

MY LIFE  
and  
MISSION

Year-1945

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SWAMI VIVEKANANDA

"I cannot touch these sayings of his (Swami Vivekananda), scattered as they are through the pages of books at thirty years' distance, without receiving a thrill through my body like an electric shock. And what shocks, what transports must have been produced when in burning words they issued from the lips of the hero !"

• —Romain Rolland

## MY LIFE AND MISSION

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BY  
SWAMI VIVEKANANDA

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ADVAITA ASHRAMA  
MAYAVATI, ALMORA, HIMALAYAS

Western College, Pune



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## PREFACE

This lecture was delivered by Swami Vivekananda to the Shakespeare Club of Pasadena, California, on January 27, 1900. It gives a vivid picture of how his great heart bled for the suffering millions of India, and also what was his plan for the uplift of his motherland to the position of her past glory. This was the only occasion when he talked before the public so poignantly about himself, his inner struggle and sorrow.

Very recently we got the report of the lecture through the courtesy of an American friend. While editing the manuscript, we have intentionally made as few changes as possible—in order to preserve the charm and force of the original speech.

ADVAITA ASHRAMA  
MAYAVATI, HIMALAYAS  
October 14, 1945

PUBLISHER





## MY LIFE AND MISSION

Now, ladies and gentlemen, the subject for this morning was to have been the Vedanta Philosophy. That subject itself is interesting, but rather dry and very vast.

Meanwhile, I have been asked by your president and some of the ladies and gentlemen here to tell them something about my work and what I have been doing. It may be interesting to some here, but not so much so to me. In fact, I don't quite know how to tell it to you, for this will have been the first time in my life that I have spoken on that subject.

Now, to understand what I have been trying to do, in my small way, I will take you, in imagination, to India. We have not time to go into all the details and all the ramifications of the subject ; nor is it possible for you to understand all the complexities in a foreign race, in this short time. Suffice it to say, I will at least try to give you a little picture of what India is like,



It is like a gigantic building all tumbled down, in ruins. At first sight, then, there is little hope. It is a nation gone and ruined. But you wait and study, then you see something beyond that. The truth is that so long as the principle, the ideal, of which the outer man is the expression, is not hurt or destroyed, the man lives, and there is hope for that man. If your coat is stolen twenty times, that is no reason why you should be destroyed. You can get a new coat. The coat is unessential. The fact that a rich man is robbed does not hurt the vitality of the man, does not mean death. The man will survive.

Standing on this principle, we look in and we see—what? India is no longer a political power; it is an enslaved race. Indians have no say, no voice in their own government; they are three hundred millions of slaves—nothing more! The average income of a man in India is two shillings a month. The common state of the vast mass of the people is starvation, so that, with the least decrease in income, millions die. A little famine

means death. So there, too, when I look on that side of India, I see ruin—hopeless ruin.

But we find that the Indian race never stood for wealth. Although they acquired immense wealth, perhaps more than any other nation ever acquired, yet the nation did not stand for wealth. It was a powerful race for ages, yet we find that that nation never stood for power, never went out of the country to conquer. (Quite content within their own boundaries, they never fought anybody. The Indian nation never stood for imperial glory. Wealth and power, then, were not the ideals of the race.)

What then? Whether they were wrong or right—that is not the question we discuss—that nation, among all the children of men, has believed, and believed intensely, that this life is not real. The real is God; and they must cling unto that God, through thick and thin. In the midst of their degradation, religion came first. The Hindu man drinks religiously, sleeps religiously, walks religiously, marries religiously, robs religiously.

Did you ever see such a country? If you



want to get up a gang of robbers, the leader will have to preach some sort of religion, then formulate some bogus metaphysics, and say that this method is the clearest and quickest way to get to God. Then he finds a following. Otherwise, not. That shows that the vitality of the race, the mission of the race is religion; and because that has not been touched, therefore that race lives.

✓ See Rome. Rome's mission was imperial power, expansion. And so soon as that was touched, Rome fell to pieces, passed out. The mission of Greece was intellect, as soon as that was touched, why, Greece passed out. So in modern times, Spain, and all these modern countries. Each nation has a mission for the world. So long as that mission is not hurt, that nation lives, despite every difficulty. But as soon as its mission is destroyed, the nation collapses.

