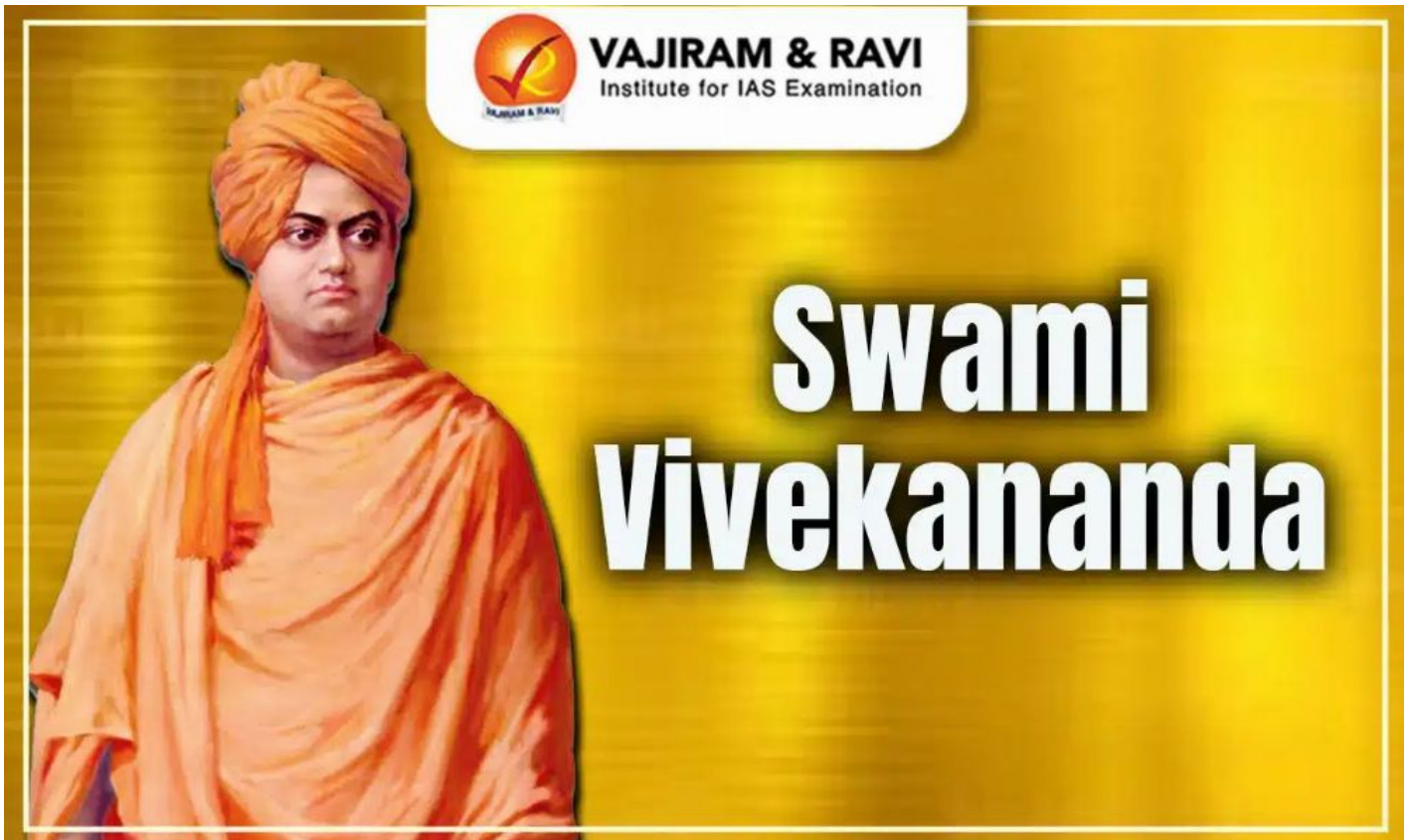


Swami Vivekananda, Background, Contribution, Philosophy Legacy

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Swami Vivekananda, born as **Narendranath Datta**, is one of India's most revered spiritual leaders and philosophers. His teachings and philosophy continue to inspire millions across the globe. Swami Vivekananda played a pivotal role in the Indian Renaissance, advocating for a return to the spiritual and cultural roots of the nation.

Swami Vivekananda is best known for his address at the **Parliament of the World's Religions in Chicago in 1893**, where he introduced **Hindu philosophy** to the Western world.

About Swami Vivekananda

Swami Vivekananda was born on January 12, 1863, in Kolkata, into an affluent and progressive family that blended spiritualism and intellectualism. His father, Vishwanath Datta, was a successful attorney with a liberal outlook, while his mother, Bhuvaneshwari Devi, was deeply religious, instilling spiritual values in young Narendra. From an early age, he exhibited a keen intellect and a profound yearning for spiritual knowledge.

He attended the Metropolitan Institution in Kolkata, excelling particularly in philosophy. Vivekananda's quest for enlightenment led him to question various religious doctrines and seek answers to life's mysteries. During his college years, he became well-versed in Western philosophy, studying the works of philosophers like **John Stuart Mill**, **David Hume**, and **Immanuel Kant**, while also delving into spiritual texts such as the Vedas and Upanishads.

Influence of Ramakrishna Paramahansa

Swami Vivekananda's life changed significantly when he met his spiritual mentor, **Ramakrishna Paramahansa**, in 1881. Ramakrishna recognized Narendra's spiritual potential and guided him toward self-realization. His teachings emphasized the unity of all religions, highlighting that all paths ultimately lead to the same divine truth, which became a cornerstone of Vivekananda's philosophy.

