



It is best to work among the youth in whom lies our hope —
patiently, steadily, and without noise.

(Swami Vivekananda)



LOOKING INWARDS (The Young and the Hope)

Our nation is on a fast forward in many areas of development and all our hopes are hinged on our youth, the future leaders of the world. Under Swami Vivekananda's instructions, we need to work among them patiently, steadily and noiselessly. Our non-judgmental guidance and experiential knowledge will play an important role in shaping their thoughts. Hence, we need to keep working on ourselves too in the very same manner. Towards this theme of hope, our contributors have written beautifully on the challenges facing the youth of today, Swami Vivekananda's hope for the youth of the country, the hope for more compassion in the new year etc. We do wish everyone a conscious start on a spiritual journey (for those who are yet to start) and steady progress (for those already on the path).

The Editorial Team

My Hope for 2024, by Mona Das from Gurugram

As we stand on the threshold of 2024, let's imagine a year filled with understanding and kindness. Where instead of heated arguments, we use peaceful methods to resolve our issues. Where fractured communities heal and come together. Where the language of love reigns supreme. Inside each of us is a playful child, wanting to enjoy simple joys like walking barefoot in the sunshine, catching fireflies at dusk or being enthralled by the night sky in the company of a loving family. Let us embrace the inner child within us and look at life with fresh eyes.

In 2024, let's find comfort - not only in things we can touch and see but also in our inner peace. As we embrace this inner harmony, may the dazzle of the material world dim, allowing the radiant glow of our shared humanity to light our collective path forward. Together let us step into the new year with hope, resilience and a commitment to building a world where compassion reigns supreme!

My Spiritual Growth from my youth to now, by Sunil Chopra from Gurugram

Spiritual growth takes place when one has the essential ingredients for it in himself or herself. It is a gradual process, if one nourishes it with a conscious effort. The conscious effort can begin at any stage of life. In my case, I had deep faith in God right from my childhood. When I joined the college, I opted for classes on Divinity. My mother suggested that I should pray to Hanumaan ji and later on I started praying to Maa Durga as well. Things spiritual would always interest me, as also the supernatural phenomenon. In my mid-thirties, I started going through spiritual books on a regular basis. Onwards on this path, I got a copy of Swami Vivekananda's 'Lectures from Colombo to Almora' and it became my constant companion. During this period, when I had gone for the very first time to Kolkata, some inexplicable force made me visit Dakshineswar on the very first day of my visit. In my late forties, I obtained a copy of the book 'The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna' and I started reading it. I got so connected with its contents that every day I would read one or two of its pages. It has now become a regular part of my daily routine. When the book finishes, I start reading it again from the beginning. Every time, I become aware of a deeper meaning of what Sri Ramakrishna says. The practices one needs to constantly follow on this path are 'mantra jaap', meditation and reading of spiritual books. Leading a spiritual life helps in attaining equanimity of mind which gives one a clearer perspective of life. One also remains grounded which leads to greater peace of mind, leading a simple life and a feeling of humility.



The Dakshineswar Kali Temple in Kolkata

Previous issues of VIVA newsletters (in both English and Hindi) can be accessed at <https://viva.rkmm.org/>



VOL No. 3. Issue No. 1 VIVA NEWSLETTER (ENGLISH MONTHLY)

Vivekananda Institute of Values (VIVA)

Practical Spirituality for All

Challenges faced by the Youth of Today, by Chhandita Sen Sharma from Gurugram

The youth can potentially be a country's greatest asset. The youth, typically confident, bright and self-motivated, actively shape the country's social development with their fresh innovations and ideas. However, today's youth face immense pressure to be the best among the rest—not only academically or professionally, but also socially. The advent of social media has created a unique set of incredible opportunities for the youth, but also a host of equally daunting challenges.

We find today's youth overexposed to social media, always competing and desiring the next big thing—be it professional opportunities, prosperity, social experiences, or unrealistic beauty standards. Consequently, we are facing an unprecedented rise in mental health issues in the youth. While social media connects us to the rest of the world, our ability to make personal connections is rapidly decreasing, resulting in increasing loneliness. Therefore, in addition to providing ample educational and professional resources, we must also establish avenues to take care of the youth's mental health and empower them to follow their passions and happiness, ensuring that our country's best potential asset is happy and healthy and truly a treasure.

