

# RAMAKRISHNA MISSION OF BANGLADESH AND ITS SERVICES IN THE FIELD OF EDUCATION

Dr. Milton Kumar Dev<sup>\*</sup>

## Introduction

The Ramakrishna Math and the Ramakrishna Mission (RKM) are twin institutions which form the core of the worldwide Ramakrishna Movement, which aims at the harmony of religion, harmony of the East and the West, harmony of the Old and the New and all round progress of human facilities without any distinction of creed, caste, gender, race, religion and nationality.<sup>1</sup> It is known to us that there were several traditional institutions during the colonial rule of the British in Bengal. Among these institutions, the RKM was truly an epoch-making institution. Never before a similar religious institution was established which specially set before itself the task of bringing socio-economic development of the weaker section of the society. So, as an institution the RKM is a phenomenon; but more important than the institution is its motto. The motto of these twin institutions is *Atmano Mokshartham Jagad-hitya cha*<sup>2</sup> (for one's own salvation and for the good of the world). In Bangladesh, the RKM figures from 1899 when two monks deputed by Swami Vivekananda<sup>3</sup> (1863-1902) founded its first centre in Dhaka, Bangladesh.<sup>4</sup> Vivekananda, a major personality of the nineteenth century, regarded as a cyclonic monk and pioneer reformer who went upto the USA to preach universal humanism, became the centre of all attraction by giving his stunning speech in the Parliament of Religions, which took place in 1893 at Chicago. The RKM is named after Sri Ramakrishna<sup>5</sup> (1836-1886), the great nineteenth century saint of Bengal who is regarded as the Master of the Modern Age.

The ideology of the RKM finds expression through their multifarious services. These services cover different areas of human need and social welfare such as education, health, rural development, self employment, women's welfare, interfaith understanding, moral life, and relief to victims of calamities.<sup>6</sup> All these activities are conducted as service, in the spirit of : 'serve humans as the embodiment of the Almighty'.<sup>7</sup> It is worth

---

<sup>\*</sup> Associate Professor, Department of History, University of Dhaka.

mentioning that in Bangladesh, one of the foremost movements in breaking the caste system and educating the downtrodden was the Ramakrishna Movement (or Vedanata Movement). RKM has 187 centres functioning in different parts of the world to carry on its work for the cause of humanity.<sup>8</sup> In Bangladesh, there are 15 affiliated centres serving to promote education, religion and humanity.<sup>9</sup>

The RKM bases its teaching on Vedanta which preaches – ‘Each soul is potentially divine’ and the divinity may be manifested through unselfish service. In the RKM, service is not restricted to a particular type of activity conducted at a particular time, but is a way of life. The monks, lay devotees and other aspirants take part in the services rendered by the RKM.

### **Services in Education**

In Bangladesh, the RKM has been rendering services for 119 years and its contribution in the field of education is a remarkable one. The RKM is conducting extensive educational services such as operation of schools, computer centers, orphanages and student’s home etc.<sup>10</sup> We are all aware of the inadequacy of the present-day system of education. Educationists – Eastern and Western are engaged for decades, in devising better methods of imparting knowledge and improving the morale of the student community. Despite their best efforts, we are, unfortunately left in the same deplorable condition as we were before, and much worse, as it is generally felt, there is a growing degeneration. If modern civilization has failed us in any domain, it is, without doubt, in the arena of producing human beings of sterling character. There has been little study on how to improve the quality of human beings who form the components of society. Professionals like engineers, doctors, architects, managers, researchers, and such others are trained or programmed in educational institutions. Similarly, is there a way of bringing out human beings with noble character? The answer is in the affirmative, if one recalls the educational thoughts of Swami Vivekananda and follows the educational system of the RKM, which is the efflorescence of moral and spiritual culture.

### **RKM and the meaning of Education**

It is known to us that, the method and process by which knowledge is traditionally acquired by a disciple from a teacher is called education. We all know, the main cause of misery is ignorance. Ignorance is proverbially

figured as darkness, and knowledge as light. The light of knowledge dispels the darkness of ignorance. RKM's aim in operating and starting various educational institutions to teach the so-called secular subjects like modern science, arts, etc. on the one hand, and the so-called spiritual subjects like the Upanishads, Vedic literature, etc. on other, was to create a complete human being, all-round and fully developed in the three 'h' s – heart, head, and hand. The entire history of the RKM's educational endeavor should be studied and comprehended against this idea of Swami Vivekananda.

