VIVEKANANDA ROCK MEMORIAL
A Perennial Source of Inspiration
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Compiled by

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Kanyakumari: Unknown monk turns into World Teacher

When Narendranath Dutta (later Swami Vivekananda) was asked by his Guru, Sri Ramakrishna what he would ask God if He appeared before him. Naren replied, “I shall ask Him to keep me in a state of Samadhi.” Sri Ramakrishna gently rebuked Naren, “Shame on you! You are asking for such an insignificant thing. I thought that you would be like the Banyan tree where thousands of travelers would rest in your shade. But now I see that you are seeking your own liberation.” Naren was shocked that his Guru who always talked and saw nothing but God was telling him thus. Sri Ramakrishna had also told him, “Naren, you have come to do the great work of Mother”. Naren did not know then what that ‘Work of Mother’ referred to.

After the Mahasamadhi of Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa Swami Vivekananda started on a pilgrimage of India to find out his mission in life. His Guru had asked him to do the Mother’s work and the disciple set out on his mission - the mission of discovering that ‘Work of Mother’, for which he was born. He moved from one place to another. He crossed mountains and rivers, forests and deserts; he met Rajas, Maharajas and the poor, scholars and the so called ignorant. The more he saw of India, the more he realized India’s greatness, the greatness of its eternal spiritual and cultural heritage based on the vision of Oneness, of inter-connected, inter-related and inter-dependent reality. She had a message to give to the world. As he saw her strength, he also saw her children suffering from poverty and ignorance; worse still, from lack of self-confidence. They had fallen into the habit of self-derision. He saw educated Indians who had alienated themselves from their Motherland.
and her ethos, and that the poor being too poor, had no time or energy
to worry about anything other than a square meal, which was often
hard to come by.

How was this nation to be uplifted? How can the people of this great
land be awakened? Such questions started tormenting his mind. His
love for India and her people became so intense that his heart was full
of anguish as he reached Kanyakumari.

His biographers in the book: *Life of Swami Vivekananda by his Eastern and
Western Disciples* describe the event in detail.

The Swami next journeyed on to Kanyakumari the
southernmost extremity of India... He was eager
as a child to see the Mother; reaching the shrine he
fell prostrate in ecstasy before Her image. Worship
finished, he crossed to a rock, which was separated,
from the mainland. About him the ocean tossed
and stormed but, in his mind, there was even a
greater tempest... And there, sitting on the last
stone of India he passed into a deep meditation
upon the present and the future of his country.
He sought for the root-cause of her downfall and
with the vision of a seer he understood why India
had been thrown from the pinnacle of glory to the
depths of degradation.

Most vividly did he realize in the silence of his
heart: “India shall rise only through a renewal and
restoration of that highest spiritual consciousness
which has made India at all times, the cradle of
the nations and the cradle of the Faith”. He saw
her greatness and her weaknesses as well, the
central evil of which was that the nation had lost
its individuality.
In a letter addressed to Swami Ramakrishnananda from Chicago on 19 March 1894, Swami Vivekananda himself referred to the event in the following words:

My brother, in view of all this, specially of the (country’s) poverty and ignorance, I had no sleep. At Cape Comorin, sitting in Mother Kumari’s temple, sitting on the last bit of Indian Rock, I hit upon a plan. (The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda, volume 6, Epistles - Second Series/ XLI Shashi).

This was the Rock where according to tradition, several millennia ago Mother Parvati, in her incarnation as Kanyakumari, performed intense penance for the hand of Siva. It was while meditating on this rock, that Swami Vivekananda realized cause of India’s downfall; it was not because of her Dharma, as was wrongly portrayed, but precisely because of ignorance of it. The Vedantic Truths were to be taken to the masses. Indians had lost their self confidence due to slavery. Therefore, he decided to go to the Parliament of World Religions at Chicago to represent Hindu Dharma. If the West appreciated the Vedanta, the confidence of the people of India in their religion would also be strengthened. That was the mission of his life - not only to realize the divinity within, but also to make his people realize it. He wanted to restore to his nation, its lost individuality. He also planned to mobilize funds and start some work for the poor of India.

This historic site – the rock at Kanyakumari - thus occupies a unique place in the life of that great Patriot-Saint. It was here that at the end of his countrywide travels as a Parivrajaka, he received Divine light and discovered the mission of his life. It was again here that while meditating on the condition of the downtrodden, the poverty-stricken teeming millions of his countrymen, groaning under the heel of a foreign rule, did a solution for the country’s ills, dawn on his consciousness. It was on that Rock, that the simple, unknown monk was transformed into a
great reformer, a great organizer and a Master Builder of the nation; he was transformed into a *Jagadguru*.