Swami Vivekananda's hope and vision for the Youth of the Country, by Saswati Roychowdhury from Gurugram

The vitality of a nation rests on the shoulders of its youth, and without adequate nurturing, it risks facing a perilous decline. Recognizing this crucial role, Swami Vivekananda passionately called upon the young people, who he considered the future of his beloved India. His vision was clear: he desired a generation of individuals strong, fearless, and sincere to their very core, embracing their immense inner power as the 'infinite, omnipotent, omniscient' soul. In order to fulfil this purpose, they need to rise as True Men. He said, "The true man is he who is strong as strength itself and yet possesses a woman's heart. You must feel for the millions of beings around you, and yet you must be strong and inflexible and you must also possess Obedience; though it may seem a little paradoxical — you must possess these apparently conflicting virtues." Recognizing the vital role of nurturing, in achieving this vision, he emphatically proclaimed, "Take the greatest care of these young ones on whom our future depends." Swami Vivekananda foresaw these vibrant and enthusiastic young minds marching across the globe, elevating India as the spiritual leader of the world.

However, for this, to occur, they must familiarize themselves with the wisdom of their illustrious ancestors, the Rishis, embracing all the ideals that contributed to our greatness and rejecting everything that led to our decline. In Swamiji's own words: "My hope of the future lies in the youths of character — intelligent, renouncing all for the service of others, and obedient — who can sacrifice their lives in working out my ideas and thereby do good to themselves and the country at large." He knew in doing so, India will ascend to greater heights, shining brighter and standing much higher than ever before.



"My hope of the future lies in the youths of character — intelligent, renouncing all for the service of others, and obedient — who can sacrifice their lives in working out my ideas and thereby do good to themselves and the country at large."

Swami Vivekananda

MOVEMENT – VIVA Events and Updates

1. A 7-day intensive Awakened Citizen Program (ACP) capacity building training was held for around 100 middle school teachers of schools of Ahmedabad zone of Kendriya Vidyalayas.



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2. Winter Workshops- There were two 5-day winter workshops for children held at VIVA. A workshop for children aged 8-12 for discovery of values and awakening of their possibilities, and a communication workshop for children aged 13-16. Both the workshops were very well received. The children received certificates at the end of the workshops. The success of the workshops has encouraged us to repeat them for this month of January.



The children receiving certificates for successfully completing the winter workshop on communication

3. On December 9, 2023, Dr. Anuradha Balam, Chief Coordinator, VIVA was invited to speak at the 'Blossom' book launch series for grades 1-5. She spoke on the importance of values in transforming education.

ASK SWAMI SHANTATMANANDA

A reader writes:

How can a person live a life of positivity despite all hopelessness around?

Swami Shantatmananda replies:

Our problems of hopelessness are centered around our understanding and conception of life. Suppose our idea of life is to be super rich, then we would always be hopeless in case we aren't able to make it come true. If we keep reasonable expectations of ourselves, our life, and people around us, we tend to live a life of hope, positivity and interconnectedness. If we can think and understand that the hopelessness and negativity is always about what we don't get - our broken expectations and failed aspirations we will remain hopeless. Remembering that there are people who have done great things despite all difficulties, can help us tremendously. We can learn, connect with, and read about such people to draw encouragement, strength and hope. There is always a higher dimension of life where we can go beyond these trivialities. When we look beyond our senses and turn inwards and begin to understand this different dimension of life, we can live better. Finally, as Swami Vivekananda says believe in yourself ('atmashradha') – an approach to life that helps to see that there's no need to get bogged down as these temporary moments get better with time and effort.

Connecting the Youth with the Old – The Goodfellows

In our lonely old age, is life all about awaiting our final fate or is there any hope in living and carrying forward with our days?

The goodfellows is a startup started by 3 bright youth of the country. The objective of the social venture is to create a community of the elderly and the youth. The elderly, called the 'grandpal', are introduced and connected with the hopeful energy of the youth who help them in their daily tasks, spend time with them and bring a new friendship to their lives. One can only imagine the joy in the synergy between the knowledge of the old and the energy of the young coming together to form a unique bond of shared interests and hopeful days. (To know more, please read the detailed article on www.thebetterindia.com)



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