Swami Vivekananda contributed valuable thoughts on education that are relevant and viable today. In order to understand his thoughts, we should first consider his oft-quoted definition of education, "Education is the manifestation of the perfection already in man".<sup>11</sup> This definition of education is one of remarkable insights. First of all, the word 'manifestation' implies that something that already exists and is waiting to be expressed. The main focus in learning is to make the hidden ability of a learner manifest. As Vivekananda said, "What a man 'learns' is really what he 'discovers,' by taking the cover off his own soul, which is a mine of infinite knowledge".<sup>12</sup> According to Vedanta philosophy, knowledge is inherent in a human being, like a spark in a piece of flint, and all that is needed is the strike of suggestion to bring it out. 'Manifestation' indicates spontaneous growth, provided the impediments, if any, are removed.

Next in importance in Vivekananda's definition of education is the expression 'already in man'. This refers to a human beings potential, which is the range of the abilities and talents, known or unknown that he is born with. 'Potential' speaks of the possibility of awakening something that is lying dormant. The word 'perfection' in the Swamiji's definition of education is also very significant. We can see that every act connected with learning, training, etc., is part of process directed towards an end. The english word 'perfect implies completion, or something being made whole. The Greek word *telic* is translated as 'perfect', and suggest the idea of attaining a goal or an end. Drawing on these meanings, one may conclude that perfection in the educational parlance is the goal of actualizing the highest human potential.

### **Types of Educational Institutions operated by the RKM**

The following are the major types of institutions started at different times during the 119 years of Ramakrishna Mission's existence in Bangladesh to actualize Swamiji's educational vision as described above :

1. Schools : pre-primary, primary and secondary levels imparting general education.
2. Sanskrit Schools : imparting knowledge of the Sanskrit language and literature at the secondary level.
3. Junior technical schools : imparting technical and vocational education at the secondary level.
4. Polytechnics : imparting technical education in various branches of engineering.
5. Student's Homes and Hostels : attached to residential schools/institutes run by the RKM as well as by others, attempted to be model on the *guru-griha-vasa* system.
6. Orphanages : housing destitute children and grown-up students, attempted to be modeled on the *guru-griha-vasa* system.
7. Computer Training Centers : imparting computer education and training to school and college students.
8. Rural Developments/Social Workers' Training Institutes : imparting education for rural development work.
9. Non-formal Education Centers : imparting literacy and adult education.<sup>13</sup>

A few thousands of students (children, men, women) are being benefited every year through a few hundred institutions belonging to the above mentioned categories. The main inspiration behind all of these is the educational vision of Swami Vivekananda. It is notable to mention that one of the main characteristics of the RKM institutions, is the active involvement and dedicated service of a large number of the monks, devotees and other aspirants of the Ramakrishna Order.

### **RKM and the Aim of Education**

RKM believes that the aim of education in general or ultimate – is essentially laid down by society and varies from society to society. Even as every society tries to keep pace with the contemporary world, societies with a stable and older tradition cherish some higher goals of everlasting value. About the aim of education Swami Vivekananda said,

The education which does not help the common mass of people to equip themselves for the struggle for life, which does not bring out strength of character, a spirit of philanthropy, and the courage of a lion – is it worth the name? Real education is that which enables one to stand on one's own legs.<sup>14</sup>

Education, he said must provide “life-building, man-making, character-making assimilation of ideas”.<sup>15</sup> The ideal of this type of education would be to produce an integrated person – one who has learned how to improve his intellect, purify his emotions, and stand firm on moral virtues and unselfishness. As an institution the RKM is concurred with contemporary thinkers when it asserted that the mind – the chief instrument of learning – deserves more attention than it had earlier received. Training the mind should be a student’s highest priority, and not simply the accumulation, the memorizing and the repeating of facts. Yet training of the mind in all its aspects is conspicuously absent in today’s education. Learning to concentrate the mind is the focus in the RKM’s scheme. And Vivekananda said, “To me the very essence of education is concentration of mind, not the collecting of facts.”<sup>16</sup> The RKM expects that the education system should be suitably designed to produce such wholesome human beings. Interestingly, the UNESCO report *learning to be* published in 1972, while defining the aim of education, echoed this same idea. It reads, “The physical, the intellectual, emotional and ethical integration of the individual into a complete man is a broad definition of the fundamental aim of education.”<sup>17</sup>

### **RKM and Value-oriented education**

A major personality of the RKM, Sri Ramakrishna, used to say that *manush* need to become *man-hush*, - that is, a man needs to become a true man. ‘He alone is a man’, he said, ‘whose spiritual consciousness has been awakened.’<sup>18</sup> Following Ramakrishna, Vivekananda emphasized that the ideal of all education, all training should be this man-making. Lamenting over the prevailing system of education, he said, “... we are always trying to polish up the outside. What use is polishing up the outside when there is no inside? The end and aim of all training is to make the man grow.”<sup>19</sup>

Modern education, which is, more or less, career-oriented, cares little for the cultivation of moral values or the formation of character. It does not teach self-control, or how to be in harmony with friends, colleagues or neighbors. Moreover, it does not emphasise respect for teachers or elders, as it was done in the traditional system. What use is the high position if a doctor, engineer, teacher, technocrat, or some other, disrespects his parents or leaves them to spend the evening of their lives in an old-age home, or under the tutelage of a governess? Increase in the number of old-age

homes in the country shows that parents are no more cared for, going counter to the teaching found in the holy book *Upanishad*, which says, consider your mother as god, consider your father as god.

