

UNIT – III

RELIGIOUS THINKERS

DEBENDRANATH TAGORE

Debendranath Tagore (May 15, 1817 - January 19, 1905) was an [Indian](#) Bengali [philosopher](#) and [Hindu](#) reformer from current-day West Bengal, in India. His son, Rabindranath Tagore was a [Nobel Prize](#) winning poet. Debendranath was himself a leading contributor to the Bengali renaissance. A [philanthropist](#) and social activist, his interest in [democracy](#) and in [education](#) helped to produce a generation of Indians from whom the leaders of the nation emerged in its independence struggle against the [British Empire](#). His concern to integrate Indian and Western ideas and to be guided by reason had a major impact on the public consciousness. The desire to modernize and to industrialize but not to become a cultural replica of the West can be traced back to Debendranath, and to his influential family.



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Biography

He was born in [Calcutta, India](#). His father, Dwarkanath Tagore, was a wealthy landowner and successful [entrepreneur](#) with interests in shipping and banking, among other ventures. Dwarkanath was a co-founder, with [Ram Mohan Roy](#) of the reformist Brahma Samaj. He had also financed such projects as the Calcutta Medical College. From the age of nine, Debendranath

received a classical Brahmin education which included the study of Sanskrit as well as Persian but he also studied English and Western [philosophy](#). In 1827 he enrolled in the Anglo-Hindu College in Calcutta, which Roy had founded.

After graduating, he started managing the family estate but his interest in religion and philosophy soon began to take up most of his time. His grandmother's death in 1838 further stimulated this interest. In 1839 he founded a Society to promote discussion of [religion](#) and philosophy, then in 1842 he succeeded to the leadership of the Brahmo Samaj. Founded by Ram Mohun Roy and his father in 1828, the Samaj promoted worship of one [God](#), opposed image-veneration, such practices as Sati (widow suicide on their husband's funeral pyre), repudiated any need for a mediator (such as an [Avatar](#)) between people and God and also the authority of the Vedas. The Samaj stressed equality of all before God, regardless of [gender](#), race or class.

Debendranath and the Samaj

Debendranath embraced all of the above but wanted to locate the Samaj more firmly within Hindu [culture](#). Initially, he revived interest in the Vedas, starting a Bengali translation of the Rig Veda. He also began to work on a liturgy for the movement's worship, which was introduced in 1845. He composed many devotional songs. He replaced the pujas with the Magh Festival, in which images played no role. His use of the Vedas resulted in a dispute with Keshub Chunder Sen, a leading member of the Samaj and a close friend of Debendranath. Sen was attracted to Christianity and wanted the movement to be more eclectic. Although by 1850, Debendranath had ceased to use the Vedas, suggesting that no scripture, however ancient, is binding for all time in 1866 Sen led a break-away group, which took the name of the Brahmo Samaj of [India](#). The original society became known as the Adi (original) Samaj. In 1878, Sen started his Church of the New Dispensation. He believed in a universal religion which in different contexts would have a

different cultural color. In India, that color would be Hindu. In 1867, Debendranath was awarded the title of "Maharishi" by the Samaj.

Social Activism

Debendranath campaigned to reduce the tax burden on the poor. In 1859 he founded a Brahmo school. He also co-founded a charitable institution. From 1851, as Secretary of the British Indian Association, he also campaigned for India's political autonomy. The Association aimed to represent Indian interests to the British government. He also campaigned for universal primary [education](#) in [India](#). Debendranath was a supporter of [democracy](#) and was against entrenched, traditional authority in both the [religious](#) and the political spheres.

Teaching

Debendranath stressed reason and discrimination. He wanted to combine the best of what he found in the West with the best of what was found in Indian [culture](#). He was deeply spiritual but until his retirement from business affairs in 1867 he continued to be involved in worldly matters. He did not renounce his material possessions as some Hindu traditions prescribe but continued to enjoy them in a spirit of detachment. He was praised by no less a spiritual master than [Sri Ramakrishna](#) who compared him to the Puranic king Janaka, father of [Sita](#), the heroine of the epic [Ramayana](#), extolled in the scriptures as an ideal man who perfectly synthesized material and spiritual accomplishments.