Now, that vitality of India has not been touched yet. They have not given up that, and it is still strong—in spite of all their superstitions. Hideous superstitions are there, most revolting, some of them—never

mind. The national life-current is still there—the mission of the race.

The Indian nation never will be a powerful, conquering people—never. They will never be a great political power; that is not their business, that is not the note India has to play in the great harmony of nations. But what has she to play? God, and God alone. She clings unto that like grim death. Still there is hope there.

So then, after your analysis, you come to the conclusion that all these things, all this poverty and misery, are of no consequence—the man is living still, and therefore there is hope.

Well! You see religious activities going on all through the country. I don't recall a year that has not given birth to several new sects in India. The stronger the current, the more the whirlpools and eddies. Sects are not signs of decay, they are a sign of life. Let sects multiply, till the time comes when every one of us is a sect, each individual. We need not quarrel about that.

Now, take your country. (I don't mean



any criticism). Here the social laws, the political formation, everything, is made to facilitate man's journey in this life. He may live very happily so long as he is on this earth. Look at your streets—how clean! Your beautiful cities! And in how many ways a man can make money! How many channels to get enjoyment in this life! But, if a man here should say, "Now look here, I shall sit down under this tree and meditate; I don't want to work," why, he would have to go to jail. See? There would be no chance for him at all. None. A man can live in this society only if he falls in line. He has to join in this rush for the enjoyment of good in this life, or he dies.

Now let us go back to India. There, if a man says, "I shall go and sit on the top of that mountain and look at the tip of my nose all the rest of my days," everybody says, "Go, and God-speed to you!" He need not speak a word. Somebody brings him a little cloth, and he is all right. But if a man says, "Behold, I am going to enjoy a little of this life," every door is closed to him.

I say that the ideas of both countries are unjust. I see no reason why a man here should not sit down and look at the tip of his nose if he likes. Why should everybody here do just what the majority here does? I see no reason.

Nor why, in India, a man should not have the goods of this life and make money. But you see how those vast millions are forced to accept the opposite point of view by tyranny. This is the tyranny of the sages. This is the tyranny of the great, tyranny of the spiritual, tyranny of the intellectual, tyranny of the wise. And the tyranny of the wise, mind you, is much more powerful than the tyranny of the ignorant. The wise, the intellectual, when they take to forcing their opinions upon others, know a hundred thousand ways to make bonds and barriers which it is not in the power of the ignorant to break.

Now, I say that this thing has got to stop. There is no use in sacrificing millions and millions of people to produce one spiritual giant. If it is possible to make a society



where the spiritual giant will be produced and all the rest of the people will be happy as well, that is good ; but if the millions have to be ground down, that is unjust. Better that the one great man should suffer for the salvation of the world.

In every nation you will have to work through their methods. To every man you will have to speak in his own language. Now, in England or in America, if you want to preach religion to them, you will have to work through political methods—make organisations, societies, with voting, balloting, a president, and so on, because that is the language, the method of the Western race. On the other hand, if you want to speak of politics in India, you must speak through the language of religion. You will have to tell them something like this: "The man who cleans his house every morning will acquire such and such an amount of merit, he will go to heaven, or he comes to God." Unless you put it that way, they won't listen to you. It is a question of language. The thing done is the same. But with every race,

you will have to speak their language, in order to reach their hearts. And that is quite just. We need not fret about that.

In the Order to which I belong we are called Sannyasins. The word means "a man who has renounced." This is a very, very, very ancient Order. Even Buddha, who was 560 years before Christ, belonged to that Order. He was one of the reformers of his Order. That was all. So ancient! You find it mentioned away back in the Vedas, the oldest book in the world. In old India there was the regulation that every man and woman, towards the end of their lives, must get out of social life altogether and think of nothing except God and their own salvation. This was to get ready for the great event—death. So old people used to become Sannyasins in those early days. Later on, young people began to give up the world. And young people are active. They could not sit down under a tree and think all the time of their own death, so they went about preaching and starting sects, and so on. Thus, Buddha, being young, started that



great reform. Had he been an old man, he would have looked at the tip of his nose and died quietly.

