

# Awakening the Nation

Rediscover the spirit of India  
with Swami Vivekananda



**SRINIVAS VENKATRAM**

with the team at Illumine Knowledge Resources

# Prologue






## 1893: Swami Vivekananda at Chicago

We all know of Swami Vivekananda's extraordinary debut at the Parliament of Religions with his famous beginning, "Sisters and Brothers of America", and the phenomenal response he received from the eclectic global audience to the six key talks he gave. The success at the Parliament made Swami Vivekananda, till then an unknown monk from India, into a world figure.



Delegates at the Parliament of Religions

Some noted individuals who interacted with Swami Vivekananda in the West

 Nikola Tesla Eminent Inventor	 Lord Kelvin Eminent Mathematician, Physicist & Engineer	 John D Rockefeller Businessman & Philanthropist
 Robert Ingersoll Eminent Lawyer, Writer & Orator	 William James Father of American Psychology	 Emma Calve French Opera Singer



Swami Vivekananda at the Parliament of Religions

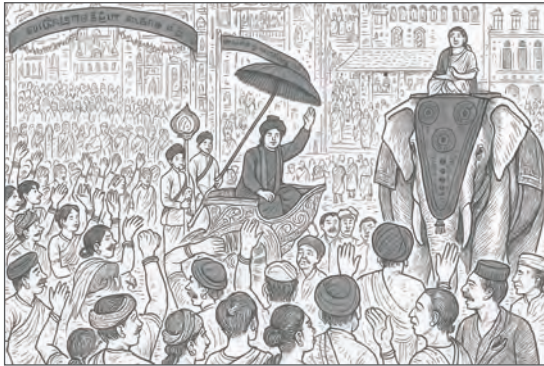
For the period between May 1893 and December 1896, Swami Vivekananda gave several lectures across America and Europe seeding the powerful ideas of Vedanta and the Upanishads in the Western world. During this period he also interacted with some of the finest minds of the West.



## 1897: A Triumphant Return

Swami Vivekananda returned to India in 1897, where he was accorded a hero's welcome.

Thousands turned up to see this new type of hero – one who conquered not with weapons but with lofty ideas and ideals.

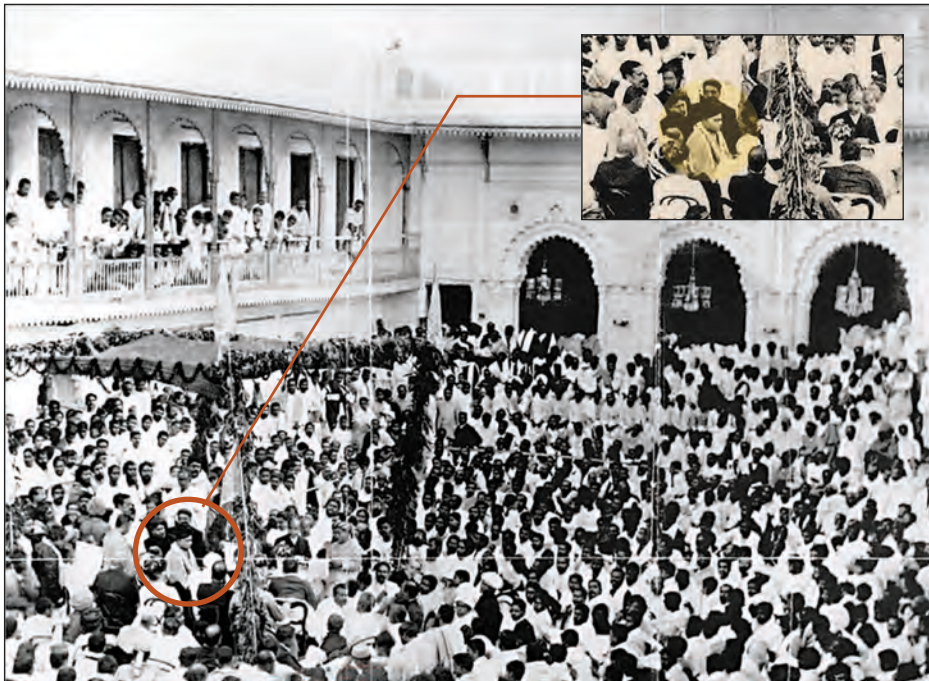


He received a touching welcome from the Raja of Ramnad.

The horses were unhitched from the carriage bearing the Swami, and the people themselves, the Raja among them, drew it.

At Rameswaram the Raja erected, in the Swami's honour, a victory column forty feet high with a suitable inscription.

He was also given a triumphant reception in Kolkata (Original Photograph - February 28, 1897)





## Awakening the Nation

Swami Vivekananda gave a series of 29 stirring lectures across the length and breadth of the country, awakening the nation. His goal was to stir India out of its centuries of slumber, regain faith in itself and its vast heritage, and organise itself for the task of rebuilding a nation broken after ten centuries of foreign invasion, Islamic conquest, and European colonisation.