What is remarkable in this achievement is that he excelled his father, who received the title Prince from the British colonial government owing to his large fortune and yet retained his dignity before them, famously wearing an all-white outfit bereft of all jewelry in a party attended by the Queen, with only his shoes studded with two diamonds bettering the Koh-i-noor in the Queen's crown. This was a gesture symbolizing the mastery of

wealth, as opposed to its slavish pursuit. In 1867, Debendranath retired to the hermitage he had established in 1863, later made world-famous as Santi Niketan by his son, Rabindranath. Debendranath wrote several books. His Bengali commentary on scripture, the *Brahmo-Dharma* (1854) was widely acclaimed.

Family

Debendranath played no small role in the [education](#) of his sons. Dwijendranath (1840-1926) was a great scholar, poet and [music](#) composer. He initiated shorthand and musical notations in Bengali. He wrote extensively and translated Kalidas's Meghdoot into Bengali. Satyendranath (1842-1923) was the first Indian to join the Indian Civil Service. At the same time he was a great scholar with a large reservoir of creative talents. Jyotirindranath (1849-1925) was a scholar, artist, music composer and theatre personality. [Rabindranath](#) (1861-1941) was his youngest son. His other sons Hemendranath (1844-1884), Birendranath (1845-1915) and Somendranath did not achieve that great fame but everybody was filled with creative talents. His daughters were Soudamini, Sukumari, Saratkumari, Swarnakumari (1855-1932) and Barnakumari. Soudamini was one of the first students of Bethune School and a gifted writer. Swarnakumari was a gifted writer, editor, song-composer, and social worker. All of them were famous for their beauty and education.

Legacy

His part in creating the legacy of Thakurbari—the House of Tagore—in the cultural heritage of Bengal, centered in [Kolkata](#), was not negligible. It was largely through the influence of the Tagore family, following that of the writer Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, that Bengal took a leading role on the cultural front as well as on the nationalistic one, in the Renaissance in India during the nineteenth century.

The house of the Tagore family in Jorasanko, popular as Jorasanko Thakur Bari in North-western [Kolkata](#), was later converted into a campus of the Rabindra Bharati University, eponymously named after Rabindranath.

SWAMI DAYANANDA SARASWATI

Swami Dayananda Saraswati, the founder of the Arya Samaj, was one of the makers of modern India. With an indigenous orientation, he wanted to bring a new social, religious, economic and political order in India.

Taking inspiration from Veda, he criticized evil practices like idolatry, caste system, untouchability etc. as prevailed in the then Indian society.

Early Life:

Swami Dayananda Saraswati, known as Mulshankar in the childhood, was born in 1824 in a small town of Tankara belonging to Kathiawar of Gujarat in a conservative Brahmin family.

Taking early education from his family, he subsequently emerged as a great Vedic scholar. He renounced the worldly life and moved from one part of

Finally, he met Swami Vrajanand at Mathura and became his disciple. After completing his education, he went on with the mission of spreading true Hindu religion and culture all over India. With this purpose he established the **Arya Samaj** at Bombay on 10th April, 1875. A number of twenty eight rules were framed which were approved by the members present in the meeting. As a writer of eminence, Dayananda wrote books like 'Satyarth Prakash', Vedanga Prakash, 'Ratnamala' 'Sankarvidhi', 'Bharatinivarna' etc. He travelled throughout the country to propagate his views and established branches of Arya Samaj at different places.

Principles of Arya Samaj:

1. Acceptance of the Vedas as the only source of truth.
2. Opposition to idol worship.
3. Opposition to caste discrimination.
4. Opposition to the **theory of God-incarnation** and religious pilgrimages.
5. Recitation of the mantras of the Vedas and performance of 'Havan' and 'Yajna'.
6. Faith in female education.
7. Opposition to child-marriage and polygamy.
8. Propagation of Hindi and Sanskrit languages.