The Order is not a church and the people who join the Order are not priests. There is an absolute difference between the priests and the Sannyasins. In India, priesthood, like every other business in a social life, is a hereditary profession. A priest's son will become a priest, just as a carpenter's son will be a carpenter, or a blacksmith's son a blacksmith. The priest must always be married. The Hindu does not think a man is complete unless he has a wife. An unmarried man has no right to perform religious ceremonies.

The Sannyasins don't possess property, and they do not marry. Beyond that there is no organisation. The only bond that is there is the bond between the teacher and the taught—and that is peculiar to India. The teacher is not a man who comes just to teach me and I pay him so much and there it ends. In India it is really like an adoption. The teacher is more than my own

father, and I am truly his child, his son in every respect. I owe him obedience and reverence, first, before my own father, even ; because, they say, the father gave me this body, but *he* showed me the way to salvation, he is greater than father. And we carry this love, this respect for our teacher all our lives. And that is the only organisation that exists. I adopt my disciples. Sometimes the teacher will be a young man and the disciple a very old man. But never mind, he is the son and he calls me "Father" and I have to address him as my son, my daughter, and so on.

Now, I happened to get an old man to teach me, and he was very peculiar. He did not go much for intellectual scholarship, scarcely studied books ; but when he was a boy he was seized with the tremendous idea of getting truth direct. First he tried by studying his own religion. Then he got the idea that he must get the truth of other religions ; and with that idea he joined all the sects, one after another. For the time being, he did exactly what they told him to do—lived with the devotees of these different



sects in turn, until interpenetrated with the particular ideal of that sect. After a few years he would go to another sect. When he had gone through with all that, he came to the conclusion that they were all good. He had no criticism to offer to any one; they are all so many paths leading to the same goal. And then he said: "That is a glorious thing, that there should be so many paths, because if there were only one path, perhaps it would suit only an individual man. The more the number of paths, the more the chance for every one of us to know the truth. If I cannot be taught in one language, I will try another, and so on." Thus his benediction was for every religion.

Now, all the ideas that I preach are only an attempt to echo his ideas. Nothing is mine originally except the wicked ones, everything I say which is false and wicked. But every word that I have ever uttered which is true and good, is simply an attempt to echo his voice. Read his life by Prof. Max Müller.

Well, there at his feet I conceived these

ideas. There, with some other young men. I was just a boy. I went there when I was about sixteen. Some of the other boys were still younger, some a little older—about a dozen or more. And together we conceived that this ideal had to be spread. And not only spread, but made practical. That is to say, we must show the spirituality of the Hindus, the mercifulness of the Buddhists, the activity of the Christians, the brotherhood of the Mohammedans, by our practical lives. "We shall start a universal religion now and here," we said. "We will not wait."

Our teacher was an old man who would never touch a coin with his hands. He took just the little food offered, just so many yards of cotton cloth, no more. He could never be induced to take any other gift. With all these marvellous ideas, he was strict, because that made him free. The monk in India is the friend of the prince to-day, dines with him; and to-morrow he is with the beggar, sleeps under a tree. He must come into contact with everyone, must always



move about. As the saying is, "The rolling stone gathers no moss." The last fourteen years of my life, I have never been for three months at a time in any one place—continually rolling. So do we all.

Now, this handful of boys got hold of these ideas, and all the practical results that sprang out of these ideas. Universal religion, great sympathy for the poor, and all that, are very good in theory, but one must practise.

Then came the sad day when our old teacher died. We nursed him the best we could. 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 vast, big ideas, saying they are determined to work these ideas out in life. Why, everybody laughed. From laughter, it became serious; it became persecution. Why, the parents of the boys came to feel like spanking every one of us. And the more we were derided, the more determined we became.

Then came a terrible time—for me personally and for all the other boys as well. But to me came such misfortune! On the one side was my mother, my brothers. My father died at that time, and we were left poor. Oh, very poor, almost starving all the time. I was the only hope of the family, the only one who could do anything to help them. I had to stand between my two worlds. On the one hand, I would have to see my mother and brothers starve unto death; on the other, I had believed that this man's ideas were for the good of India and the world, and had to be preached and worked out. And so the fight went on in my mind for days and months. Sometimes I would pray for five or six days and nights together, without stopping. Oh, the agony of those days! I was living in hell! The natural affections of my boy's heart drawing me to my family—I could not bear to see those who were the nearest and dearest to me suffering. On the other hand, nobody to sympathise with me. Who would sympathise with the imaginations of a boy? Imaginations that caused so much



suffering to others! Who would sympathise with me? None—except one.