His speeches were not mere eloquence. They represented the revelation of a vision for India and a profound articulation of both challenges and solutions to the nation's apparently insurmountable problems. These lectures inspired hundreds of freedom fighters and patriots to dedicate their lives to this nation.

The speech at Ramnad, the 5<sup>th</sup> he made, carried in essence, his prophetic vision for the nation.

**“ The longest night seems to be passing away,  
the sorest trouble seems to be coming  
to an end at last;**

**the seeming corpse appears to be awaking  
and a voice is coming to us... she is awakening,  
this motherland of ours,  
from her deep long sleep...**

**None can resist her any more; never is she going  
to sleep any more; no outward powers can hold  
her back any more;**

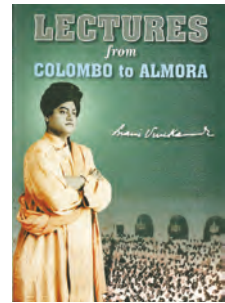
**for the infinite giant is rising to her feet.”**

CW.3.145.3 | January 1897, Ramnad

The heart of India resonated to the Swami's call. India became aware of Herself – Her glorious heritage, and Her limitless possibilities in the future.

Swami Vivekananda became the Awakener of India's National Consciousness.

This book, Awakening the Nation is based on the Lectures from Colombo to Almora (1897-1901).



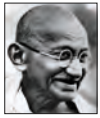
The compilation of these lectures were first brought out as a book in 1897 itself.

This book continues to be published by the Advaita Ashrama, and continues to inspire thousands to learn about and love India.

Available at  
[advaitaashrama.org](http://advaitaashrama.org)



Legions of national leaders were influenced by this set of lectures and many more speeches of Swami Vivekananda...



Mahatma Gandhi, when he visited Belur Math, had this to say:

*"I have gone through his works very thoroughly, and after having gone through them, the love that I had for my country became a thousand-fold."*



According to Subhas Chandra Bose:

*"Our countrymen have gained unprecedented self-respect, self-confidence and self-assertion from his teachings..."*

*If he had been alive, I would have been at his feet."*



Rabindranath Tagore says:

*"If you want to know India, study Vivekananda. In him everything is positive and nothing negative."*



Jawaharlal Nehru says:

*"He was no politician in the ordinary sense of the word and yet he was, I think, one of the great founders – of the national modern movement of India."*



C. Rajagopalachari makes a telling tribute to Swami Vivekananda's contribution:

*"It is Swami Vivekananda who saved Hinduism and saved India. But for him, we would have lost our religion and would not have gained our freedom. We therefore owe everything to Swami Vivekananda."*



According to noted historian and Indologist, A L Basham:

*"He [Swami Vivekananda] will be remembered as one of the main moulders of the modern world, especially as far as Asia is concerned, and as one of the most significant figures in the whole history of Indian religion, comparable in importance to such great teachers as Shankara and Ramanuja."*



Sri Aurobindo called Vivekananda a very lion among men:

*"We perceive his influence still working gigantically, we know not well how, we know not well where, in something that is not yet formed, something leonine, something grand, intuitive, upheaving that has entered the soul of India, and we say: Behold, Vivekananda still lives in the soul of his Mother and in the souls of her children."*

## Vivekananda Way in The Vedanta Kesari

In 2018, at the suggestion of Swami Mahamedhananda, the then editor of The Vedanta Kesari, a series titled the Vivekananda Way was initiated for the purpose of helping young people engage with Swami Vivekananda's ideas in an easy and accessible manner.

One of the themes developed by Illumine Knowledge Resources as part of this series was called Understanding India through Swami Vivekananda's eyes, and was based on the Lectures from Colombo to Almora. The series ran for nearly five years and spanned 53 issues of the Vivekananda Way.

In that sense, this book has been five years in the making.

## Awakening the Nation: An Illumine Discovery Book

This book Awakening the Nation is based on the Vivekananda Way series. It has been edited and enriched for a larger audience.

The book is aimed at readers who are interested in learning more about Swami Vivekananda's powerful prescription for nation-building based on India's civilisational heritage and the strengthening ideas of the Upanishads.

It seeks to recreate, through discovery, what was experienced by thousands of Indians when Swami Vivekananda gave these lectures – a renewed love for what is great about this nation and its ideals.

Through the above, we hope this book acts as one more enabler for the collective transformation that India is undertaking.



**The Vedanta Kesari**  
Journal of the Ramakrishna  
Order inspired by Swami  
Vivekananda

Speaking of the lectures that Swami Vivekananda gave, Nobel Prize winner Romain Rolland said: *'His words are great music, phrases in the style of Beethoven, stirring rhythms like the march of Handel choruses. I cannot touch these sayings of his... 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!'*



Source: The Life of Vivekananda  
and the Universal Gospel by  
Romain Rolland

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