Reforms:

Swami Dayanada, through the Arya Samaj, tried to reform the Hindu society and religion.

Religious Reforms:

On the basis of the above mentioned principles, the Arya Samaj emphasized on the liberation of the Hindu society. Dayananda claimed that only Vedas were the repositories of true knowledge and the only religion was the religion of the Vedas. The principles of economics, politics, social sciences, humanities can be found in the Vedas. His clarion call "Go Back to the Vedas" created consciousness among the people. He rejected other scriptures and 'Puranas'. He strongly opposed idol worship, ritualism, practice of animal-sacrifice, the concept of polytheism, the idea of heaven and hell and fatalism. The Arya Samaj simplified Hinduism and made Hindus conscious of their glorious heritage and superior value of **Vedic knowledge**. The Hindus should not look towards Christianity, Islam or western culture for guidance.

Emphasizing on the superiority of Hinduism, the Arya Samaj could challenge the Islamic and Christian propaganda against it. Dayananda started

“Shuddhi Movement” as a process of converting the people of other religions to Hinduism and also to reconvert those who have changed from Hinduism to other religions. This movement prevented low caste Hindus from converting to Christianity or Islam. The Shuddhi Movement challenged the Christian missionaries who tried to convert the uneducated, poor and depressed classes of the Hindus.

Social Reforms:

With its opposition to various social evils, the Arya Samaj rendered valuable services to Hindu society. He opposed the caste system and the superiority of the Brahmins in the society. He also challenged the monopoly of the Brahmins to read the Vedas and supported the right of every individual irrespective of caste, creed and colour to study the Vedas. Dayananda also opposed the practice of untouchability.

He protested against injustice to women and worked for the education of the females. He vehemently opposed child-marriages, polygamy, “**Purdah**” and the practice of “Sati” etc. Citing the teachings of the Vedas, he proved that women should have equal rights with men. Inter-caste marriages and interdining were practised by the members of the Arya Samaj.

The Arya Samaj established a number of educational institutions like Gurukuls, Kanya Gurukuls, D.A.V. Schools and Colleges for the education of both males and females. These educational institutions protected the Hindu religion and society and also promoted the growth of knowledge and education in modern scientific line.

Though Arya Samaj had not actively participated in politics yet it indirectly helped in the promotion of national consciousness. Dayananda was the first to advocate “Swadeshi” to discard foreign goods. By recognising Hindi as the national language, he promoted the growth of an all-India national spirit.

He also used the term 'Swaraj' to be established on the Vedic principles before any Indian national leader thought of it. The Arya Samaj, thus became a fanatic supporter of Hinduism and became an organ of militant Hinduism. Because of such militancy, subsequently the growth of extremism within the fold of the All India National Congress became possible.

The Arya Samaj played a significant role in bringing the socio-religious changes in pre-independent India. Though Dayananda was criticized as a conservative and sectarian activist who claimed the superiority of Hinduism over and above of all other religions, yet he was one of the makers of modern India. Truly speaking, he was not opposed to Christianity or Islam, rather the evil practices of all religions and their religious imperialism.

RAMAKRISHNA PARAMHANSA

Date of Birth: February 18, 1836

Place of Birth: Kamarpukur village, Hoogly District, Bengal Presidency

Parents: Khudiram Chattopadhyay (Father) and Chandramani Devi (Mother)

Wife: Saradmoni Devi

Religious Views: Hinduism; Advaitaism;

Philosophy: Shakto, Advaita Vedanta, Universal Tolerance

Death: 16, August, 1886

Place of Death: Cossipore, Calcutta

Memorial: Kamarpukur village, Hoogly District, West Bengal; Dakshineswar Kali Temple Compound, Kolkata, West Bengal

