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**Swami Vivekananda's Enduring Legacy: Catalyzing Social Reforms in 19th and 20th Century India**

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**Abstract**

Swami Vivekananda, a renowned philosopher and spiritual leader, had a profound impact on India's society by advocating for social change and enlightenment. His teachings and ideals sparked a transformation in India's outlook, addressing issues such as caste discrimination, women's rights, and education. Through his powerful messages and charisma, Vivekananda inspired a wave of social reform movements, leaving an enduring legacy that continues to influence India's societal landscape. This study delves into the multifaceted aspects of his contributions to social reform, shedding light on his remarkable influence on India's path towards progress and equality.

**Keywords:** Swami Vivekananda, Social Reforms, India, Enlightenment, Philosopher, Movements, women's education, Influence etc.

**Introduction**

Swami Vivekananda's birth occurred on the 12th of January in 1863 in the city of Kolkata. His parents were Vishwanath Dutta and Bhubaneswar Devi. The childhood name of Swami Vivekananda was Narendranath Dutta. His father held the position of an Attorney-at-Law in the Calcutta High Court. He demonstrated a high level of proficiency in both the English and Persian languages. He possessed a comprehensive understanding of both the Bible and Hindu writings written in Sanskrit. The mother had a profound devotion to her religious beliefs and possessed a comprehensive understanding of the narrative tradition. Swami Vivekananda exhibited a strong emotional bond with his mother. He frequently recounts legendary narratives to him, to which he would attentively and keenly listen. Frequently, he expressed that his mother

had served as a perpetual source of inspiration throughout his life. He acquired knowledge of epics and Puranas from his mother. From an early age, Vivekananda showed remarkable intellectual abilities and a profound inclination towards topics of spirituality. Vivekananda exhibited a remarkable capacity for retaining all the information imparted to him. He communicated integrity and sought to verify the veracity of any information presented to them. He displayed notable audacity and bravery, especially when confronted with difficult circumstances. He demonstrated proficiency in both singing and sports to an equal degree. He possessed inherent leadership qualities from birth.

Swami Vivekananda is widely recognized as a prominent figure in India, revered for his exceptional monasticism. He is commonly acknowledged as the individual responsible for introducing the essence of Indian culture to Western society. He is commonly recognized as the representative figure of the Hindu faith. The individual exhibited a dual nature, characterized by spiritual and societal reform efforts. Frequently, there has been observed a tendency for the spiritual aspect of an individual to exert greater influence than their social self. It may appear that Vivekananda was completely overshadowed by the significant influence of the title "Swami."

According to Swami Vivekananda, attaining liberation, known as "Mukti," and other worldly matters hold no significance for him. Furthermore, in the event of a need to do so, we, as individuals who have embraced the path of renunciation, should be prepared at all times to part with our possessions. This may entail sleeping outside beneath the shelter of trees and relying on alms for sustenance daily. Therefore, it can be observed that Swami Vivekananda holds a prominent position in India as a trailblazing individual who has significantly contributed to the development and transformation of modern India. (Adiswarananda2006) Swami Vivekananda advocated for a range of reforms, including socialism, secularism, mass uplift and mass power, compassionate treatment of the untouchables, universal literacy, women's freedom, and social service integration with religious devotion. These principles formed the fundamental tenets of his reformist agenda. The renowned phrase, "Awake, arise, and stop not till the goal is reached," continues to have a profound impact on the country's younger generation, stimulating their awareness of social issues and revitalizing their discouraged emotions.

Swamiji completed his entrance examination at the metropolitan institute. He obtained his undergraduate degree from a Christian college in Calcutta. Hastie, the college principal,

expressed a strong sense of admiration for him. Sisir Kumar (1995) was renowned for his statement regarding Narendranath:

"Narendranath possesses exceptional intellectual capabilities." Throughout my extensive travels, I have seen individuals from all backgrounds and educational institutions. However, I have yet to encounter an individual possessing the exceptional talents and potential that he possesses, even when comparing him to philosophical students in German universities. He will likely achieve significant accomplishments and have a lasting impact on society throughout his lifetime. He possessed a diverse array of interests, encompassing several domains such as athletics, music, combat sports, philosophical discourse, and poetic expression. He deeply admires the poetic works of Shelley, Wordsworth, Herbert Spencer, and John Stuart Mill. (5)

Narendra exhibited a lack of interest in indulging in worldly pursuits. He consistently sought something outside the realm of worldly and materialistic pursuits. He experienced a profound transformation in his life upon encountering Sri Ramakrishna. Swami Vivekananda assumed the name of Swami Vivekananda, transitioning from his previous identity as Narendranath Dutta to his second encounter with Sri Ramakrishna.