Character-building is fundamental in RKM's educational scheme, as against career-orientation, which occupies stage in today's education. A person is what his thoughts have made him. Explaining this the Swamiji said, "Each thought is a little hammer blow on the lump of iron which our bodies are, manufacturing out of it what we want it to be".<sup>20</sup> That is why one finds that the focus of the RKM's educational programmes was on assimilation of man-making, character-building ideas. Character-building education might focus on teaching what is right and what is wrong. But simultaneously, or alternatively it should teach how to decide what is right and what is wrong. It has been rightly argued that participation in discussion of morality is more instructive than simply hearing about it. In any case, teachers should be moral exemplars if the classroom and the school are to serve as arenas for the teaching of ethics. The students then have the experience of being part of a group of people who take moral values seriously, and this helps them imbibe moral values spontaneously.

In recent times RKM centres, specially its Dhaka centre has organised several value oriented education seminars, where educationist and faculty of University of Dhaka took part to deliver their thoughts for the cause of student community. Nowadays all the centres of the RKM in Bangladesh are putting emphasis on value-oriented education or moral education to create true human beings. Because today human beings, the key component of society, are hardly human in nature. No doubt the present education system has overemphasized the cultivation of the intellect at the cost of the general well-being of humanity and to check this dangerous trend Vivekananda strongly recommended all-round progress of human faculties. In one of his lectures he expressed the desire, "that all men were so constituted that in their minds all these elements of philosophy, mysticism, emotion and of work were equally present in full! That is the ideal, my ideal of a perfect man."<sup>21</sup>

So, RKM is trying to produce true human beings by ensuring character-building education. It will be no odd to say that most students have taken to 'Hello-Hi' culture under western influence, neglecting the traditional salutations like *assalamu alaikum* or *namaskar*. RKM is pointing that without being trained in the art of *viveka* (sense of discrimination between

right and wrong), students are unable to make right choices when they use social networking sites. And without denying the positive impact of IT revolution in all walks of life, it may be argued at the same time that the flood of information on internet has diluted originality; many students succumb to cut and paste method to prepare their assignments. In such a disheartening milieu RKM's view on education come to our rescue, to take education to its ideal state.

### **Religious education and the RKM**

Harmony of religions is a living tradition in the teaching of RKM. Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda's principles of harmony are being put into practice in 15 affiliated centres and more than 85 non-affiliated centres of the RKM in Bangladesh. When Swami Vivekananda described religions as "the innermost core of education",<sup>22</sup> he referred to its quintessential elements – universal love, purity, freedom, manliness, and selflessness. He wanted religion to serve the noble cause of making everyone pious. Religion, he said, is "the idea which is raising the brute unto man, and a man unto god".<sup>23</sup> By religion, he did not mean any particular sect or dogma but the eternal principles of truth and virtue which lie at the root of all faiths, and which are essential for the spiritual regeneration of humankind. His concept of religion was based on faith – faith in oneself before having faith in God.

RKM, founded by Swami Vivekananda believes that religious education could be greatly useful for inculcating moral values among students, and for making them realise that all life is one. Religion could teach them the art and science of living, and bring them into contact with prophets, mystics, saints, and other great men, who led a selfless life. Evolved souls epitomise lofty ideals which can transform society. If students can hold on to an ideal of their choice, their personality would change for the better. Harmony of religions finds expression in the RKM in several ways, some of which are discussed below. In the first place, the RKM's educational institution admits students belonging to different religions, castes and races. Hindus, Muslims, Christians, Jews and Buddhists, hailing from different parts of the country, study together in mutual love and cooperation like children of the same parents in the educational institutions of RKM.

