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Relevance of Swami Vivekananda's Thoughts in Today's Perspective

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Religion and Swami Vivekananda

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Swami Vivekananda addressed the Parliament of Religion at Chicago on 11th September 1893 in the Hall of Columbus. He stood there on the platform of the Parliament as the living embodiment of universality and harmony, the two key needs of the modern age. What he taught in subsequent years was only a commentary on his addresses at the Parliament. Swamiji stood there as the coordinator of the different sects and religions, urging everyone to give up the frog-in-the-well mentality and become universal. What would this universal religion be like? Swamiji explained in the Parliament.

.... if there is even to be a universal religion, it must be one which will have no location in place or time; which will be infinite like the God it will preach, and whose sun will shine upon the followers of krsna and of Christ, on saints and sinners alike; which will not be Brahminic or Buddhistic, Christian or Mohammedan, but the sum total of all these and still have infinite space for development; which in its catholicity will embrace in its infinite arms, and find a place for, every human being, from the lowest groveling savage not far removed from the brute, to the highest man towering by the virtues of his head and heart almost above humanity, making society stand in awe of him and doubt his human nature. It will be a religion which will have no place for prosecution or intolerance in its policy, which will recognize divinity in every man and woman,

and whose whole scope, whose whole force, will be created in aiding humanity to realize its own true divine nature. This was the religion Vivekananda represented at the Parliament. It was in fact the Religion beyond all religions. The importance of the Parliament of Religions can never be overestimated. The Parliament in 1893 had delegates from all corners of the world who represented a wide spectrum of religious faiths around the globe. The sheer magnitude of its size and the immensity of the public response and media coverage, it received make the parliament a unique event in the religious history of the world. In a letter to his brother disciples Swamiji wrote: Everything must be sacrificed, if necessary, for that one sentiment universality. Vivekananda religion taught him to search through multiplicity and duality for the ultimate unity which is the unchanging base of an ever changing world. To reach the Universal Religion, recognition of the necessity of variation is as important as that of underlying unity. If one religion is true, all others must be true. He proclaimed at Parliament of Religion, "We believe not only in universal toleration, but we accept all religions as true." Religion had generated both intense love and diabolical hatred, but accepting all religions meant worshipping god with each of them. "I shall go to the Mosque of the Mohammedan; I shall ... kneel before the crucifix ... I shall take refuge in Budha ... I shall sit down in meditation, with the Hindu." In the present situation in the world, the significance of such a religious approach cannot be overestimated. When the unitary outlook that science today hints at and that Swami taught and made available to everyone becomes pervasive among mankind, most of the problems that plague our human species will simply disappear. Human life will take on a