One of the most prominent religious figures of India during the nineteenth century, Sri Ramakrishna Paramhansa was a mystic and a yogi who translated complex spiritual concepts into lucid and easily intelligible manner. Born in a simple Bengali rural family in 1836, Ramakrishna was as simple yogi. He pursued the Divine throughout his life in various forms and believed in divine embodiment of the Supreme Being in every individual. Sometimes believed to be the modern day reincarnation of Lord Vishnu, Ramakrishna was the embodiment of spiritual salvation to troubled souls from all walks of life. He was a key figure in revival of Hinduism in Bengal at a time when intense spiritual crisis was gripping the province leading to predominance of young Bengalis embracing Brahmoism and Christianity. His legacy did not end with his death in 1886; his most prominent disciple Swami Vivekananda carried on his teachings and philosophy to the world through Ramakrishna Mission. In essence, his teachings were as traditional as ancient sages and seer, yet he remains contemporary throughout the ages.

Early Life

Ramakrishna was born as Gadadhar Chattopadhyay on February 18, 1836 to Khudiram Chattopadhyay and Chandramani Devi. The poor Brahmin family hailed from the Kamarpukur village of Hoogly district in Bengal Presidency.

Young Gadadhar was sent to the village school to learn Sanskrit, but a reluctant student he would often play truant. He loved to paint and create clay models of Hindu Gods and Goddesses. He was attracted to folk and mythological stories which he had heard from his mother. He gradually learnt Ramayana, Mahabharata, Puranas and other holy literature by heart just by hearing it from priests and sages. Young Gadadhar loved the nature so much that he used to spend much of his time in orchards and on the river-banks.

From a very young age, Gadadhar was religiously inclined and he would experience episodes of spiritual ecstasy from everyday incidents. He would go into trances while performing pujas or observing a religious drama.

After the death of Gadadhar's father in 1843, the responsibility of the family fell on his elder brother, Ramkumar. Ramkumar left home for Calcutta to earn for the family and Gadadhar, back in his village started performing regular worshipping of their family-deity, previously handled by his brother. He was deeply religious and would perform the pujas ardently. Meanwhile, his elder brother had opened a school to teach Sanskrit in Calcutta and served as a priest at different socio-religious functions.

Ramakrishna was married to five-year old Saradmoni Mukhopadhyay from a neighbouring village when he was twenty three years of age in 1859. The couple stayed apart until Saradmoni came of age and she joined her husband at Dakshineswar at the age of eighteen. Ramakrishna proclaimed her as the embodiment of Divine Mother and performed the Shodashi Puja with her in the seat of Goddess Kali. She was an ardent follower of her husband's philosophies and took up the role of mother to his disciples with much ease.

Image Credit:

Arrival at Dakshineswar and Induction into Priesthood

The Kali temple at Dakshineswar was established by the celebrated philanthropist Queen of Janbazar, Calcutta, Rani Rashmoni, during 1855. Since the Queen's family belonged to the Kaibarta clan that was considered a lower caste by the Bengali society of the time, Rani Rashmoni was having immense difficulty in finding a priest for the temple. Rashmoni's son-in-law, Mathurbabu came across Ramkumar in Calcutta and invited him to take the position of the head priest at the temple. Ramkumar obliged and sent for Gadadhar to join him at Dakshineswar to

assist him in the daily rituals. He arrived at Dakshineswar and was entrusted with the duty of decorating the deity.

Ramkumar died in 1856, leaving Ramakrishna to take over the position of the head priest at the temple. Thus began the long, celebrated journey of priesthood for Gadadhar. It is said that Mathurbabu, witnessing Gadadhar's piousness and certain supernatural incidents, gave the name Ramakrishna to young Gadadhar.

Religious Journey

As a worshipper of Goddess Kali, Ramakrishna was considered a 'Shakto', but the technicalities did not limit him to worship the divine through other spiritual approaches. Ramakrishna was perhaps one of the very few yogis who had tried to experience divinity through a host of different avenues and have not stuck to one single way of spirituality. He schooled under a number of different Gurus and absorbed their philosophies with equal eagerness.

He worshipped God Rama as Hanuman, Rama's most devoted follower and even experienced vision of Sita merging with himself.