In all the centres of the RKM the birthdays of the great founders of world religions are celebrated. Novices of the RKM are taught comparative religion and the scriptures of different religions. The students of the RKM institutions have all the freedom to study and derive benefit from the teachings of the saints and sages of all religion. With a view to developing the human inner faculties more stress has been given here to the study of scriptures, practice of various spiritual disciplines, meditation, chanting hymns, prayers etc. everyday. Discourses, seminars and talks on moral values, philosophy and religion held regularly in the campus of the RKM. Scholars of different faiths take part in all these programmes to exchange their views about Prophet Mohammad (PBUH), Jesus Christ, Gautam Buddha, Sri Chaitanya and Sri Krishna and other great souls. Besides observance of the birth anniversaries of the Holy Trinity, Nabi-day, Christmas Eve, Buddha Purnima and Puja are arranged throughout the year.<sup>24</sup> Furthermore, speaking ill of other religions and religious leaders by the student is not allowed within the bounds of the RKM. Organizing youth convention and interfaith conferences in which student representatives of different religions speak about their own religions is another way RKM promotes the ideal of harmony of religious.

In recent times, it is proved that true religious education could further empower the inner personality of students by developing their hearts, not of course in medical sense, but by instilling into them the feelings of love and compassion for others. And here we recall the social overtone in Vivekananda's concept of religion which distinguishes him from the other nineteenth century thinkers. He once wrote, "I do not believe in a god or a religion which cannot wipe the widows' tears or bring a piece of bread to the orphan's mouth."<sup>25</sup> Through education he wanted to sensitise the youth about the problems facing mankind and to prepare them for leadership roles for bringing about social change. He was not unaware that religious fanaticism, born of narrow outlook, had resulted in conflicts and wars throughout history. Yet he felt that mankind needs to be taught that "religions are but the varied expressions of the RELIGION, which is Oneness."<sup>26</sup>

Owing to various causes such as the influence of mass media, globalization, the presence of large religious minorities, etc., there is now a growing awareness of the importance of following a pluralistic approach to religion and culture. Modern youths need to develop a true-multi religious,



multi-cultural and even a multinational outlook. The practice of harmony of religions in the RKM has nothing to do with these recent trends. Because, it has been in vogue in the RKM of Bangladesh for more than one hundred years.

### **Women's Education and the RKM**

The RKM regards women as the embodiment of *Shakti* (Power), the Primordial energy of the universe. Swami Vivekananda believed that women could excel in all fields of human activity if treated on par with men and given proper education and training. He further held that they were equally competent to take up intellectual pursuits. In this respect, he questioned the conservatives thus, "In what scripture do you find statements that women are not competent for knowledge and devotion?"<sup>27</sup> He wanted to create a class of celibate women, brahmcharinis, who would be instrumental in spreading education among girls. Vivekananda was opposed to such social customs as *sati*, infanticide, child marriage, and the confinement of women at homes. His concept of emancipation of women through education was based on spiritual and social principles. Following the instruction of Swamiji, the women devotees of the RKM in Bangladesh established two *Ashrama* at Sylhet and Khulna after the name of Holy Mother Saradadevi.<sup>28</sup> Besides, an association named Sarada Sangha is formed at Dhaka.<sup>29</sup> These institutions are working to preach child education and recently a school named *Sarada Sishu Niketon* has started in Dhaka.<sup>30</sup> These organizations are operating scholarship schemes for children and working to create women awareness in Bangladesh.

### **Vivekananda Educational and Cultural Centre**

Another institution which bears the stamp of Swami Vivekananda's inspiration is Vivekananda educational and cultural centre, (*Vivekananda Shiksha O Sanskriti Parishad*) Bangladesh. Essentially it is an organization catering to the educational and cultural needs of the student community of Bangladesh. Swami Vivekananda says, "Our life is ephemeral but our souls permanent and when death is must, then come and keep your trace in this transient world. Come and be a real man. Do you love mankind? Then come to be honest and try hard to be sublime." "Responding to this call and being inspired by the then head of RKM, Dhaka Swami Aksharananda, *Vivekananda Shiksha O Sanskriti Parishad* (VSSP) started its journey with

its noble motto ‘Service to the mankind is service to God’ and now to stay beside the oppressed and deprived people. It was established at the instance of some senior students of Dhaka University on 1<sup>st</sup> December 1989.<sup>31</sup> The VSSP operates its activities among students and distressed people irrespective of cast, religion and nation.

