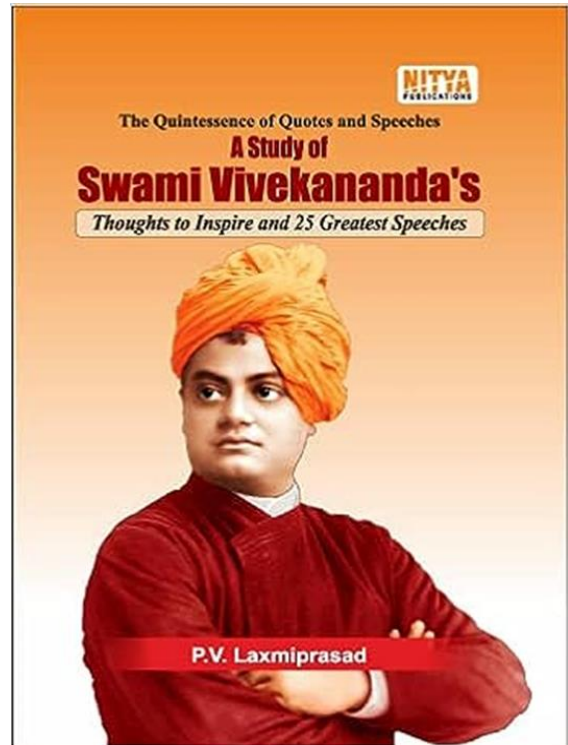


***The Quintessence of Quotes and Speeches: A Study of Swami Vivekananda's Thoughts to Inspire and 25 Greatest Speeches*, Ed. P. V. Laxmiprasad, Nitya Publications, India, 2021, Pp. 153.**

Reviewed by D. Vijaya Lakshmi
Associate Professor
Vishnu Institute of Technology
Bhimavaram Andhrapradesh
Email: vijayalakshmi.d@vishnu.edu.in

Laxmiprasad gives an explicit picture of the life history of Swami Vivekananda in his preamble to Swami Vivekananda. In the opening lines of his introduction, Laxmiprasad mentions the tremendous spiritual personalities such as Rabindranath Tagore, Subhas Chandra Bose, Mahatma Gandhi, Barack Obama, Jayalalithaa who got inspired to instil patriotism in their minds. Quotes written by Bala Gangadhar Tilak, Sri Aurobindo, Rabindranath Tagore, Bipin Chandra Pal and so on showed that he was a true patriotic spirit. In the earlier days, Adi Shankaracharya picturised by means of words about religion, Swami Vivekananda lived to the full extent of his expectations.



Dr. Laxmiprasad's focus is on the ways of C Rajagopalachari, Sarvepalli Radhakrishna, Indian historian Ramesh Chandra Majumdar, Pranab Mukherjee, Narendra Modi, Mamata Banerjee, Baba Ramdev, Anna Hazare, Arvind Kejriwal. These are a few political personalities who are awe-inspired with the patriotic knowledgeable speeches by Swami Vivekananda. Dr. Laxmiprasad keenly observed that not only Indians but also non-Indians of different nations acclaimed the ways of Swami Vivekananda and his notable observations and ends with the consolidation of his life as milestones.

Being an ardent follower of Swami Vivekananda, Dr. Laxmiprasad wanted to write a review on his books as the cultural and spiritual content in the book motivates anyone who comes to

read. Dr. Laxmiprasad takes up two books, such as Thoughts to Inspire and 25 Greatest Speeches of Swami Vivekananda for writing a review. Thoughts to Inspire is a valuable book which gives enthusiasm to people in joys as well as worries. 25 Greatest Speeches - each speech is a masterpiece to all Indians is not a matter but these speeches affect the whole world and this book makes him a celebrity. His versatility of Vedas, Puranas, Epics and so on is immeasurable and impacts infinite people in the world of all generations. Yoga is a buzzword nowadays too as still the intensity inspires people to be fit and work to enjoy the true spirit. Dr. Laxmiprasad's dream of working on Swami Vivekananda's books comes the true by writing this book. The preface is the anchor of directing the readers to go deep into it.

For reviewing this book, I have taken the first four quotes and speech of Swami Vivekananda by Dr. Laxmiprasad. His quotes from Thoughts to Inspire are simple and lucid in style, inspiring to all ages. Each quote he selects from Swami Vivekananda is extremely valuable for future generations. In his first quote, he gives a clear picture of a man's soul. No teacher is required for a human being as his soul can help in all the ways to evolve in his future endeavours. I remember a quote by William Earnest Henley, a British Victorian poet, editor and critic "I am the master of my fate, I am the captain of my soul," he concluded his poem 'Invictus' with these lines. Though these lines are said by him ironically but it is a great motivational quote for many like me. We need to listen to our Soul and Heart to decide where we can excel. Knowledge acquisition gradually encourages our soul to make the right decisions and also leads it to be spiritual. Our ultimate goal of the spirit is to be liberated from these worldly pleasures; it comes out of our inner self, and no one can direct and redirect us to mould our soul.

Dr. Laxmiprasad's second quote is the best of all quotes. The idea is the first step; without it one cannot go forward to do any work. Knowledge, morals and ethics all will make this first step which is a dream can be fulfilled in the coming future. Scientist to saints can undergo journeys of different ways based on their professions but finally they reach their target and shows the world that how exemplified their lives are. Jagadish Chandra Bose to Swami Vivekananda's lives is the best examples for the execution of their ideas and ending up with bare-fruit. Paulo Coelho, a Brazilian bestselling author of his book The Alchemist, says in this book that "when you want something, all the universe conspires in helping you to achieve it." If the idea is right with its righteousness, there will be no break and it leads to the victorious

path in the end, is proved by the above men. While execution of the idea or thought is inevitable both physically and mentally (spiritually).

