

RAMAKRISHNA MISSION VIVEKANANDA UNIVERSITY

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Swami Vivekananda established Ramakrishna Mission as commanded by his Master, Sri Ramakrishna, for the secular and spiritual amelioration of humankind as a whole, irrespective of caste, creed, colour, nationality, gender or religion. The twofold aim of the Ramakrishna Mission is, in Swami Vivekananda's own Sanskrit slogan, *atmano mokshartham jagaddhitaya cha* ("For one's own spiritual emancipation and for the welfare of the world"). To achieve this aim at both the individual and the collective level, he established the Ramakrishna Mission, by which he "set in motion a machinery which will bring noble ideas to the door of everybody." Swamiji envisioned it as "a lever for the good of humanity...which no power can drive back." Swami Vivekananda made Belur Math the headquarters of the worldwide Ramakrishna Movement, comprising the twin organizations of Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission. He envisioned that Belur Math would be a centre of great harmony and synthesis, not only of all religious beliefs and traditions, but also of arts and sciences and the various branches of knowledge, both secular and spiritual. In fact, on 2 July 1902, just two days before he passed away, he prophesied, standing at the Belur Math grounds: "The spiritual impact that has come to Belur [Math] will last fifteen hundred years, and it will be a great University. Do not think I imagine it; I see it." It is apparent that Swami Vivekananda's conception of a "University" is a centre where 'man-making' and character-building education would be imparted, higher values would be inculcated and all-round personalities would be formed. His own conception of a complete, all-round personality was one with "heart to feel, brain to conceive and hands to work".

Swamiji's emphasis on character as the hallmark of an educated person is well known. He emphasized times without number that education is not the "amount of information that is put into your brain" but the "life-building, man-making, character-making assimilation of ideas." In 1939, the Governing Body of Ramakrishna Mission took a small step in this direction by starting an institution of higher education near Belur Math called Ramakrishna Mission Vidyamandira. The name 'Vidyamandira' is Swamiji's own christening of the educational institution he wanted near Belur Math. Then, in 1963, Swami Vivekananda's birth centenary year, the authorities of Ramakrishna Mission submitted a proposal to the Government for the starting of the Vivekananda University. For various reasons, however, the university did not materialize at that time. Efforts in this direction were made off and on in subsequent years until finally, a deemed university under University Grants Commission (UGC) was established under Ramakrishna Mission's auspices.