# Relevance of Swami Vivekanand for Youth in 21st Century

## Who is Vivekanand?

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- Swami Vivekananda was born in 1863 as Narendranath in a Bengali family.
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- He was monk, a chief disciple of the Indian mystic Ramakrishna and the founder of Ramakrishna Mutt.
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- In 1888, Narendra left the monastery and travelled extensively in India for five years,.
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- In 1893 Vivekananda represented India and Hinduism in The Parliament of the World's Religion in Chicago.
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- In 1894, he founded the Vedanta Society in New York to  study, practice and propagate the principles of Vedanta.
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- He was a key figure in the introduction of the Indian philosophies of Vedanta and Yoga to the Western world.
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- He raised interfaith awareness, as his two favourite books being Bhagavad Gita and The Imitation of Christ and contributed to the concept of nationalism in colonial India.
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- In 1902, he died at the age 0f 39, with the rupture of a blood vessel in his brain being the possible cause of death.
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## What is his relevance to today’s youth?

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- Swami Vivekanand is the greatest youth icon produced by India and one that influenced millions of youth across the world.
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- In the 21st century, when the youth of India are facing new problems,

pushing boundaries and aspiring for a better future, thoughts of Swami Vivekanand have become more relevant.
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- His ideas can be understood by this fourfold mantra to live a meaningful life - Physical, Social, Intellectual and Spiritual quest .
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### 1. Physical Quest

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- By physical quest he meant, taking care of the human body and undertaking activities to mitigate physical sufferings.
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- Vivekananda was of the view that the youth can lead a successful life only when they are physically fit.
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- Vivekananda understood that while most youth aspire not all are equipped with the mental and physical stamina to pursue such a goal.
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- Therefore he asked the youth to overcome fears and become stronger physically and mentally. He said, “Power is within you; you can do anything and everything. Believe in that, do not believe that you are weak. Therefore, arise, awake, and stop not till the goal is reached."
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- He said, "You will be nearer to heaven through football than through the study of the Gita."
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- What Vivekananda wanted from the youth was 'muscles of iron' and 'nerves of steel'.
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### 2. Social Quest

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- Vivekanand wanted the young to undertake social activities, not merely for the betterment of society but also for their individual evolution and growth.
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- The social quest involves undertaking activities to mitigate physical sufferings. Running hospitals, orphanages and old-age homes qualify for this

level.
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- He advised the youth to 'Serve God in man'. Vivekanand clubbed spiritualism with social service.
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- He said, "For the next fifty years this alone shall be our keynote - this, our great Mother India. Let all other gods disappear for the time from our minds."
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- He taught that the men and animals around us are our gods deserve our worship and services. He asserted that "the first gods we have to worship are our countrymen. These we have to worship, instead of being jealous of each other and fighting each other."
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- The most unique contribution of Swami Vivekanand towards the creation of a new Bharat was opening the minds of Indians to their duty to the downtrodden.
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### 3. Intellectual Quest

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- He said, "It is the young, the strong, and healthy, of sharp intellect that will reach the Lord."
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- He advocated intellectual quest i.e Running schools, colleges and awareness and empowerment programs.
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- Raising one's intellectual level, gaining knowledge and spreading and sharing it with society is the objective.
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- He suggested that to rebuild the Indian society, education was the primary means for empowering the people.
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- He emphasised on education for all.
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- He also said, "Education is not the amount of information that is put into your brain and runs riot there, undigested, all your life. We must have life-building, man-making, character-making assimilation of ideas."
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### 4. Spiritual Quest

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- He then prescribes the highest level of spiritual service - one of dhyan and sadhna.
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- He suggested that youth could learn many things from the West but must have faith in our own spiritual heritage.
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- Today, when our youth find themselves gripped by increasing isolation, purposelessness, depression and mental fatigue, despite material success, they must go for a spiritual quest and achieve greater goals.
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- He said, "Life is short, but the soul is immortal and eternal, and one thing being certain, death, let us therefore take up a great ideal and give up our whole life to it."
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- The transience of triumph and material wealth were central to this philosophy.
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- He challenged the youth to live for a noble reason, a mighty ideal and a higher state so that they were able to transcend the impermanence.
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### 5. Nation Building

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- Vivekanand advised these four quests as an ideal and goal for the youth.
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- The purpose of these services was to raise the individual and national consciousness as a whole.
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- That's why he called upon the youth to focus their collective energies towards nation building.
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- His vision of India was that of a transformed society inspired by dignity, freedom and individuality and rooted in strength, love and service.
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- He dreamed that such a Bharat would be an egalitarian society that would have broken out of the notions of high or low.
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- He also talked about the unity of society, something that finds an echo in today's world when we witness conflict at various levels.
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- Swami Vivekanand said, "The solution of the caste problem in India is not to degrade the higher castes but to raise the lower up to the level of the higher."
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## What is the way ahead?

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- Swami Vivekanand is often aptly described as a karma yogi.
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- He exemplified his teachings through his own life. He chose the path of spiritual consciousness and tried to assuage the mental and physical sufferings of others in this physical world.
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- The relevance of Swami Vivekanand today is with the ideals and goals that he devised for the youth. He was a great observer of the human mind and the human society at large.
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- Therefore he propounded the scientific way to achieve these goals through these quests.
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- Youth have the option to choose from any of the four paths. The freedom to choose, irrespective of gender, birth, caste or other identifiers is what increases the appeal of this path manifold today.
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- Each individual can begin with himself by preparing himself for the greater cause.
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- Understanding Swami Vivekananda and his message and putting it across our youth can be the simplest way to address many problems faced by India today.
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- It is high time for the youth to come forward once again by shedding their fears and take up the cudgels to shape up India.
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