**Nation-wide celebrations of Birth Centenary of Swami Vivekananda**

The birth centenary of Swami Vivekananda was approaching. The plans for the celebration were going afoot in the country. It was in the fitness of things, therefore, that in order to commemorate the historic Birth Centenary Celebrations and given the significance of the Rock in Swamiji’s life, the people of Kanyakumari conceived the idea of erecting a memorial to Swami Vivekananda on that hallowed rock, the Vivekananda Rock. The deeply enthused people formed a Committee to oversee the same.

**Hurdles - Destiny’s way to bring Eknathji on the scene**

When a small section of the local Christian community came to know about it, they started claiming that the Rock was known as ‘St. Xavier’s Rock’ in order to stall the work. It made a fictitious claim that Xavier had visited that Rock and said that it wanted to plant a cross there in memory. But they could not produce any proof of his visit. Therefore, to claim it physically, one night, some of them went to the Vivekananda Rock and planted a big stone cross.

The government was in a fix. It agreed that it was a trespass on the rock. But it was worried about the tense situations and even though it was only a small section of the community which was opposing it, the government was also worried about the votes of the Christian community which was in majority in Kanyakumari District. Therefore, the government expressed its inability to remove the cross. Many Hindus became agitated that there could be anyone in the country who would actually oppose a memorial for Swami Vivekananda and that too in his birth centenary year. Thus, it came to be that the cross was removed from the rock overnight by some who could not bear it. The Government declared Section 144. The next day, police were
posted on the rock. The Government had agreed that that rock was ‘Vivekananda Rock’ and had allowed the Vivekananda Rock Memorial Committee to install a tablet, commemorating the incident in the life of Swami Vivekananda. However, it refused permission for a statue to be installed. The tablet was installed on 17 January 1963. This was the day when in far off Calcutta, Eknathji Ranade, All India Baudhik Pramukh of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh was releasing his book titled *SwamiVivekananda’s Rousing Call to Hindu Nation*. It was a compilation of Swami Vivekananda’s message on Man-making-Nation-building culled from *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*. Destiny has strange ways of orchestrating events!

The Vivekananda Rock Memorial Committee, which was until then at the district level, expanded into a state level committee and then into an All India Committee in order to garner support for the project of installing Swamiji’s statue on the Rock. Sri Mannath Padmanabhan became its first President. The Committee again passed the resolution for installing the statue of Swami Vivekananda. On 16 May 1963, the tablet was broken and thrown into the sea by some miscreants. The situation became tense. The Government agreed again that it was the Vivekananda Rock but in the prevailing situation did not permit installation of statue.

The Union Minister, Sri Humayun Kabir, expressed his opinion that the statue on the Rock might spoil the natural beauty of the sea. Quoting this, Sri Bhaktavatsalam, the then Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu declared that he would not allow the memorial of Swami Vivekananda to come up in his lifetime. As all the parties concerned took a rigid stand, it became difficult to solve the issue and the situation turned volatile.

The members of the Vivekananda Rock Memorial Committee approached Sri Guruji Golwalkar, Sarsanghachalak of Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh requesting him to draft some one who could persuade the Government to grant permission. The Committee felt
that Eknathji, with his wide contacts and great acumen to overcome
difficulties, was the right person. Of Eknathji’s thoroughness, it was
jocularly said in the Sangh, “Should it be decided to shift the Qutub
Minar to some other location, if there is one man who could do it, it will
be Eknathji.”

It so happened, that Eknathji had also come to Nagpur for some meeting
and was to leave on tour by afternoon. Had Eknathji not been there at
that time, Guruji might have assigned the work to someone else. But,
destiny has no ifs and buts, what it decides, happens! One may think
it happened accidentally. However, nothing is accidental. Destiny
had prepared Eknathji for this moment. The whole chain of incidents
in the life of Eknathji - the study of Swami Vivekananda during his
college days, relinquishing Sangh (as it was evident that if he was the
General Secretary at that time, he would not have been able to take
over the task of the Vivekananda Rock Memorial) or the compilation of
Swami Vivekananda’s inspiring ideas and plans for India in the form
of *Rousing Call to Hindu Nation*, the overall situation prevailing in the
country at that time or his years of deep reflection about the need for
more dimensions to the organizational work – all these prepared him
for this very moment.