He learned the nuances of 'Tantra Sadhana' or tantric ways from Bhairavi Brahmani, a female sage, during 1861-1863. Under her guidance Ramakrishna completed all 64 sadhanas of tantras, even the most intricate and demanding of them. He also learned Kundalini Yoga from Bhairavi.

Ramakrishna next moved on to leaning the inner mechanics of the 'Vaishnav' faith, a faith starkly opposite in philosophy and practices to Shakto tantric practices. He learned under the tutelage of Guru Jatadhari during 1864. He practiced 'Batshalya Bhava', worshipping of God, specifically Lord Vishnu in a child image with the attitude of mother. He also practiced 'Madhura Bhava', the central concepts of Vaishnav faith, synonymous with the love that Radha felt for Krishna. He visited Nadia and

experienced a vision that Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, the founder of Vaishnav faith merging in his body.

Ramakrishna was initiated into Sanyaas or formal life of an ascetic during 1865 from Monk Totapuri. Totapuri guided Ramakrishna through the rituals of renunciation and instructed him the teachings of Advaita Vedanta, Hindu philosophies dealing with non-dualism of spirit, and importance of Brahman. It was now that Ramakrishna attained his highest spiritual realization.

In the subsequent years, he undertook practicing of Islam, with observing all the rituals of the religion in a devout manner. He even experienced vision of a radiant white bearded man. His tryst with Christianity came much later, in 1873, when a devotee read The Bible to him and he got immersed in the thoughts of Christ. He had a vision of Madonna and Child and of Jesus himself.

Teachings and Influence on Society

Sri Ramakrishna was probably the most celebrated mystic of all times. A simple man, sometimes with childlike enthusiasm, he explained the most complex concepts of spiritual philosophies in most simple parables, stories and anecdotes. His words flowed from a deep sense of belief in the Divinity and his experience of embracing God in a very real form. He directed that the ultimate goal of every living soul is God-realization. Having practiced different facets of Hinduism as well of other religions like Islam and Christianity, he preached that all of these religions were different paths that lead up to a single goal – God. His conversations with his disciples were recorded by his devotee Mahendranath Gupta and the collective work was titled as Sri Sri Ramakrishna Kathamrita (The Nectar of Sri Ramakrishna's Words). To get rid of the thought that he belonged to a higher Brahmanical caste, he began to eat food cooked by the shudras or lower-caste.

His influence reached all strata of the society; he did not differentiate between devotees based on caste. He even embraced the sceptics, won them over with his simplistic charm and unselfish love. He was a force of revival to re-energise the decaying Hinduism in nineteenth century Bengal. His teachings also had profound effect on other religions like the Brahmoism that were forced to re-evaluate their beliefs.

Notable Disciples

Foremost among his innumerable disciples was Swami Vivekananda, who was instrumental in establishing the philosophy of Ramakrishna at a global stage. Vivekananda established the Ramakrishna Mission in 1897 to carry out the visions of his Guru Ramakrishna and dedicated the establishment in servitude of the society.

Other disciples who renounced all ties to family life and participated in the formation of Ramakrishna Math along with Vivekananda were Kaliprasad Chandra (Swami Abhedananda), Sashibhushan Chakravarty (Swami Ramakrishnananda), Rakhal Chandra Ghosh (Swami Brahmananda), Sarat Chandra Chakravarty (Swami Saradananda) among others. All of them were instrumental in propagating the teachings of Sri Ramakrishna not just in India, but throughout the world and carried forward his vision of Seva.

Apart from his direct disciples, Ramakrishna had profound effect on Sri Keshab Chandra Sen, an influential Brahmo Samaj leader. Ramakrishna's teaching and his company led Keshab Chandra Sen to reject the rigidity of Brahmo ideals that he initially was attached to. He recognised polytheism and heralded the Naba Bidhan movement within the Brahmo order. He propagated Ramakrishna's teachings in his Naba Bidhan periodicals and was responsible for popularisation of the mystic among the elites of the contemporary Bengali society.