That one's sympathy brought blessing and hope. She was a woman. Our teacher, this great monk, was married when he was a boy, a mere child. When he became a young man, and all this religious zeal was upon him, he came to see his wife. Although they had been married as children, they had not seen very much of each other until they were grown up. Then he came to his wife and said: "Behold, I am your husband; you have a right to this body. But I cannot live the sex life, although I have married you. I leave it to your judgment." And she wept and said: "God speed you! The Lord bless you! Am I the woman to degrade you? If I can, I will help you. Go on in your work."

That was the woman. The husband went on and became a monk, in his own way; and from a distance the wife went on helping as much as she could. And later, when the man had become a great spiritual giant, she came—really, she was the first disciple—and she spent the rest of her life taking care of the

body of this man. He never knew whether he was living or dying, or anything. Sometimes, when talking, he would get so excited that if he sat on live charcoals he did not know it. Live charcoals! Forgetting all about his body, all the time.

Well, that lady, his wife, was the only one who sympathised with the idea of those boys. But she was powerless. She was poorer than we were. Never mind! We plunged into the breach. I believed, as I was living, that these ideas were going to rationalise India and bring better days to many lands and foreign races. With that belief, came the realisation that it is better that a few persons suffer than that such ideas should die out of the world. What if a mother or two brothers die? It is a sacrifice. Let it be done. No great thing can be done without sacrifice. The heart must be plucked out and the bleeding heart placed upon the altar. Then great things are done. Is there any other way? None have found it. I appeal to each one of you, to those who have accomplished any great thing. Oh, how much it has cost! What



agony! What torture! What terrible suffering is behind every deed of success, in every life. You know that, all of you.

And thus we went on, that band of boys. The only thing we got from those around us was a kick and a curse—that was all. Of course, we had to beg from door to door for our food—got hips and haws—the refuse of everything. A piece of bread here and there. We got hold of a broken-down old house, with hissing cobras living underneath; and, because that was the cheapest, we went into that house and lived there.

Thus we went on for some years, in the meanwhile making excursions all over India, trying to bring about the idea gradually. Ten years were spent without a ray of light! Ten more years! A thousand times despondency came; but there was one thing always to keep us hopeful—the tremendous faithfulness to each other, the tremendous love between us. I have got a hundred men and women around me; if I become the devil himself to-morrow, they will say: "Here we are still! We'll never give you up!" That

is a great blessing. (In happiness, in misery, in famine, in pain, in the grave, in heaven or in hell, he who never gives me up is my friend.) Is such friendship a joke? A man may have salvation through such friendship. That brings salvation, if we can love like that. If we have that faithfulness, why, there is the essence of all concentration. You need not worship any gods in the world if you have that faith, that strength, that love. And that was there with us all throughout that hard time. That was there. That made us go from the Himalayas to Cape Comorin, from the Indus to Brahmaputra.

This band of boys began to travel about. Gradually we began to draw attention: ninety per cent was antagonism, very little of it was helpful. For we had one fault: we were boys—in poverty and with all the roughness of boys. He who has to make his own way in life is a bit rough, he has not much time to be smooth and suave and polite—"my lady and my gentleman," and all that. You have seen that in life, always. He is a rough



diamond, he has not much polish, he is a jewel in an indifferent casket.

And there we were. "No compromise!" was the watchword. "This is the ideal and this has got to be carried out. If we meet the king, though we die, we must give him a bit of our minds; if the peasant, the same." Naturally, we met with antagonism.

But, mind you, this is life's experience: if you really want the good of others, the whole universe may stand against you and cannot hurt you. It must crumble before your power of the Lord Himself in you, if you are sincere and really unselfish. And those boys were that. They came as children, pure and fresh from the hands of nature. Said our Master: "I want to offer at the altar of the Lord only those flowers that have not even been smelled, fruits that have not been touched with the fingers." The words of the great man sustained us all. For he saw through the future life of those boys that he collected from the streets of Calcutta, so to say. People used to laugh at him when he said: "You will see—this boy, that boy,

what he becomes." His faith was unalterable. "Mother showed it to me. I may be weak, but when She says this is so—She can never make mistakes—it must be so."