During his childhood, Vivekananda had traits of intense determination and restlessness. As a philosophy student, he possessed many inquiries about the concept of God. These inquiries encompassed the existence of a divine being, the visual representation of said being, the purpose behind the world's creation, and the nature of the relationship between God and humanity, among others. However, he encountered a shortage of individuals capable of responding satisfactorily to his inquiries. Narendra harboured deep affection and reverence for Ramakrishna. However, he steadfastly maintained his autonomy in forming opinions.

Sri Ramakrishna succumbed to a severe illness and subsequently expired. Before his demise, Ramakrishna assembled his group of youthful followers, placing them under the guidance and mentorship of Narendra. Furthermore, he transferred his authority to Narendra and expressed, "Through the potency bestowed upon you by me, you shall accomplish remarkable feats." (Badrinath 2006) In August 1886, upon the passing of Sri Ramakrishna, a group of his youthful disciples led by Narendra established the Ramakrishna fraternity in Baranagore. During this period, Narendra and his fellow disciples solemnly committed sannyasa and renunciation,

recognizing the necessity of embracing the itinerant lifestyle associated with sannyasa. In the latter part of 1888, Narendra also commenced temporary excursions from the monastery.

Narendra established the Ramakrishna Mission, a prominent philanthropic organization within India. He aspired to develop a comprehensive comprehension of the Indian populace, encompassing their many cultures and rich customs. In pursuit of this objective, he engaged in significant travel, bidding farewell to his fellow brethren with a steadfast determination to sever all connections and retreat to the seclusion of the Himalayas. Similar to a skilled diver, he immersed himself in the vast expanse of the Indian Ocean, effectively concealing any evidence of his presence. He was an anonymous monk who possessed remarkable intellectual abilities. He encountered numerous prominent individuals, including lawyers, educators, and political leaders. He implored each of them to take action on behalf of the suffering masses. Several individuals stepped forward and offered him financial assistance to embark on a journey to the Western region and disseminate knowledge about the enduring faith of the contemporary era.

In continuation of his noble endeavour, Narendra, accompanied by a group of his young disciples who had pledged their support, embarked on a journey to the United States of America to participate in the Parliament of Religions held in Chicago. At the tender age of 30, he arrived in Chicago to advocate for the principles and beliefs of Hinduism in that locale. The profound impact of his eloquent and heartfelt language, remarkable charisma, and radiant demeanour were of such magnitude that the following day, the press hailed him as the preeminent figure in the Parliament of Religions. (Bhuyan, 2003) When a rather obscure individual in his thirties appeared at the inaugural gathering of the Parliament of Religions in Chicago in September 1893, which Cardinal Gibbons officiated, his fellow participants were overshadowed by his authoritative demeanour. The ideas espoused by this warrior prophet from India profoundly impacted the United States.

Narendra above of humble monastic origins had attained a position of great prominence and importance in the current period. His discourse to the Parliament of Religions solidified his position as a proponent of India's longstanding cultural principles. Almost instantaneously, he ascended to the esteemed status of a revered national figure in India. The realization abruptly dawned onto the indigenous population that there must exist a certain quality within Indian philosophy that compels the intellectual elite of the Western world to hold it in high regard. This

is the initial instance in which they became aware of the profound value inherent in their cultural legacy. His trip to Chicago proved successful after his travels to England and Switzerland. He disseminated his message at that location. He had the opportunity to engage with and deliver lectures to individuals from diverse backgrounds. Swami's lectures in various locations were intended to generate substantial cash to alleviate the suffering and Poverty experienced by the Indian population. Additionally, these lectures sought to introduce the Western world to the ancient Indian wisdom of Vedanta and the traditional practices of classical yoga. (Chattopadhyaya 1999)