Among the other noted disciples of Ramakrishna were Mahendranath Gupta (a devotee who followed Ramakrishna despite being a family man), Girish Chandra Ghosh (noted poet, playwright, theatre director and actor), Mahendra Lal Sarkar (one of the most successful Homeopath doctors of the nineteenth century) and Akshay Kumar Sen (a mystic and saint).

Death

In 1885 Ramakrishna suffered from throat cancer. In order to consult the best physicians of Calcutta, Ramakrishna was shifted to a devotee's house in Shyampukur by his disciples. But with time, his health started deteriorating and he was taken to a large house at Cossipore. His condition kept worsening and on 16 August, 1886, he passed away at the Cossipore garden house.

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA

Born: 12 January, 1863

Place of Birth: Kolkata, India

Childhood Name: Narendranath Dutta

Father: Vishwanath Dutta

Mother: Bhuvaneshwari Devi

Education: Calcutta Metropolitan School; Presidency College, Calcutta

Religion: Hinduism

Guru: Ramakrishna

Founder of: Ramakrishna Mission (1897), Ramakrishna Math, Vedanta Society of New York

Philosophy: Advaita Vedanta

Literary works: Raja Yoga (1896), Karma Yoga (1896), Bhakti Yoga (1896), Jnana Yoga, My Master (1901), Lectures from Colombo to Almora (1897)

Death: 4 July, 1902

Place of Death: Belur Math, Belur, Bengal

Memorial: Belur Math. Belur, West Bengal

Swami Vivekananda was an inspiring personality and was famous in whole world. He was born on 12 January, 1863, Kolkata (earlier Calcutta). He was a spiritual leader and social reformer. His lectures, writings, letters, poems, ideas motivated not only youth of India but also whole world. He is the founder of Ramakrishna Mission and Belur Math in Calcutta, which are still working towards helping the needy. He was the man of wisdom and a very simple human being. Let us study in detail about him through this article.

"Arise, awake and stop not until the goal is achieved" - Swami Vivekananda

Swami Vivekananda: Life History and Education

Vivekananda childhood name was Narendranath Dutta, belonged to an affluent Bengali family in Calcutta. He was one of the eight children of Vishwanath Dutta and Bhuvneshwari Devi. On the occasion of Makar Sankranti he was born on **12 January, 1863**. His father was an attorney and an influential personality in the society. Vivekananda's mother was a woman who has faith in God and has a great impact on his son.

At the age of eight in **1871** Vivekananda was enrolled at Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar's Institution and later at the Presidency College in Calcutta. He was exposed to Western philosophy, Christianity and science. He had interest in music both instrumental as well as vocal. He was active in sports, gymnastics, wrestling and body building. He was also fond of reading and till the time he had completed his graduation from the college he had acquired a vast knowledge of various subjects. Do you know on the one hand he read Hindu scriptures like Bhagvad Gita and the Upanishads and on the other hand western philosophies and spirituality by David Hume, Herbert Spencer etc.

"Be an atheist if you want, but do not believe in anything unquestioningly."- Swami Vivekananda

He had grown up in a religious family but studied of several religious books and knowledge led him to question the existence of God and some time he believed in Agnoticism. But he could not completely deny the fact about the supremacy of God. In **1880**, he joined Keshab Chandra Sen's Nava Vidhan and also became a member of Sadharan Brahmo Samaj led by Keshab Chandra Sen and Debendranath Tagore.

Brahmo Samaj recognised one God unlike idol-worship. Several questions were running in the mind of Vivekananda and during his spiritual crisis he first heard about Shri Ramakrishna from William Hastie, the Principal of the Scottish Church College. He finally met Shri Ramakrishna Paramhansa at Dakshineswar Kali Temple and Vivekananda asked him a question, "Have you seen God?" which he had asked so many spiritual leaders but was not satisfied. But when he asked from Ramakrishna, he gave such a simple answer that "Yes, I have. I see God as clearly as I see you, only in a much deeper sense". After this Vivekananda started visiting Dakshineswar and got several answers of the questions that were in his mind.