### **Ideals and objective of VSSP**

1. To build up oneself in accordance with the ideals ‘service to all recognizing as manifestation of God’ of Ramakrishna-Vivekananda.
2. To accelerate the consciousness of education and culture among the youth to promote humanity and providing necessary co-operations in this regard.
3. To provide financial aid to poor but meritorious and physically challenged students.
4. To promote education through library and providing literacy to illiterate.
5. To take active part in the service of distressed humanity and medical help for the poor patients.
6. To show due respect to every religions and religious preacher and following the doctrine of fraternity and peaceful coexistence in this regard.
7. To regulate activities for the expansion of the organization in line with its ideals and motto.
8. This organization is completely nonpolitical, so it will refrain itself from taking part in the programme of any particular community or denomination for exacting their claim.<sup>32</sup>

### **Vivekananda History Fund (VHF), Dhaka University**

‘Vivekananda History Fund’ was established in the Department of History, Dhaka University on 8 November 2017.<sup>33</sup> RKM, Dhaka in Association with the Vivekananda Study and Philanthropic Centre, USA donated 10 lac Taka to establish this fund. A seven-member committee works to operate aims and objectives of this fund. The salient features of this fund is to provide ‘Vivekananda Educational Stipend’ to the needy students of the department of History. Besides, this VHF organised ‘Vivekananda Memorial Lecture’ every year to focus on Swami Vivekananda’s secular perspective in understanding the religious, social, cultural and educational issues of South Asian studies with an emphasis on Bangladesh society.

### RKM's First Educational Service in Bangladesh

RKM's educational services in Bangladesh has a long and checkquered history and in places like Dhaka, Habiganj, Barisal, Sylhet, etc., deserve a mention here. The works of the pioneers at this places are now history, about which the present generation has little knowledge. We came to know that Gauri Ma, a saintly woman – disciple of Sri Ramakrishna, visited Habiganj in 1914 and granted *mantra-diksha* to a few devotees. Inspired by her, many devotes then started a *Sri Ramakrishna Seva Samity* at Habiganj.<sup>34</sup> Even before the Samity was started, some of the youths of Habiganj village had begun service activities for the illiterate cobbler folk. In this the pioneer was Yogesh Chandra Datta, who later become Swami Ashokananda and headed the Mission's Northern California Centre for a long time. He was then highly regarded for his intellectual and spiritual attainments. This Band of dedicated young men started a literary campaign in the village with a night school. With the help of a lantern they used to go from house to house in cobbler colony and literally catch hold of the slum children and bring them to school to study.<sup>35</sup> From Habiganj, these young man used to cross the river *Khoyai* to go to *Gosainnagar* village in the evenings to conduct their coaching classes. When the boat service used to be suspended during the rainy season on account of flood-fides, these young men would swim across the river. In later days, the monks of the RKM used to do the same.

Table 1.1: RKM's Educational Service in Bangladesh

Institutions	No. of Units	No of Students		
		Boys	Girls	Total
Junior High School				
Dhaka	1	327		
Dinajpur	1	97	96	193
Junior Basic/P. School				
Faridpur and Dinajpur	2	80	71	151
Hostels/Students Home				
Dhaka, Bagerhat, Barishal, Chittagong, Comilla, Dinajpur, Faridpur, Narayangonj and Sylhet	11	584		584
Orphanages				

Comilla	1	70	70	70
Chauspathis				
Faridpur	1	73	73	73
Vocational Training Centres				
Bagerhat and Narayanganj	2	80		80
Computer Training Centre				
Cultural Centre				
Dhaka and Dinajpur	2	60	30	90
Public Library and Reading Room				
Dhaka, Bagerhat, Barishal, Baliati, Chittagong, Comilla, Dinajpur, Faridpur, Habiganj, Mymensingh, Narayanganj and Sylhet	12			

Source: Swami Atmapriyananda, (ed.) *Ramakrishna Mission: A Saga of Service*, 2010, pp. 202-203.

### **RKM Sangskriti Bhavan, Dhaka**

On the cultural side of the RKM's activities, a pride of place is occupied by the RKM *Sangskriti Bhavan* at Dhaka. The pioneer of this project was Swami Akshwarananda, a monk of originality and vision. From its modest beginning, it has come a long way and has now grown into an important centre for learning and research. It was created to actualize Swamiji's vision of combining the best elements of Eastern and Western cultures by making scholars of both the worlds come together in friendly exchange of views. This centre also seeks to educate the younger generation on the glorious spiritual and cultural heritage of Bengal. Its computerized library, having nearly one lakhs books and more than one-hundred periodicals is one of the richest and most modern in Bangladesh. The guest house accommodates scholars and guests from several countries, who come to Bangladesh to study Bengali culture and spirituality. Seminars, symposia and lectures on various topics relating to culture, history, religion and spirituality from the main fabric of the RKM institute's life.