### **Swami Vivekananda and World Social Order**

Vivekananda's sojourn in America extended beyond a duration of three years. A high level of vigorous engagement characterized this extended duration. Vivekananda commenced providing tuition to his dedicated students without any financial obligation. Following a series of talks and classes conducted in New York, the individual established the inaugural Vedanta Society in the United States. In addition, he provided instruction to a select cohort of disciples at Thousand Island Park. Swami perceived in Margaret a significant potential for contributing to the advancement of India through her work. The lectures delivered by Swami in England pertain to the practice of Janna yoga. The outcomes of his research yielded a significant impact, leading to offers for the position of Eastern Philosophy chair at both Harvard University and Columbia University. He exerted significant effort in conveying that Vedanta is the fundamental universal principle underlying all religions. As a result of his endeavours, the initial permanent centre for yoga activity was established in the United States. He returned to India in 1896. During his time at Madras, he conducted public lectures that served as a rallying cry for the advancement and construction of a new India. (Arrington & Tapan 2001)

Narendra expressed a desire to establish a novel societal structure and civilization whereby the esteemed spiritual traditions of India would be harmoniously integrated with the most recent developments in science and technology. He espoused the belief that "Jive is shiva," signifying the interconnectedness of all beings with the divine. He proclaimed to the Indian population, urging them to "Rise, awaken, and persist without ceasing until the objective is achieved." (Burke 1958) He, a prominent figure in India, passed away at the relatively early age of 39 on the 4th of July, 1902. He founded two monastic establishments, Sri Ramakrishna

monasteries, one located in Baronage and the other in Blur, near Calcutta. To this day, his work continues to be conducted in these missions. He expressed to his disciples that he may find it beneficial to detach himself from his physical form, likening it to discarding a garment that has become worn and no longer serves its purpose. During his relatively brief lifespan of 39 years, the individual in question showed remarkable productivity by creating enduring literary works, including Janna yoga, Bhatia yoga, Karma yoga, and Raja yoga. He presented many talks, crafted poetry, and served as a spiritual mentor to innumerable individuals seeking his guidance and teachings. He established the Ramakrishna Order of Monks. Swami Vivekananda once referred to himself as a personification of the essence of India.

### **Social Reforms on Poverty**

Despite being known for his spiritual practices and religious beliefs, Swami Vivekananda actively engaged in activities and labour to increase productivity and eliminate Poverty. In conjunction with his mentor, Ramakrishna Paramahansa, he consistently espoused the viewpoint that "religion is not intended for individuals experiencing hunger." (Banhatti 1995) He has effectively facilitated the disruption of individuals' comfort zones and motivated them to take proactive measures. Swamiji played a significant role in shaping the trajectory of modern India by inspiring the cultivation of Rajasic qualities among the Indian population. He additionally motivated them to improve their current circumstances and refrain from accepting their current state of Poverty and impoverishment.

### **India's Cultural History and Swamiji's Word**

Swamiji undoubtedly exhibited a profound pride in India's rich cultural heritage. However, he vehemently opposed the notion that nearly anything originating from the past deserved praise. In his perspective, India served as a symbol of its populace, wherein the populace denoted the collective masses. He obtained a range of benefits from his adherence to Vedantic Socialism or Vedanta, including the eradication of Poverty, elimination of illiteracy, restoration of human dignity, freedom from fear, and access to both spiritual and secular knowledge for all individuals regardless of their social class or caste. Additionally, this ideology aimed to dismantle all forms of monopolies, whether economic, religious, intellectual, cultural, or social.

Swami Vivekananda revitalized India through his reinterpretation of Vedanta and his profound concern for the public's welfare and societal challenges. He vocalized his opposition to the oppressive systems of feudalism and colonialism. Concurrently, Swamiji sought solutions pertaining to India's historical trajectories and strategies for its transformation into a robust, prosperous, and sovereign nation. He consistently emphasized that the development of India necessitated the collective efforts of the masses, as well as the involvement of tiny cohorts of enthusiastic patriots who possessed unwavering courage, physical strength comparable to iron muscles, unyielding determination, and unwavering determination.