Under Ramakrishna's guidance, Vivekananda underwent profound spiritual transformations, realizing the divine unity that transcends religious boundaries. Following Ramakrishna's passing in 1886, he took monastic vows, renouncing worldly life, and dedicated himself to spreading his guru's teachings.

Swami Vivekananda's Contributions to Indian Society

Swami Vivekananda significantly contributed to Indian society by reviving Hinduism and introducing neo-Vedanta and Yoga to a global audience. He advocated for an educational framework that integrates science and spirituality, founded the **Ramakrishna Mission**, and championed social reforms for marginalized communities and women's rights.

- **Revival of Hinduism:** Vivekananda significantly contributed to the revival of Hinduism, showcasing its modern relevance. He aimed to counter negative stereotypes, portraying Hinduism as a rational and universal spiritual path, most notably at the **Chicago World Parliament of Religions in 1893**.
- **Neo-Vedanta:** He introduced the concepts of Vedanta and Yoga to a global audience, promoting '**Neo-Vedanta**'—a Westernized interpretation of Hinduism that integrates spirituality with material progress.
- **Promotion of Education:** Vivekananda advocated for an educational framework that combined modern scientific knowledge with spiritual wisdom, emphasizing character-building to instil moral values, self-confidence, and social responsibility.
- **Establishment of the Ramakrishna Mission:** In **1897**, he founded the **Ramakrishna Mission**, a philanthropic and spiritual organization aimed at promoting Vedanta teachings and engaging in social service.
- **Advocacy for Social Reform:** Vivekananda was a passionate advocate for social reforms, focusing on caste discrimination and women's rights. He emphasized uplifting marginalized communities and empowering women as vital to societal progress.
- **Literary Contribution:** As a prolific writer and speaker, Vivekananda's works, including "**Jnana Yoga**," "**Bhakti Yoga**," "**Karma Yoga**," and "**Raja Yoga**," compile his teachings on various aspects of spiritual practice.

Swami Vivekananda Philosophy and Teachings

Swami Vivekananda's philosophy is deeply rooted in Vedanta, the spiritual tradition based on the teachings of the Upanishads. His teachings emphasise the divinity of the soul, the oneness of existence, and the importance of self-realisation.

- **Universal Religion:** Vivekananda preached the concept of a universal religion that transcends sectarian boundaries. He believed that all religions are different paths leading to the same ultimate reality. This idea of **religious pluralism** and tolerance was central to his teachings.
- **Follower of Vedanta:** Swami Vivekananda was a staunch proponent of Vedanta, the philosophy rooted in the Upanishads, which emphasises the oneness of existence, the divinity of the soul, and the harmony of religions.
- **Self-Realisation:** According to Vivekananda, the purpose of human life is to realise one's true nature, which is divine. He emphasised the importance of self-inquiry, meditation, and spiritual practice as means to achieve this realisation.
- **Service to Humanity:** Vivekananda upheld the ideal of "**Jiva is Shiva**," meaning that serving humanity is equivalent to serving God. He encouraged his followers to engage in selfless service and to work for the betterment of society.
- **Karma Yoga:** Vivekananda popularised the concept of **Karma Yoga**, the path of selfless action. He taught that one should perform their duties without attachment to the results, dedicating all actions to the divine.

Swami Vivekananda's Role in Indian Renaissance

Swami Vivekananda is often regarded as a key figure in the Indian Renaissance, a period of cultural and intellectual revival in India during the 19th and early 20th centuries. His role in this renaissance can be understood through the following contributions:

- **National Awakening:** Vivekananda instilled pride in India's cultural and spiritual heritage, encouraging the embrace of ancient traditions alongside the positive aspects of Western science.
- **Empowerment of Youth:** He believed in the potential of youth as the nation's backbone, inspiring them to take pride in their identity and work for social reform with his famous call, "**Arise, awake, and stop not till the goal is reached.**"
- **Promotion of Interfaith Dialogue:** His participation in the Parliament of the **World's Religions in Chicago (1893)** highlighted Hinduism's global recognition and emphasized universal values of tolerance and religious harmony.
- **Intellectual Revival:** Vivekananda fostered an intellectual revival in India, promoting critical thinking, scientific inquiry, and rational spirituality, inspiring a generation of thinkers and leaders in the independence movement.

Swami Vivekananda Legacy

Swami Vivekananda's legacy continues to inspire globally through his message of universal brotherhood, the establishment of educational institutions by the Ramakrishna Mission promoting character and service, and the recognition of his birthday, **January 12**, as **National Youth Day** in India.

- **Global Influence:** Vivekananda's message of universal brotherhood and spiritual enlightenment has resonated worldwide, influencing thinkers and spiritual seekers; his works are translated into multiple languages and studied in various educational institutions.
- **Ramakrishna Mission:** The Ramakrishna Mission is a spiritual and philanthropic organization founded by Swami Vivekananda in 1897.
 - Named after the Indian Hindu spiritual guru and mystic Ramakrishna, the mission is headquartered at Belur Math in West Bengal, India.
 - The mission's work is based on the principles of Karma Yoga, which emphasizes selfless work dedicated to God.
 - The Ramakrishna Mission is involved in various humanitarian activities, including educational, medical, and relief services.
- **National Youth Day:** To honour his contributions, the Government of India declared **January 12**, Swami Vivekananda's birthday, as **National Youth Day**, promoting his ideals and values among the youth.

Swami Vivekananda UPSC PYQs

Question 1: “Do not hate anybody, because that hatred that comes out from you must, in the long run, come back to you. If you love, that love will come back to you, completing the circle.” – Swami Vivekananda (**UPSC Mains 2021**)

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