So things went on and on for ten years without any light, but with my health breaking all the time. It tells on the body in the long run: sometimes one meal at nine in the evening, another time a meal at eight in the morning, another after two days, another after three days—and always the poorest and roughest 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 snow peaks, sometimes ten miles of hard mountain climbing, just to get a meal. They eat unleavened bread in India, and sometimes they have it stored away for twenty or 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 for one meal. And then the bread was so hard, it made my mouth bleed to eat it. Literally, you can break your teeth on that bread.



Then I would put it in a pot and pour over it water from the river. For months and months I existed that way—of course it was telling on the health.

Then I thought, I have tried India; it is time for me to try another country. At that time your Parliament of Religions was to be held, and someone was to be sent from India. I was just a vagabond, but I said: "If you send me, I am going. I have not much to lose, and I don't care if I lose that." It was very difficult to find the money, but after a long struggle they got together just enough to pay for my passage—and I came. Came one or two months earlier, so that I found myself drifting about in the streets here, without knowing anybody.

But finally the Parliament of Religions opened and I met kind friends, who helped me right along. I worked a little, collected funds, started two papers, and so on. After that I went over to England and worked there. At the same time I carried on the work for India in America, too.

My plan for India, as it has been deve-

loped and centralised, is this: I have told you of our lives as monks there, how we go from door to door, so that religion is brought to everybody without charge, except, perhaps, a broken piece of bread. That is why you see the lowest of the low in India holding the most exalted religious ideas. It is all through the work of these monks. But ask a man, "Who are the English?"—he does not know. He says perhaps, "They are the children of those giants they speak of in those books, are they not?" "Who governs you?" "We don't know." "What is the government?" They don't know. But they know philosophy. It is a practical want of intellectual education about life on this earth they suffer from. These millions and millions of people are ready for life beyond this world—is not that enough for them? Certainly not. They must have a better piece of bread and a better piece of rag on their bodies. The great question is, how to get that better bread and better rag for these sunken millions.

First, I must tell you, there is great hope for them, because, you see, they are the



gentlest people on earth. Not that they are timid. When they want to fight, they fight like demons. The best soldiers the English have are recruited from the peasantry of India. Death is a thing of no importance to them. Their attitude is, "Twenty times I have died before, and I shall die many times after this. What of that?" They never turn back. They are not given to much emotion, but they make very good fighters.

Their instinct, however, is to plough. If you rob them, murder them, tax them, do anything to them, they will be quiet and gentle, so long as you leave them free to practise their religion. They never interfere with the religion of others. "Leave us liberty to worship our gods, and take everything else!" That is their attitude. When the English touch them there, trouble starts. That was the real cause of the '57 mutiny—they would not bear religious repression. The great Mohammedan governments were simply blown up because they touched the Indians' religion.

But aside from that, they are very peace-

ful, very quiet, very gentle, and, above all, not given to vice. The absence of any strong drink, oh, it makes them infinitely superior to the mobs of any other country. You cannot compare the decency of life among the poor in India with life in the slums here. A slum means poverty, but poverty does not mean sin, indecency, and vice in India. In other countries, the opportunities are such that only the indecent and the lazy need be poor. There is no reason for poverty unless one is a fool or a blackguard—the sort who want city life and all its luxuries. They won't go into the country. They say, "We are here with all the fun, and you must give us bread." But that is not the case in India, where the poor fellows work hard from morning to sunset, and somebody else takes the bread out of their hands, and their children go hungry. Notwithstanding the millions of tons of wheat raised in India, scarcely a grain passes the mouth of a peasant. He lives upon the poorest corn, which you would not feed to your canary birds.

Now there is no reason why they should



suffer such distress—these people; oh, so pure and good! We hear so much talk about the sunken millions, and the degraded women of India—but none come to our help. What do they say? They say: “You can only be helped, you can only be good by ceasing to be what you are. It is useless to help Hindus.” These people do not know the history of races. There will be no more India if they change their religion and their institutions, because that is the vitality of that race. It will disappear so, really, you will have nobody to help.