### **Women's Social Development**

Although Swami Vivekananda did not actively participate in politics, his understanding of modern India exhibited a remarkable political acumen that surpassed his contemporaries. The individual exhibited profound anger at the exploitation of rights and demonstrated authentic care for the advancement of marginalized groups, particularly women and other socially disadvantaged individuals. He sought to implement a unique social reform by incorporating Western concepts and technological advancements but simultaneously avoiding the pitfalls of unquestioningly imitating Western cultural practices. In his literary work "On India and Her Problems," Narendra acknowledges that the nation's populace primarily resides in rural cottages. Regrettably, no efforts were made by anyone to assist them. Contemporary reformers are actively engaged in addressing the issue of widow remarriage. (Bharathi 1998) Vivekananda extended his perspective by asserting that as long as a significant number of individuals continue to endure conditions of Poverty and ignorance, he considers any individual who does not actively address these issues to be acting traitorously. The influential theory advocated by him exerted a significant impact on subsequent social reformers. The dynamic principles espoused by Mahatma Gandhi and the socialist ideologies embraced by Jawaharlal Nehru were deeply influenced by the concepts and teachings of Swamiji.

### **Religion**

The opinions of Swami Vivekananda regarding religion were characterized by their distinctiveness. He introduced secularist principles to India, which have since become an essential component of the Constitution of India. (Farquhar, 1915) His perspectives on religion were grounded in widely shared objectives. He maintained that all religions are only distinct



avenues leading to a shared objective. His thoughts might be seen as a continuation of India's existing concepts and principles. His thoughts were grounded in mutual respect and tolerance and the shared recognition of a fundamental truth underlying all religions. He vehemently opposed the practice of untouchability. (Chetananda 1997)His acquisition of knowledge from Vedanta philosophy resulted in his opposition to untouchability. He discovered no theological or secular justification for the abhorrent practice of untouchability and vehemently denounced it.

## **Education**

Swami Vivekananda's perspectives on education exhibit a more contemporary outlook than ancient India's prevailing educational philosophies. From the outset, he was pivotal in facilitating widespread expansion and advancement. Moreover, he formulated the concept of informal education several decades ago, which is the term we currently employ. Significant emphasis was placed on the need for technical education and industrial training, which have since become integral components of the contemporary educational system in India.

Vivekananda actively advocated for the advancement of educational opportunities for women. The individual placed significant emphasis on traditional family values and the importance of female virginity while strongly opposing the subjugation of women. He fervently advocated for the expansion of educational opportunities to encompass women. His social reform concepts significantly impacted his endeavours to reorient India's traditional religions towards social service. The creation of the Ramakrishna Mission introduced a novel approach for Indian monks and Sanyasins. It is evident that Hindu monks do not lead a solitary existence but actively prioritize their commitment to serving the community. (Das 1991)Various institutions such as hospitals, educational establishments, dispensaries, orphanages, and other community facilities have been established to mitigate human suffering.

## **As a Role Model**

It is evident that Swami Vivekananda holds a significant position in Indian history, having made substantial contributions to the development of modern India. Swami Vivekananda advocated for various reforms, including socialism, secularism, mass uplift and mass power, compassionate treatment of the untouchables, universal literacy, informal education, women's freedom, and the integration of social work with religious worship. The renowned phrase,



"Awake, arise, and stop not till the goal is reached,"(Dhar1976) continues to have a profound impact on the country's younger generation, stimulating their social awareness and revitalizing their subdued morale.

Based on the preceding analysis, it can be ascertained that Swami Vivekananda can be aptly regarded as a social reformer. He endeavoured to rejuvenate India by integrating its traditional traditions with contemporary scientific advancements. One notable aspect of Vivekananda's reform efforts was his decision not to seek the abolition of the prevailing systems in India at that time. He intends to facilitate the development of others in their authentic state. Vivekananda possessed a profound sense of pride in India's rich cultural heritage. He derived various benefits from his adherence to Vedantic Socialism, including eradicating Poverty, eliminating illiteracy, restoring human dignity, freedom from fear, and access to both spiritual and secular knowledge for all individuals, regardless of their social class or caste.

Additionally, his commitment to Vedantic Socialism aimed to dismantle all forms of monopolies. Swami Vivekananda's reevaluation of Vedanta, coupled with its inherent focus on the welfare of the general populace and their concerns, bestowed upon India a novel paradigm for existence. He vocalized his opposition to the oppressive systems of feudalism and colonialism. Simultaneously, Vivekananda sought solutions pertaining to India's historical trajectories and strategies to foster its development into a robust, prosperous, and autonomous nation. He consistently emphasized the notion that the construction of India was contingent upon the assistance of the general populace, as well as tiny cohorts of enthusiastic patriots who possessed courage and fortitude.

