

# Swami Vivekananda in Washington, D.C.

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**I**N A continuing, but intermittent, search for news of Swami Vivekananda in America, a visit to Washington, DC, was made. At the Library of Congress, two articles were found in the *Washington Times*, which apparently, to the writers' knowledge, have not been published previously. According to Marie Louise Burke in her monumental and constantly expanding work, *Swami Vivekananda in the West: New Discoveries*, Swamiji left Baltimore on October 22 or 23, 1894, for Washington. While there he stayed as the guest of Col. and Mrs. Enoch Totten. A search of the existing records of Washington of that time turned up nothing concerning the Tottens. Swamiji was well taken care of, according to Burke, and spent several days visiting this interesting city, the capital of the United States.

On Sunday, October 28, he spoke twice at the People's Church. These sermons were covered by both the *Washington Post* and the *Washington Times*. The *Times* article has not been published before. It

is highly complimentary about Swamiji and will be given in its entirety later on in this article.

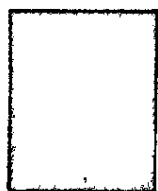
The other article fills a gap in the knowledge of Swamiji's activities on November 1. Ads had been run in the papers announcing that Swami Vivekananda would give lectures on November 1, entitled 'Karmax (Reincarnation)' and on November 6, 'Gods Of All Nations.' The word 'Karmax' is puzzling; perhaps it is derived from karma, but more likely, it is only a misprint. It is possible that the title was meant to be 'Karma and Reincarnation.'

The fact that Swamiji left Washington before the November 6 lecture is known. He was called away on some important, unstated, business to New York City. No mention was made in the *Washington Post* regarding the November 1 lecture, so nothing definite regarding this lecture was known prior to this finding. The *Washington Times* ran the following article on November 2:

## THE HINDOO OPTIMISTIC

### Vive Kananda Compares Religions and Talks of Reincarnation

Optimism is the feature of the belief of the Aryas or Hindoos as distinguished from Western religions. according to the Brahman monk, Vive Kananda, who spoke to a fair-sized audience at Metzert Hall last night. His subject was reincarnation. Much of his lecture was devoted to comparison of Hindoo with Christian doctrine.



Ray and Wanda Ellis are members of the Vedanta Society of St Louis, Missouri, USA. Published here is their second 'New Discovery' Their earlier research in New England had resulted in the discovery of a report of a lecture Swamiji gave in the town of Lynn, Massachusetts, on April 17, 1894. That discovery was presented in the VEDANTA KESARI Annual 1987.

To illustrate the tenet of reincarnation he compared the human body to a river. Each drop of water passes on and is replaced by another. The entire body of water, he observed, changes wholly in a few moments, but we call it the same river. In the same way the particles of the body are constantly replaced by others and no two days do we have the same body, yet we preserve our identity.

The spirit remains so, the Hindoos believe, that the person may have a different and more sudden and violent change in death and yet pass on in its existence to some other place in the universe, to some other planet or star, and then take on a body of flesh again or of some other kind.

He said there ought to be no talk of sin. The mistakes of the past ought to be used only for guidance in the future, never to be moaned over. When the lesson is learned from them they should be forgotten.

“Strike a light,” he said, “sit not in darkness and sorrow. Do always better and be happy.”

He is stopping with the Hon. Enoch Totten, No. 1708 I Street northwest, and many prominent people were to be found in his audience, interested listeners. Mrs. Totten, though a strict Presbyterian, thinks his doctrines very helpful, and believes to hear him would be a great benefit to many Christians, as well as to thoughtful people outside of the churches.

The other finding, a lengthy article was obviously impressed with Swamiji, as in the *Washington Times*, appeared on the following article will show: Monday, October 29, 1894. The reporter

### LOVE RELIGION'S ESSENCE

Vive Kananda, a Brahmin Monk,  
Preaches at the People' Church.

INTRODUCED BY REV. DR. KENT

Those Who Want God as They Want Life  
Will Find—Many People Attend Church  
Because It Is Fashionable in Their Set—  
True Devotion Asks No Returns

Vive Kananda, the Brahmin monk, spoke to the congregation of the People's Church, No. 423 G Street northwest, at 11:00 a.m. yesterday.

He was dressed in a robe of scarlet which covered his entire person, from throat to ankles, in large simple folds. On his head he wore a turban of ample silk of the color of gold, which flowed back, falling as far as his waist. He has a smooth face, with large, regularly curved features; large

eyes, whose light is subdued by being partly closed much of the time. Between the brown of his face and his robe below was a narrow band of white, the upper edge of a well-laundered linen collar, and edging his turban above, a broad touch of black hair. Large and well proportioned, his simplicity of dress gave him a majestic presence.

Dr. Kent introduced the monk. He said that Dr. Leonard Bacon's statement to the World's Parliament of Religions that we do not sufficiently take into account the personal equation in hearing the report of missionaries, ought to be seriously pondered. These reports are honest but very misleading. The World's Parliament of Religions had given the people so generally misrepresented an opportunity to tell the truth about themselves. But we must not expect too much. Many denominations, like the turtle, have withdrawn themselves into their shells and refused to hear.

