

161st birth anniversary of Swami Vivekananda

January 13, 2023

In news– January 12 2023 marked the 161st birth anniversary of Swami Vivekananda, observed as National Youth Day.

About Swami Vivekananda-

- He was **born Narendranath Datta on January 12, 1863, in Kolkata, West Bengal.**
- He practiced meditation from a very early age and also joined the Brahmo Samaj movement for a certain period.
- He later became the **most-notable disciple of Ramakrishna**, who demonstrated the essential unity of all religions.
- He **believed in the essential unity of man and god (Advaita).**
- He believed that it was only in selflessness and in consciously trying to serve the larger humanity that one truly gained a perspective on religion and God.
- He stressed on the universal and humanistic side of the Vedas as well as belief in service rather than dogma.
- He was a Hindu spiritual leader and reformer who attempted to combine Indian spirituality with Western material progress, maintaining that the two supplemented and complemented one another.
- One of the greatest patriots, he was also credited for **introducing Indian philosophies of Vedanta and Yoga to the western world.**
- He was one of the main representatives of Neo-Vedanta, a modern interpretation of selected aspects of Hinduism in line with western esoteric traditions, especially Transcendentalism, New Thought and Theosophy.
- **He is best known in the United States for his groundbreaking speech to the 1893 (11th September)**

World's Parliament of Religions at Chicago (This day is observed as **"World Brotherhood Day"**).

- On his return to India with a small group of Western disciples in 1897, Vivekananda founded the Ramakrishna Mission at the monastery of Belur Math on the Ganga River near Calcutta (now Kolkata).
- **He died on 4th July 1902 and was cremated on a sandalwood funeral pyre on the bank of the Ganga in Belur**, opposite where Ramakrishna was cremated sixteen years earlier.
- **In 1985, the Government of India declared his birthday – January 12, as National Youth Day.**

His teachings & philosophy-

Vedantic Humanism-

- Swami Vivekananda believed that there is **only one Self in the universe**. There is only one Existence. **He saw the entire universe as a manifestation of the absolute One.**
- On the coexistence of various faiths, he believed religious acceptance, and not tolerance was important.
- For Vivekananda, the most desirable path for self-realisation was the **selfless service of man**.
- He believed that some ways through which the essential unity of all human beings can be realised are unconditional love for all, judicious detachment, and expansion of self through service of fellow humans despite any sectarian difference.
- **He was an exponent of vedantic humanism. He did not propagate a world-negating concept of spirituality, rather he said that each and every chore of your life should be done with divinity.**
- He articulated that external rituals of religion are of secondary importance but the spiritual essence of a religion should be preserved and accepted.

Divinity within ourselves-

- He said that infinite power is in the soul of man, whether he knows it or not. Its manifestation is only a question of being conscious of it. With the full consciousness of his infinite power and wisdom, the giant will rise to his feet.
- He asserted that each **soul is potentially divine. The goal of human beings should be to manifest this divinity within**, which can be done by controlling nature, external and internal.

Faith in oneself-

- **He emphasises that the ideal of faith in ourselves is of the greatest help to us as whatever** “you think, that you will be. If you think yourselves weak, weak you will be; if you think yourselves strong, strong you will be.”
- He said that one has to know that all knowledge, power, purity, and freedom are in oneself.
- He also urges people to not shy away from taking responsibility for their actions.

Four pathways of attaining moksha-

Swami Vivekananda spelt out the four pathways of attaining moksha from the worldly pleasure and attachment in his books – **Raja-yoga, Karma-yoga, Jnana-yoga and Bhakti-yoga.**

- **Karma-yoga, or the yoga of selfless action** tells that through the correct actions, the ‘troublemaker’ ego can turn into the ‘troubleshooter’ ego. It says that even if you do not believe in God, just focus on your work with utmost honesty, dedication and power of your mind. Be non-attached and keep working for work’s sake. Instead of worrying about the results, leave the fruits of your work to the Lord.
- **Bhakti-yoga is the process of inner purification.** Love is the vital element for all human beings, it teaches. Love is pure and cosmic, but ego pollutes it and gives

out negative elements like lust, greed, jealousy and anger. God is the only one who truly loves us. Pour holy thoughts into the mind with prayer, chant holy words, study holy books and keep the holy company close to your heart.

- **Raja-yoga** seeks to attain the divine by igniting the flame of knowledge of the self within. Most seekers do not have the patience and perseverance to follow this path for the sacrifices that it calls for. Raja-yoga dispels that the mind is perverted to follow the path of reason. Teaching the process of meditation and concentration, it tells you to confront the restlessness of the mind and uproot it.
- **Jnana-yoga is the path of knowledge.** Weeding out the darkness of ignorance through the light of knowledge, it brings the 'fire' and 'light' alive by burning all the impurities of the mind. The mind does not give up its attachment to worldly pleasures unless it has tasted something greater and higher. Self-knowledge, according to jnana-yoga, is true liberation.

About National Youth Festival-

- The Ministry of Youth Affairs & Sports has been celebrating it with an objective of providing a platform to bring the youth of the country together in an attempt to provide them an opportunity to showcase their talents in various activities.
- The 26th National Youth Festival was held in Hubballi-Dharwad, Karnataka.