Conflicts are inevitable in the lives of human beings. So, Dr. Laxmiprasad's third quote is about conflict. We all know the proverb, "no pains no gains." If there is no conflict we are not aware of the consequence. Conflicts are of two types, one is external and the other is internal. External conflicts are no more dangerous than internal. This quote focuses on internal conflicts. If any conflict arises internally means conflict between the brain and heart, the heart wins. So we need to follow our heart. We need to learn to trust our inner feelings then it will be stronger. Paulo Coelho says in *The Alchemist*, "Because, wherever your heart is, that is where you will find your treasure." So our heart is like a compass. It knows the direction we should move, so we must listen carefully. With the experience, most of our spiritual leaders from Swami Vivekananda to our great Prime Minister Narendra Modi usually reiterate the same to all of us in their speeches. Decision making is the ultimate thing in a profession or life. It is not an end point but everything will start working based on this decision in future.

Dr. Laxmiprasad's fourth quote is about God's offerings. Getting these offers are not much easier. Sometimes, we feel that God tests us. We all know that test is a way to measure our knowledge or skill set. Even if we have to test for driving a bike, our capability will be quantified. God also tests us when we ask for something otherwise we cannot bear the burden of what we are going to get. Boss is right like God is always strict and straightforward in offering anything. We need to face a lot of hurdles and setbacks before we enjoy the fruits of those offerings such as strength, logical brain, problem solving skills, happiness, wealth, favours, peace and so on. Sometimes we blame God he is not doing anything though we pray to Him. At once nothing will come to us but gradually we could understand what we are getting and fulfilling our wishes as we, human beings, are living to fulfil our desires. While undergoing our journey of enjoying the offering by God we drive ourselves towards spirituality.

Dr. Laxmiprasad has proved his Indianism and Hinduism in choosing this book for reviewing. While reading the content of Swami Vivekananda in Dr. Laxmiprasad's style it encourages the reader to go ahead in reading the book. All these speeches are delivered to Americans in various places of America. In the first speech Paper of Hinduism, each word is inspiring and awe stuck that what is going on now in the society and the way of the people live in giving value to our Hindu scriptures. Swami Vivekananda says that the Vedas are the living spirits of the body. It is known that man may die but the knowledge he acquired in his life time will never go

anywhere and will never die. When the person comes in this world with another birth like changing his dress said in the Bhagavad Gita he will be born with the knowledge he acquired in his past life.

vāsānsi jīrṇāni yathā vihāya
navāni grihṇāti naro 'parāṇi
tathā śharīrāṇi vihāya jīrṇānya
nyāni sanyāti navāni dehī ||22||

It proves as the lives of the people are the best examples. No person's lives are identical. The present life of person explains how noble/wretched his past life is. Swami Vivekananda compares Science to the Almighty. Women and Nature are given utmost importance in his speech. He awakes the whole world to understand the concept of religion which is unity and divinity.

Dr. Laxmiprasad's next glorious speech mentioned is Address at the Final Session. Swami emphasises the Parliament of Religions in this speech. Whatever the religion is, the unified spirit of religion is the only religion that should last forever in this world. We can also follow our religion and accommodate other religions to maintain universality, individuality and growth. A truthful quote from Henry Ford is "If everyone is moving forward together, then success takes care of itself."

Dr. Laxmiprasad's third essential speech of Swami Vivekananda is The Spirit and Influence of Vedanta. The highlight of the speech is the ancient Indian/Vedanta Philosophy or Tat Tvam Asi. This philosophy is more ancient than Buddhism and there is no such highlighted personality in Indian Philosophy as Christians and Mohammedans have. Each man has a divine spirit within him. So it is not meant for one person or the other. Every individual is equivalent to God. Swami says Altruism is the basic philosophy to develop morals and ethics in human beings. He reiterates in this speech also that the basics of all religions are one and the same. Universal brotherhood is the highest standpoint in Vedanta Philosophy.

Dr. Laxmiprasad's fourth prominent speech given by Swami Vivekananda is The Soul and God. It is an infinite and never-ending topic to discuss. Desire is the first and foremost thing to progress or regress in our life. This desire has no limitations and is a common criterion for all ages and kinds of people. Though Gods and Religions are different the application of humans is the same to fulfil their wishes. The thought and mind of a person is the next important step.

These are guided and controlled by the Soul which is different from these two (Thought and Mind). God is the Soul, if there is no God there is no Soul. If the Soul leaves the body, the body is nothing. If God leaves the Soul, the Soul is nothing. Inter relations among all these such as desire, thought, the Soul and God are mystical, not seen directly but can experience, on the part of Swami Vivekananda. This concept is extensively discussed in one of the 18 chapters in the Bhagavad Gita i. e. Jnana Yoga.

Nirāçéryatacittātmā tyaktasarvaparigrahau |
çäréraà kevalaà karma kurvannāpnoti kilbiñam ||21||

Said Lord Krishna in the 4th chapter (Jnana Yoga) of Sri Bhagavad Gita. The way Dr. Laxmiprasad concluded the book is fantastic. I have heard many great things about Swami Vivekananda, but Dr. Laxmiprasad's pen chant encouraged me to read all the great speeches and quotations. Dr. Laxmiprasad's style is straightforward and appealing after reading it and making a note of all of them, bringing them into applications while teaching is my next step. Contextual usage is the ultimate utilization of reading a book. It is possible with the writings of Dr. Laxmiprasad.