Dr. Mummery, of England, has said: "What in any religion is fundamental is largely true, and what is superficial is largely false." This is being impressed upon our people by the literature of other religions that has been spread through our country from the Parliament of Religions.

Vive Kananda, coming forward, said as a boy at the university he studied comparative religion. In India are many religions. One-fifth are Mahomedans. A million are Christians. He studied all. He listened to a great Hindoo preacher, and when he had finished, said:

"My brother, have you seen God?"

The preacher looked up in surprise.

"No."

"How, then, do you know these things are true?"

"My father told me."

"Who told your father?"

"His father," and so on through his ancestors to the clouds.

He heard a Christian preacher of great eloquence. This man told the seeker for truth that if he was not immersed in water at once he was in great danger to be roasted alive. Upon further questions this Christian also, through the records of his books, went back to his ancestors, and so back to the clouds.

#### THE STUDENT NOT SATISFIED

This did not satisfy the student. He set about praying. He prayed sometimes three days and nights with much weeping and without food. He finally found a man who knew no books, not even to write his own name. This sage was preaching his religion. When asked the old question, he replied:

"Yes, I see God now and I will teach you to see Him."

This man bore the stamp of God in his features. It was the same certificate that came to the man of Nazareth when the dove descended upon Him at Jordan. He made his hearer to believe that God lives and religion is not a mockery.

For twelve years Kananda sat at this man's feet. He was the master. He said one day, "Take up this book." Kananda took up the book and read. It was a calendar. He read in it where the rainfall was foretold. It said that within a certain time so many tons of rain would fall in a certain district. "Now," said the teacher, "close the book and press it." He did so. "Squeeze it very hard." He obeyed. "Did any water come from the book?" "None." So are all books. The true religion is here, at the heart.

The truth is people do not want God. Far from it. Religion is largely fashionable. My lady has a fine parlor, elegant furniture, a piano, beautiful jewelry, well-fitting, costly dresses, a hat that is the latest thing out. She cannot get along without a dash of religion to keep up with her set. There is much of this religion, but it is hypocrisy, and hypocrisy is the root of all evil. This sort of religion is not of God. It is only the shadow. People with such religion sometimes grow to be in earnest and talk about religious things as if they had some reality. So talking about religion without having it these people fall to quarreling and fighting. "Mine, mine," is the cry, never "thine, thine." "My religion is best." "No, mine," and so they fight as did the savage tribes about their rival gods, Mambo and Jumbo. Competition in religion, as in business, is the bane of all.

#### LOVE ABIDETH

Your own Paul says "all else shall perish, but love abideth." That is the great truth. That false doctrine that my nation shall be aggrandized at the cost of every other nation is not of God.

A youth went to his master and said, "I want to know God." The master paid little attention, but the youth persisted and would not be put off. Finally one day the master said: "Let us go down to the river and have a bath." So they went down and the youth plunged in. The master followed and falling upon him held him under. The youth struggled, but the master would not let him up. Finally, when he seemed to be almost dead he desisted, drew him from the water and revived him. "What did you most want when in the water?" the master asked. "Breath," was the answer. "Then you don't want God."

So it is with men, what do you want? You want breath, without it you cannot live; you want bread, without it you cannot live; you want a house, without it you cannot live. When you want God as you want these things, He manifests himself to you. It is a great thing to want God.

A majority of men and women in this world want the enjoyments of sense. They have been told that there is a God afar off and if they will send him a cartload of words he will help them get these good things of this world. But in every land there are a few persons who want God. They would be one with the essence of good and truth. Religion is not shopkeeping. Love asks no return; love begs not; love gives.

Religion is not an outgrowth of fear; religion is joyous. It is the spontaneous outburst of the songs of birds and the beautiful sight of the morning. It is an expression of the spirit. It is from within an expression of the free and noble spirit.

If misery is religion, what is hell? No man has a right to make himself miserable. To do so is a mistake; it is a sin. Every peal of laughter is a prayer sent to God.

To go back, what I have learned is this: Religion is not in books, not in forms, not in sects, not in nations; religion is in the human heart. It is engraved there. The proof of it is in ourselves.

I make two points. There are sects. Let them go on increasing in number till each is a sect by himself. None can see God exactly as another; each must believe in Him and serve Him as he sees Him. Then I want a harmonizing of the sects. Individuality is not in a fight with universality.

Let each for himself and all together fight evils. If you have a power of eight and I a power of four, and you come and destroy me, you have lost at least four. You have only four left to conquer evil. It is love alone that can conquer hatred. If there is power in hate there is infinitely more power in love.

So with these findings one more piece of the jigsaw puzzle of Swamiji's wanderings in America has been put into place. What else is to be found? Perhaps

some small town library holds a key to another piece of the puzzle. How to find it and what will it say? That is the fascination of the search. □

When you see a good man, think of emulating  
him; when you see a bad man,  
examine your own heart.

*Confucius*