Contemporary reformers are actively engaged in addressing the issue of widow remarriage. Vivekananda extended his perspective by asserting that individuals who have received education at the expense of the impoverished masses are deemed traitors if they fail to acknowledge and address the prevalent conditions of hunger and ignorance among them. The profound ideology he espoused exerted a significant impact on subsequent social reformers. The dynamic principles of Mahatma Gandhi and the socialist concepts of Jawaharlal Nehru were greatly influenced by Vivekananda's beliefs and teachings.

## Swamiji as a Renowned Social Reformer

Based on the evidence presented, it can be inferred that Vivekananda holds a prominent position as a significant figure in social transformation. He proposed a remedy for the issues faced by Indian society that is commensurate with the magnitude of those challenges. During the era of Vivekananda, religion, particularly Hinduism, was perceived by some as primarily characterized by priestly practices. (Dutta 2003) Through his religious lectures, he has demonstrated that religion primarily encompasses the process of self-realization and extending that same realization to others. All individuals are interconnected and have a collective existence within the concept of Brahman. According to the perspective being discussed, it is posited that all individuals possess a divine essence.

Furthermore, it might be argued that divinity resides inside the human essence. He delivered this message to instil a sense of self-assurance in individuals. This action can be characterized as audacious. During that period, the clergy possessed a significant degree of influence over society. However, he could not refrain from demonstrating to the people of India that religion is solely based on self-realization. During that period, the caste system had significantly deteriorated. The determination was predicated on the individual's birth. He demonstrated that the caste system is not determined by one's birth but rather by the individual's inherent qualities. The objective is to achieve comprehensive national development.

Consequently, he proposed an educational framework that adequately facilitates the holistic development of students. Society is comprised of individuals. The elevation of a person will inherently result in the elevation of society as a whole. Two points can be highlighted in his educational reform. During that period, access to education was confined to a select few individuals. Vivekananda advocated for the provision of comprehensive education accessible to all individuals. His supply of non-formal education was a significant gift to society.

Furthermore, the individual held a negative perspective towards the education system prevalent in India. As to his assessment, the nature of it was characterized by negativity. A comprehensive education system facilitates the development of mental and physical strength and fosters self-reliance. Upon examination of his educational curriculum, it becomes evident that it

encompasses a comprehensive range of disciplines that effectively contribute to developing individuals' mental and physical strength and self-reliance. The ideology he espoused has proven advantageous for the general populace of India. These actions are sufficient to identify him as a social reformer.

In a broad sense, the subsequent delineations can encapsulate his impact on India and the global community. In contemporary India, Vivekananda emerged as the primary proponent of the notion that the spiritualization of our daily existence is essential for imbuing it with more significance. Within the realm of spirituality, he had a reawakening, so to speak, of India's intrinsic message to both its people and the global community. According to Vivekananda, spiritual self-realization enables individuals to fully actualize their inherent capabilities, particularly within a colonized country such as 19th-century India. Furthermore, despite his rejection of political practice and his adoption of social and religious reforms influenced by the West, the crux of his teaching was empowering individuals. This empowerment was to be achieved through education, collective contemplation and engagement, and most importantly, the recognition of the fundamental interconnectedness of all human beings. Within the Hindu tradition, the practice of ascetic detachment from worldly affairs had faced criticism before Vivekananda's emergence. However, Vivekananda initially embraced the concept of individual renunciation and aggressively integrated it with the notion of dedicated social service. In this context, he bestowed a novel interpretation or significance on the fundamental concept and establishment of sanyas.

The creation of the Ramakrishna Mission introduced a novel approach for Indian monks and Sanyasins. It is evident that contemporary Hindu monks do not lead lives of seclusion but actively strive to demonstrate their commitment to serving society. Various institutions such as hospitals, educational establishments, dispensaries, orphanages, and other community facilities have been established to mitigate human suffering. The Indian society of the nineteenth century found itself entangled in a complex network resulting from religious superstition and social obscurantism. According to Max Weber's observations, Hinduism has evolved into a complex amalgamation of magical practices, animistic beliefs, and superstitious elements. Abhorrent rituals, such as animal sacrifice and the infliction of physical torment, had supplanted the worship of deities. The priests exerted a significant and perhaps detrimental influence on the mental state of the populace. The practice of idolatry and polytheism served to strengthen their

societal status. According to the proposal put out by Raja Rammohan Roy, the exclusive control held by some individuals or groups over the understanding of religious texts and the interpretation of rituals has created a misleading nature inside various religious systems. The devout adhered to a state of subordination, not alone to the divine entity, but also to the clergy's capricious inclinations, desires, and requests. Religious ideology can influence individuals to engage in a wide range of actions. In ancient Indian society, it was seen that some women resorted to engaging in intimate relationships with priestesses to fulfil their sexual desires.

