalities but upon eternal principles. Its final goal is spiritual emancipation of all. *Atmano mokshurtham Jagadhitaya ca* -- for one's own salvation and the service of humanity. Vivekananda's mission was to show the right way of life to the decadent world which was "lust and luxury as deities with money as its priest and fraud and force as its ceremonies".