Table 1.2: List of Educational Institutions of RKM in Bangladesh as in the Year

Sl.	Name of the Institution	Place	Name of the Activity	Year of Starting
1	Ramakrishna Math and Mission	Dhaka	School	1899
2	Ramakrishna Mission	Barishal	Students' Home	1904
3	Ramakrishna Mission	Barishal	Students' Home	1911
4	Ramakrishna Mission	Dhaka	Jr. High School, vocational	1914
5	Ramakrishna Ashrama & Seva Samity	Sylhet	Students' Home	1916
6	Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama	Faridpur	Students' Home	1921
7	Ramakrishna Ashrama and Mission Seva Samity	Habiganj	Students' Home	1921
8	Ramakrishna Ashrama	Mymensingh	Students' Home	1921
9	Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama	Dinajpur	Students' Home	1923
10	Ramakrishna Ashrama	Bagerhat	Students' Home	1926

Source: Swami Atmapriyananda (ed.), *Ramakrishna Mission: A Saga of Service*, 2010, pp. 301-302.

The educational services rendered by the RKM, is going on and growing steadily in size. There is great public appreciation of the work. There is also tremendous demand for more institutions, more schools, colleges, students' home, hostels and so on.

### **RKM, a publisher**

The RKM now rank one of the publishers of books in Bangladesh. Three of its most important publishing centres are: Dhaka RKM, Sylhet RKM, and Chittagong RKM. However, the status of the RKM as a publisher

should be judged not merely by the number of volumes or the amount of money realized through the sale of books, but by the intellectual, moral and spiritual quality of the books and the beneficial effect they produce on the minds of people. Through its books the RKM disseminates some of the highest and noblest ideals and ideas of the Modern World. ‘A good book is the precious lifeblood of a master-spirit, embalmed and treasured up on purpose to a life beyond life’ – this famous statement of Milton is literally true of the books published by the RKM. Since its books are published without any commercial motive, they are priced very low. In recent years books have become very expensive, beyond the reach of the common people. By keeping the price of books low, often by subsidizing them, the RKM make quality books available to people all over Bangladesh. A new encouraging trend as regards Ramakrishna – Vivekananda literature has helped immensely in the propagation of RKM’s ideology. A few publishers have started publishing some selected books at highly subsidized rates so that even an ordinary person can afford to buy them. Also, more and more organizations are making gifts of books on RKM’s ideology to their friends. The Dhaka RKM centre has started distributing books free of charge among students and teachers. During the seminar on value-oriented education, the RKM centre of Dhaka took the initiative in publishing books on Vivekananda and morality. Two books named *Biswavivek Vivekananda* and *Noitikota* (in Bengali) were distributed among the students and teachers when this humble researcher read main article in a seminar held on 2 December 2017 at Dhaka RKM. The programme has received an overwhelming response. Thus a great enthusiasm and awakening was generated in the educational institutions by the distribution of such books. Such attempts, if made on a regular basis, will go a long way in spreading the RKM’s ideology and in uplifting humanity as regards the quality of life.

### **Salient Features of the RKM’s Books**

1. It is non-sectarian, nonpolitical in nature, and negative ideas against any religion or sect or community are not projected in this literature.
2. It has maintained high standards in terms of language as well as literary value. Some of the books are prescribed as textbooks. In a reference book of Dhaka University, *The Philosophers of Bengal*, the author Professor Aminul Islam, former Dean, Faculty of Arts, has introduced a chapter on Ramakrishna and Vivekananda.
3. It is equally appealing to the intellectuals as well as the masses.

4. Authenticity is given an important place in the literature. Only authentic material is published in books and journals published by the RKM. Miracle mongering, stories based on hearsay, etc., are avoided.
5. The span of Ramakrishna – Vivekananda literature is very wide. It covers a wide range of subjects including history, philosophy, religion, psychology, self-development, mysticism, etc.
6. Even though it is firmly founded on ancient knowledge and wisdom, it is modernistic in approach.

Table 1.3 : Survey of Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Book (RVB)

Summary of RVB published by the major publication centres of RKM as in the year 2015

Sl.	Name of the Publication Centre	No. of Titles	Language	Remarks
1.	Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission Dhaka, Bangladesh	20	English-16, Bengali-4	First title published: <i>The Philosophy of Vivekananda and Future of man</i> by G. C. Dev in 1963.
2.	Ramakrishna Math, Udbodhan, Calcutta	433	English-14, Bengali-416, Hindi-3,	First title published: <i>Ramakrishna</i> (Bengali) in 1899. Popular Books: 1. <i>Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna</i> (Bengali). 2. <i>C. W. of Sw. Vivekananda</i> (Bengali).
3.	Institute of Culture, Golpark, Calcutta	132	English-98, Bengali-31, Hindi-2, Oriya-1	First title published – <i>Sri Ramakrishna and Spiritual Renaissance</i> in 1940. Popular Books: 1. <i>Cultural Heritage of India</i> (6 Vols). 2. <i>Shatarupe Sarada</i> (Bengali).