Then there is the other great point to learn: that you can never help, really. What can we do for each other? You are growing in your own life, I am growing in my own. It is possible that I can give you a push in your life, knowing that, in the long run, all roads lead to Rome. It is a steady growth. No national civilisation is perfect, yet. Give that civilisation a push, and it will arrive at its own goal: don't strive to change it. Take away a nation's institutions, customs and

manners, and what will be left? They hold the nation together.

But here comes the very learned foreign man, and he says, “Look here; you give up all those institutions and customs of thousands of years, and take my tom-fool tin pot and be happy.” This is all nonsense.

We will have to help each other, but we have to go one step farther: the first thing is to become unselfish in help. “If you do just what I tell you to do, I will help you. Otherwise not.” Is that help?

And so, if the Hindus want to help you spiritually, there will be no question of limitations: perfect unselfishness. I give, and there it ends. It is gone from me. My mind, my powers, my everything that I have to give, is given: given with the idea to give, and no more. I have seen many times people who have robbed half the world, and they gave \$20,000 “to convert the heathen.” What for? For the benefit of the heathen, or for their own souls? Just think of that.

And the Nemesis of crime is working. We men try to hoodwink our own eyes. But



inside the heart, He has remained, the real Self. He never forgets. We can never delude Him. His eyes will never be hoodwinked. Whenever there is any impulse of real charity, it tells, though it be at the end of a thousand years. Obstructed, it yet awakens, once more to burst like a thunderbolt. And every impulse where the motive is selfish, self-seeking—though it may be launched forth with all the newspapers blazoning, all the mobs standing and cheering—it fails to reach the mark.

I am not taking pride in this. But, mark you, I have told the story of that group of boys. To-day there is not a village, not a man, not a woman in India that does not know their work and bless them. There is not a famine in the land where these boys do not plunge in and try to work and rescue as many as they can. And that strikes to the heart. The people come to know it. So help whenever you can, but mind what your motive is. If it is selfish, it will neither benefit those you help, nor yourself. If it is unselfish, it will bring blessings upon them to

whom it is given, and infinite blessings upon you, sure as you are living. The Lord can never be hoodwinked. The law of Karma can never be hoodwinked.

Well then, my plans are, therefore, to reach these masses of India. Suppose you start schools all over India for the poor, still you cannot educate them. How can you? The boy of four years would better go to the plough or to work, than to your school. He cannot go to your school. It is impossible. Self-preservation is the first instinct. But if the mountain does not go to Mohammed, then Mohammed can come to the mountain. Why not education go from door to door, say I. If a ploughman's boy cannot come to education, why not meet him at the plough, at the factory, just wherever he is? Go along with him, like his shadow. But there are these hundreds and thousands of monks, educating the people on the spiritual plane; why not let these men do the same work on the intellectual plane? Why should they not talk to the masses a little about history—about many things? The



ears are the best educators. The best principles in our lives were those which we heard from our mothers through our ears. Books came much later. Book-learning is nothing. Through the ears we get the best formative principles. Then, as they get more and more interested, they may come to your books too. First, let it roll on and on—that is my idea.

Well, I must tell you that I am not a very great believer in monastic systems. They have great merits, and also great defects. There should be a perfect balance between the monastics and the householders. But monasticism has absorbed all the power in India. We represent the greatest power. The monk is greater than the prince. There is no reigning sovereign in India who dares to sit down when the "yellow-cloth" is there. He gives up his seat and stands. Now, that is bad, so much power, even in the hands of good men—although these monastics have been the bulwark of the people. They stand between the priestcraft and knowledge. They are the centres of

knowledge and reform. They are just what the prophets were among the Jews. The prophets were always preaching against the priests, trying to throw out superstitions. So are they in India. But all the same so much power is not good there; better methods should be worked out. But you can only work in the line of least resistance. The whole national soul there is upon monasticism. You go to India and preach any religion to a householder. The Hindu people will turn back and go out. If you have given up the world, however, they say: "He is good, he has given up the world. He is a sincere man, he wants to do what he preaches." What I mean to say is this, that it represents a tremendous power. What we can do is just to transform it, give it another form. This tremendous power in the hands of the roving Sannyasins of India has got to be transformed, and it will raise the masses up.