When Vivekananda's father died, whole family faced financial crisis. He went to Ramakrishna and asked him to pray for his family but Ramakrishna refused and told Vivekananda to pray himself in front of Goddess Kali. He could not ask for wealth, money but instead of it he asked for conscience and reclusion. That day he was marked with spiritual awakening and a way of ascetic life was started. This was the turning point in his life and accepted Ramakrishna his Guru.

"Take risks in your life. If you win, you can lead, if you lose, you can guide."
Swami Vivekananda

In **1885**, Ramakrishna developed throat cancer and was transferred to Calcutta and then later to a garden house in Cossipore. Vivekananda and other disciples of Ramakrishna took care of him. On **16 August, 1886**, Shri Ramakrishna gave up his mortal body. Narendra was taught that the service to men was the most effective worship of God. After the

demise of Ramakrishna, fifteen of his disciples including Narendranath began to live together at Baranagar in North Calcutta, which was named as *Ramakrishna Math*. In **1887**, all the disciples took vows of monkhood and Narendranath emerged as Vivekananda that is "the bliss of discerning wisdom." All of them performed yoga and meditation. Further, Vivekananda left the math and decided to tour whole India on foot which was came to be known as '*Parivrajak*'. He saw several social, cultural and religious aspects of the people and also saw what common people faced in their daily life, their sufferings etc.

Swami Vivekananda attended World Parliament of Religions

When he came to know about the World Parliament that was organised in Chicago, America. He was keen to attend the meeting, to represent India and his Guru's philosophies. After various troubles, he attended the Religious meeting. On **11 September, 1893**, he came up on the stage and stunned everyone while saying "My brothers and sisters of America". For this he received a standing ovation from the audience. He described the principles of Vedanta, their spiritual significance etc. He stayed around two and half years in America itself and founded the Vedanta Society of New York. He also travelled to United Kingdom to preach the philosophies, spiritualism and principles of Vedanta.

"Learn everything that is good from others but bring it in, and in your own way absorb it; do not become others." Swami Vivekananda

[Ramakrishna Mission and Vivekananda: Contribution in Social Reform](#)

He founded Ramakrishna Mission

Around **1897**, he returned to India and reached Calcutta where he founded Ramakrishna Mission on 1 May, 1897 at Belur Math. The goals of the mission were based on the Karma Yoga and its main objective was to serve the poor and suffering or disturbed population of the country. Several social services are also performed under this mission like establishing schools, colleges and hospitals. Teachings of Vedanta were also provided through conference, seminars and workshops, rehabilitation work across the country.

Let us tell you that Vivekananda's teachings were mostly based on the Ramakrishna's spiritual teachings of Divine manifestations and his personal internalisation of the Advaita Vedanta Philosophy. According to him, the ultimately goal of life is to achieve the freedom of soul and that encompasses the entirety of one's religion.

Death

He predicted that he will not live till the age of 40. Therefore, on 4 July, 1902, he died while doing meditation. He is said to have attained 'Mahasamadhi' and was cremated on the Banks of river Ganga.

“A man is not poor without a rupee but a man is really poor without a dream and ambition.” Swami Vivekananda

Key Works of Swami Vivekananda

- The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda

- Swami Vivekananda's Speeches at the Parliament of Religions, Chicago, 1893

- Letters of Swami Vivekananda

- Jnana Yoga: The Yoga of Knowledge

- Yoga: The Yoga of Love and Devotion

- Yoga: The Yoga of Action

- Raja Yoga: The Yoga of Meditation

Key Works on Swami Vivekananda

- Vivekananda A Biography, by Swami Nikhilananda

- Swami Vivekananda by Eastern and Western Disciples

- The Master As I Saw Him, by Sister Nivedita

- Reminiscences of Swami Vivekananda
- The Life of Vivekananda, by Romain Rolland

No doubt Swami Vivekananda's teachings not only motivated the youth but also the whole world. He laid the true foundations of India's unity as a nation. He taught how to live together with so much of diversities. He was successful in constructing a virtual bridge between the culture of East and the West. He played a key role in isolating India's culture from rest of the World.