Sl.	Name of the Publication Centre	No. of Titles	Language	Remarks
				3. <i>Chinanayak Vivekananda</i> (Bengali).
4.	Sir Ramakrishna Math, Madras	838	English-292, Tamil-333 Telugu196, Sanskrit-17	First title published: <i>Inspired Talks</i> in 1908 Popular Books: 1. <i>Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna</i> (Eng). 2. <i>Sri Ramakrishna Upadesh Mozighal</i> (Tamil). 3. <i>C. W. of Sw, Vivekananda</i> (Tamil) 16 Vols. 4. <i>C. W. of Sw, Vivekananda</i> (Telugu) 10 Vols.
5.	Ramakrishna Math, Bangalore	82	English-54, Sanskrit-5, Kannada-23	First title published: <i>Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna</i> (Kannada) in 1925. Popular Books: <i>Secret of Concentration</i> (English)
6.	Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, Narendrapur (W.B)	82	English-7, Bengali-140	First title published: <i>Ma Sarada Devi</i> (Bengali).
7.	Vedanata Society of New York, USA	45	Englis-45	Early Books: <i>Vedanta Philosophy</i> by Sw. Vivekananda. The Real and Apparent Man by Sw. Vivekananda and Spiritual Unfoldment by Sw. Vivekananda published in 1901. Baker & Taylor Co. started publishing many books of Sw. Vivekananda before Vedanata Society started doing do.
8.	Vedanata Society of Northern California, USA	17	Englis-17	Early Books: <i>Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna</i> in 1912. Book edited by this centre but published from Advaita



Sl.	Name of the Publication Centre	No. of Titles	Language	Remarks
				Ashrama have not been included, eg. <i>Swami Vivekananda in the West. New Discoveries</i> (6 Vols.) by Marie Louise Burke.
9.	Vedanata Society of St. Louis, USA	13	Englis-13	Books edited by this centre but published from Advaita Ashrama have not been included. Early Books: <i>Ethos and Religion</i> in 1942.
10.	Vedanata Society of Southern California, USA	12	Englis-12	Popular Books: <i>Vedanata-Voice of Freedom</i> by Sw. Chetananda.
11.	Ramakrishna Vedanata Centre, UK.	7	English-7	<i>Women Saints of East &amp; West</i> published in 1955.
12.	Nippon Vedanta Kyokai, Japan	26	Japanese-19	Early Books: <i>Selected Verses of Sw. Vivekananda</i> (Japanese) in 1962. Popular Books: <i>Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna</i> (Japanese).
13.	Ramakrishna Ashrama, Argenina	26	Spanish-26	Early Books: <i>Conferencias de 1934</i> by Swami Vijayananda in 1935 Popular Books: <i>Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna</i> (Spanish).
14.	Centre Vedantique Ramakrichna, Gretz France.	15	French-15	(no details)
15.	Advaita Ashrama, Cralcutta	283	English-182, Hindi-53 Nepal-2, English-Sanskrit-46	Early Books- <i>The Atman</i> in 1905. <i>C. W. of Sw. Vivekananda</i> (Eng) in 1907. 1. <i>Selections from C. W. of Sw Vivekananda</i> (Eng). 2. <i>Sw Vivekananda – His</i>

Sl.	Name of the Publication Centre	No. of Titles	Language	Remarks
				call to the Nation. 3. <i>Mind and its Control.</i> 4. <i>Will Power &amp; Its Development.</i> 5. <i>Thoughts of Power.</i>

Source: Swami Lokeshwarananda (ed.), *The Story of Ramakrishna Mission*, 2006, pp. 782-797

## Conclusion

In Bangladesh and all over the world, The RKM, being a spiritual *sangha* and a service centre aiming at the ‘total uplift of humanity’, has proved itself during the last 119 years by its noteworthy contributions to humanity at all levels. Now the RKM has stepped into the 21<sup>st</sup> century is in urgent need of an institution which is capable of instilling higher values of life in people from all walks of life, from the poorest to the richest, without being dogmatic and sectarian in nature, and which will be capable of giving wisdom, strength and peace of mind to all. We have already entered the new millennium. People of this new era are looking for global values, a global religion and a global civilization. RKM’s teaching of character-making and man-making education, and universal love have the potential to usher us into a new civilization in this 21<sup>st</sup> century. Besides, the RKM, as an institution, as I firmly believe, added a dimension to the present day democratic discourse. Democracy is all about pluralism in all spheres of life. Much has been talked about and written for political pluralism as an element of democratization. But nothing or little has so far been said of religious pluralism as another element in the democratization process. But RKM has provided the recipe for religious pluralism by highlighting the truth *jato mat tato path* – so many paths as there are views. To say that this was only a recipe for religious harmony would be doing an inadequate justice to these two proponents of extraordinary perception and farsightness bearing on the issues and problems of the contemporary world. RKM concentrated on and addressed the roots of human conflicts, and sought elimination of which through its empirically deduced truth common to all. RKM’s services and recipe in Bangladesh awaits proper attention and consideration. But as it becomes obvious that the *Seva-*