Now, you see, we have brought the plan down nicely on paper; but I have taken it, at the same time, from the regions of ideal-



ism. So far the plan was loose and idealistic. As years went on, it became more and more condensed and accurate; I began to see by actual working its defects, and all that.

What did I discover in its working on the material plane? First, there must be centres, to educate these monks in the method of education. For instance, I send one of my men and he goes about with a camera: he has to be taught in those things himself. In India, you will find every man is quite illiterate and that teaching requires tremendous centres. And what does all that mean? Money. From the idealistic plane you come to everyday work. Well? I have worked hard, four years in your country, and two in England. And I am very thankful that some friends came to the rescue. One, who is here to-day with you, is amongst them. There are American friends and English friends who went over with me to India, and there has been a very rude beginning. Some English people came and joined the orders. One poor man worked hard and died in India. There are an Englishman and an

Englishwoman who have retired; they have some means of their own, and they have started a centre in the Himalayas, educating the children. I have given them one of the papers I have started—a copy you will find there on the table—*The Awakened India*. And there they are instructing and working among the people. I have another centre in Calcutta. Of course, all great movements must proceed from the capital. For what is a capital? It is the heart of a nation. All the blood comes into the heart and thence it is distributed; so all the wealth, all the ideas, all the education, all spirituality will converge towards the capital, and spread from it.

I am glad to tell you I have made a rude beginning. But the same work I want to do, on parallel lines, for women. And my principle is: each one helps himself. My help is from a distance. There are Indian women, English women, and I hope American women will come to take up the task. As soon as they have begun, I wash my hands of it. No man shall dictate to a woman; nor



a woman to a man. Each one is independent. What bondage there may be is only that of love. Women will work out their own destinies—much better, too, than men can ever do for them. (All the mischief to women has come because men undertook to shape the destiny of women.) And I don't want to start with any initial mistake. One little mistake made then will go on multiplying, and if you succeed, in the long run that mistake will have assumed gigantic proportions and become hard to correct. So, if I made this mistake of employing men to work out this women's part of the work, why, women will never get rid of that—it will have become a custom. But I have got an opportunity. I told you of the lady who was my Master's wife. We have all great respect for her. She never dictates to us. So it is quite safe.

That part has to be accomplished.

## SOME SAYINGS OF SWAMI ✓

### VIVEKANANDA

1. My ideal can be expressed in a few words: to preach unto men their divinity and how to make It manifest in every movement of life.
2. This world is in chains of superstition. I pity the oppressed, whether men or women, and I pity the oppressor more.
3. The religions of the world have become lifeless mockeries. What the world wants is character. The world is in need of those whose life is one burning love, selfless. That love will make every word tell like a thunderbolt.
4. The old religions said that he was an atheist who did not believe in God. The new religion says that he is an atheist who does not believe in himself.
5. Yes, the older I grow, the more everything seems to me to lie in manliness. This is my new gospel. Do even evil



# SOME SAYINGS

like a man! Be wicked, if you must, on a great scale!

- ✓ 6. First bread and then religion.
7. So long as even a single dog in my country is without food, my whole religion will be to feed it.
- ✓ 8. If you want to find God, serve man!
- ✓ 9. May I be born again and again, and suffer thousands of miseries, so that I may worship the only God that exists, the only God I believe in, the sum total of all souls.
10. The West is groaning under the tyranny of the Shylocks, and the East is groaning under the tyranny of the Priests.
11. The whole of Western civilisation will crumble to pieces in the next fifty years if there is no spiritual foundation. It is hopeless and perfectly useless to attempt to govern mankind with the sword.
12. Understand that India is still living because she has her own quota yet to give to the general store of the world's civilisation.

# SOME SAYINGS

13. Remember! the message of India is always *'Not the soul for nature but nature for the soul!'*
14. The Lord of one religion is the Lord of all religions.
15. If one religion be true, then all the others also must be true. Thus the Hindu faith is yours as much as mine.
16. Keep the motto before you, "Elevation of the masses without injuring the religion."
17. With five hundred men the conquest of India might take fifty years: with as many women, not more than a few weeks.
18. Every soul is a sun covered with clouds of ignorance; the difference between soul and soul is due to the difference in density of these layers of clouds.
19. Man, the infinite dreamer, dreaming finite dreams!
20. First let us be gods, and then help others to be gods. "Be and make" let this be our motto.



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