“Take up one idea, make that one idea your life, think of it, dream of it, let the brain, muscles, nerves, every part of your body be full of that idea, and just leave every other idea alone. This is the way to success.” Swami Vivekananda

RAMALINGA ADIGAL

'**Arutprakasa vallalar Ramalinga Adigal**' was called by his followers as "**Vallalar**". Vallalar lived from **1823 to 1874** in his "muscular body" like other men of the world. He was born on fifth October 1823 in an agricultural village community, eight Kilo meters towards north east of "**Bhuvanagiri**" town, 40km away from **Cuddalore** the district headquarters, 220km away from Chennai, the **Tamilnadu** state headquarters in **India**.

His father was "**Ramaiah pillai**" and mother "**Chinnammai**". He had two elder brothers **Sabapathi** and Parasuramar; and two elder sisters Sundarambal and Unnamulaiammal. He mainly lived in five places; "Maruthur" 1823 to 1825, Chennai 1825 to 1858, Cuddalore district **karunguzhi** village in 1858 to 1867, "**Vadalur**" 1867 to 1870 and **Mettukuppam** 1870 to 1874.

He published three books: they are "**Ozhuvil odukkam**" in 1851, Thondamandala sathagam in 1855 and Sinmaya theepikai in 1857. He authored three books, they are "**Thiruvarutppa**", "**Manumurai kanda**

vaasagam” and **“Jeevakaarunya ozhukkam”**.(Non-violence as a vital principle of life) . He established four organisations; **“Sathiya sanmarga sangam”** in 1865, **“Sathiya Dharumachalai”** in 1867, **“Siddhi valaagam”** in 1870 and **“Sathiya gnana sabai”** in 1872. He disintegrated his body into light atoms and became one with the Almighty-God on 30th January 1874 at 12.00 midnight.

His book **“Thiruvarutppa”** contains more than **6000 verses**. He says that these poems were rendered by him as they were intuited by the Lord **“Arutperunjothi”** the graceful universal light, which governs the universe.

He has used nine **types of grammar forms** in his verses i.e.,

1. **En** (the origin of number)
2. **Ezhuthu** (the origin of letter)
3. **Sol** (the origin of word)
4. **Porul** (how the meaning of words and concepts came to use)
5. **Yaappu** (how the words are arranged with a metrical rhythm of a poem),
6. **Ani** (how to put the words in an order of decoration to look rhythmic)
7. **Urai** (how should be a form of prose)
8. **Punarchi** (coalescence of letters and words)
9. **Ortru** (how to make the sound vary by pressing a letter with a dot or small round mark over a letter).

All these verses inculcate wisdom to men. He was above the differences of caste, creed, class, language, races, religion, sex and national segregations of people. He has taken all lives on earth as children of god. No one should be allowed to suffer from hunger, ill-health, agedness and disabilities. They are to be taken care of by the fellowmen. The service to the poor is the service to god.

Main preachings of vallalar:

1. **'Arutperunjothi'**-the graceful universal light caused creation of all in the universe.
 2. **'Thaniperunkarunai'**-the Almighty by his benevolence created the five elements of nature to provide all that required by lives on earth, thus he protects all.
 3. Let all lives be happy .They have equal rights to live on earth and enjoy their life.
 4. No one has any right to kill anyone else for any cause.
 5. Wisdom alone can bring peace to a man.
 6. Fraternity and compassion can keep all lives in happiness.
 7. Non-violence in words and deeds is the way of life.
 8. Man can lead immortal life through principles of "**Sanmargam**".
 9. "**Sanmargam**" will enable men to live in three levels of body i.e.,
1.Muscular body without normal food and excretions, 2.Invisible body in the form of air (only sound can be heard –'asariri'), 3.Invisible body in the form of **Light-Gnana Deham**– (appearing through intelligence i.e., in the wisdom of man).
 10. The end of a man is not death, but disintegrating his body into light, thus being one with God. God is in the form of light.
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