*Dharma* (service) of RKM has ample indications for how to achieve interfaith harmony, and which pre-date the recent such endeavours; it is worth mentioning that its teachings and preaching provide a strong antidote to Samuel Huntington's Cassandra like prognosis of a 'Clash of Civilization'. At present, In Bangladesh and all over the world, RKM is growing and expanding rapidly (total 221 centres). It is rendering services for the cause of the distressed and deprived.

## Notes and References

1. *The General Report of the Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission* for the year 2012, Howrah, West Bengal, p. 1 [Henceforth the General Report].
2. *The General Report*, 2012, p. 11.
3. Swami Vivekananda was Sri Ramakrishna's most prominent disciple and the architect of the RKM. He became more widely known for his attempts to defend Hindu ideas and universal humanism in west.
4. East Bengal was a low lying riverined land in South Asia. With its coastline on the Bay of Bengal, it bordered India and Burma. With the decolonization in 1947, India was divided and East Bengal became a part of Pakistan. In December 1971, at the height of the freedom movement for the regional autonomy against the Pakistani military regime, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman (Father of the Nation, Bangladesh) declared that hereafter the Eastern region of Pakistan would be called Bangladesh instead of East Pakistan. Finally, because of the discriminatory policy of the West of Pakistan, East Pakistan fought a liberation War in 1971 and became Bangladesh.
5. The name of Sri Ramakrishna Paramhansa has become associated with a message of tolerance towards all religions. A Bengali rural brahman and religious ecstatic devoted to Kali, Ramakrishna gathered a core of young disciples and urban householders as disciples. After his death, these followers under the leadership of Swami Vivekananda founded the Ramakrishna Math and Mission to perpetuate a philosophy of service to humanity and tolerance of all religions.
6. *Activities of Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission*, Office of Secretary (Dhaka: Ramakrishna Mission, 2016), p. 2. [Henceforth *Activities of RKM*]
7. *Uddipan*, Sri Ramkrishna Temple Consecration Ceremony Commemorative Volume (Dhaka: RKM, 2007), p. 185.
8. *Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, their History, Ideals and Activities*, Office of General Secretary (W.B, India: 2014), p. 3. [Hereafter *Ideals and Activities*]
9. *Ibid.*, p. 2.
10. *Interview* with Swami Dhruveshananda, the Secretary, Dhaka Ramakrishna Mission, August, 20, 2015
11. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (Kolkata: Advaita Ashrama, 1993), Vol. 2. [Henceforth CWSV]
12. *Ibid*, Vol. 1, p. 28.
13. Swami Atmapriyananda (ed.), *Ramakrishna Mission: A Saga of Service* (Kolkata: Belur Math, 2010), pp.273-274.
14. CWSV, Vol. 7, pp.147-148.

15. *Ibid*, Vol. 3, p. 302.
16. *Ibid*, Vol. 6, p. 38.
17. Edgar Faure, et. al., *Learning to be* (Paris: UNESCO, 1972), p. 156.
18. *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* (Chennai: RKM), p. 851. [Hereafter *The Gospel*]
19. CWSV, Vol. 2, p. 15.
20. *Ibid*, Vol. 7, p. 20.
21. *Ibid*, Vol. 2, p. 388.
22. CWSV, Vol. 5, p. 231.
23. *Ibid*, Vol. 5, p. 50.
24. *Activities of RKM*, (Dhaka: 2016), p. 3.
25. CWSV, Vol. 5, p. 50.
26. *Ibid*, Vol. 6, p. 410.
27. *Ibid*, Vol. 6, p. 489.
28. *Interview* with Brahmacharini Srabanti, the Principal, Sri Ma Sarada Ashrama, Khulna, May, 14, 2015.
29. *Shaswati*, a yearly periodical of Sarada Sangha, Dhaka (Dhaka: Published by the President, Sarada Sangha, 2017), p. 4.
30. *Ibid.*, pp. 4-5.
31. *Gandip*, a yearly periodical of Vivekananda Shiksha O Sangskriti Parishad, Bangladesh, (Dhaka: VSSP, 2007), p. 3.
32. *Ibid.*, p. 4.
33. Agreement, office of the Chairman, Department of History, University of Dhaka.
34. Swami Atmapriyananda (ed.) *op. cit.*, p. 287.
35. *Ibid.*, p. 287.