Swami Vivekananda, like other Indian social reformers of the 19th century, was highly affected by the country's illustrious past. Even the most illogical and superstitious institution was not something he liked to criticize. Have no words of censure for even the most superstitious, he argues, for they must have had some benefit in the past. Never forget that this country's institutions are the best in the world regarding their goals and purposes, compared to any other nation. Although castes exist in practically every nation on earth, nowhere is their structure and intent as magnificent as it is in this one. He claims that in earlier periods, even those habits that seem quite low now were vital to existence. He said that if certain habits must be abandoned, we should do so with blessings rather than curses.

Vivekananda was opposed to reforming India purely by the use of Western tools and techniques.

I regret to inform you that most of our contemporary reform movements have been thoughtless replications of Western work practices, which is undoubtedly unsuitable for India. Consequently, all of our recent reform initiatives have yielded unfavourable outcomes. (Banhatti<sup>2</sup>)

The reason Indian reformers have failed in their attempts to change Indian society is because they have attempted to imitate Western methods while completely denouncing our own. According to Vivekananda, the majority of India's reform ideas are beneficial. Most social reformers are likewise decent, well-meaning folks, and some of their goals are commendable. However, it is a well-established reality that despite hundreds of years of social reform, no meaningful and lasting change has been noticeable across the nation.

"Thousands of platform speeches have been made, denouncing the devoted head of the Hindu race and its civilization in volume after volume. Yet, no good practical result has been achieved. Where is the reason for that?" he asks. Finding the cause is not difficult. It is found in the actual denunciation.[Chattopadhyaya 1999, 3]

It is evident from this that Vivekananda supported using Indian methods to help improve Indian society. He believed the previous reformers' efforts were ineffective because they ignored our strategies.

Vivekananda did not attempt to overthrow the established Indian systems while transforming Indian society. He played the character of a physician who seeks to treat a patient's illness rather than end it.

"My method of treatment is to remove the disease's causes from its roots, rather than just keeping them suppressed," he states.\*[4] Any problem that is merely suppressed always has the potential to resurface.

Thus, Vivekananda tried to eradicate the underlying causes of social ills. He adds that to establish an Indian nation, we must first address the issue's core, apply the necessary fixes, and watch it blaze skyward. This is what Vivekananda refers to as radical reform.

## **Conclusion**

Numerous social reformers in India are changing people's perceptions. They suffered greatly during the Indian Revolution.

A few social reformers who contributed to the country were highlighted here. Mother Teresa, Jawaharlal Nehru, Baba Amte, Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, Swami Dayananda Saraswati, and Swami Vivekananda

There is the perspective that Vivekananda continuously espoused for the oppressed and the marginalized. It was he who, long before Gandhi, reinterpreted and skillfully used the more traditional theological metaphor of God as existing among the humble and impoverished (daridranarayan). Social ills are discussed in social philosophy. Social philosophy is responsible for establishing standards for eliminating these social ills so that everyone in the community can live in harmony and dignity. The vices of Indian society that were prevalent at the time are

largely responsible for the inspiration behind Vivekananda's ideology. We briefly examine the socioeconomic state of India in the 19th century before moving on to Vivekananda's initiatives. When Swami Vivekananda lived there, India's socioeconomic situation was dire. Issues like Poverty, faith, Sati, and so forth were pervasive in those days. Furthermore, the country was ruled by the British during the time. Even though the British government established the railroad and the telegraph, among other positive things, they destroyed the nation's economy.

In less than forty years, Swami Vivekananda created an age, motivating his brothers to oppose the tyranny of the wise, superstition, untouchability, Poverty, and illiteracy. He interacted with individuals from all social strata on his travels from the Himalayas to Kanyakumari. He shared their joys and sorrows and ate and slept with them. His heart was continually thumping with the crowd, and he felt degraded by their treatment of him. He fiercely opposed the traditional caste structure of the Brahmans and saw "untouchability" as a mental illness that afflicted the upper classes.

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