Imbued with Swamiji’s spirit as it were, Eknathji believed that a
memorial in stone was useful only if it was reflected in the thoughts
and deeds of the people. A lasting memorial was possible only in the
hearts of people. That would be possible, only when a fitting living
memorial - a service organization - also was established. If he were
to take up the work, he wanted to know from Sri Guruji whether he
would be permitted to do that too. Sri Guruji who knew Eknathji well,
agreed to relieve him from active work of the Sangh at least till the
work relating to the memorial took shape.

**Seeking Blessings and Support of Ramakrishna Mission**

Eknathji was a keen student of society. He also knew how politician take
U-turns especially based on people’s sentiments. Swami Vivekananda had founded the Ramakrishna Mission to propagate the teachings of his Master and perpetuate His memory in the hearts of the people. In the mind of the society, Swami Vivekananda and Ramakrishna Mission were inter-linked. Eknathji knew that as the campaign to get permission intensifies, journalists, as was their habit, might ask the Ramakrishna Mission its view about the Memorial. Due to lack of information, if the Mission said that it was not aware of Memorial or that it was neither for nor against it or for that matter, the memorial could well be on the shore instead of on the Rock, then the fate of the memorial on the Rock would be sealed. The Memorial, as conceived, would never become a living reality.

Eknathji sought the total support of Ramakrishna Mission and the blessings of its monks before he started the work. Therefore, he first went straight to the Belur Math and met Most Revered Swami Madhavanandaji, the then President of Sri Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission. As Pranta Pracharak of Poorvanchal, Eknathji used to visit the Belur Math whenever he was at Kolkata. He also had stayed in the Belur Math for nearly six months to compile the book *Swami Vivekananda’s Rousing Call to Hindu Nation*. He knew many monks of the Ramakrishna Mission and the monks in turn used to bestow their love and affection on him.

This is how Eknathji described his visit to Belur Math in his lectures, that was later compiled as, *The Story of the Vivekananda Rock Memorial - As told by Eknath Ranade*.

.. From Nagpur I went straight to Calcutta and met the Revered Madhavananda Maharaj on 22 July, 1963. He was President then. When I was in Calcutta from 1950 to 1953, I was a regular visitor to Belur and every fortnight I used to go and meet Swami Madhavananda Maharaj and he had a great affection for me. I told him that some people proposed that I should do
something about the Vivekananda Rock Memorial. I did not know where the matter stood. I had not yet seen the correspondence and I was going there. But first of all, he should please tell me whether he was interested in this. If the Ramakrishna Mission was interested then I might have the enthusiasm to take up the work. If it had no interest then I also would not have any enthusiasm. At that time, what Swami Madhavananda said was very significant. He said: “If a person like you is prepared to take up the work and if the whole Committee is behind you, want you, you should certainly take up this work and I assure you that though the Ramakrishna Mission will not be in any way officially connected with all you do, you can be rest assured, the entire Ramakrishna Mission will be at your back all the time. You go ahead and Thakur will bless you, Swami Vivekananda will bless you, and you have my blessings also.

By acknowledging the moral right of Ramakrishna Mission to build the memorial, Eknathji gained its moral support and backing. Swami Madhavanandaji also said to Eknathji, “You are born to do this work”.

Thus, with the blessings of the monks of Ramakrishna Mission, Eknathji reached Chennai (Madras of those days). He first went through all the files. He found that he would have to meet many dignitaries in this respect. Naturally, it required that Eknathji should have some locus standi in the Committee. Many members offered to vacate their place for Eknathji, but he suggested creating a new post of Organizing Secretary. Thus, Eknathji took up the work of Vivekananda Rock Memorial Committee (VRMC) from 11 August 1963 as its Organizing Secretary. From Chennai, he went directly to Kanyakumari.

As the General Secretary of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, he had visited Kanyakumari on 7 October, 1955. But now, he came with a
specific mission. His entry into Kanyakumari was to change the place forever; Kanyakumari Township was to go on the international tourist map and also on the map of Nation - building service organization. Eknathji was entering his 50th year when he undertook this work. The spring of penance, that started with the penance of Mother Kanyakumari, gained momentum through the meditation of Swami Vivekananda. It was now set to a stage where Eknathji would add his share to it. The waves that were hitting the rock ceaselessly seemingly indicated the difficulties that surrounded the proposed Memorial on the Rock. But Eknathji was as firm as that legendary Rock. In the ocean of challenges, he saw an ocean of opportunities. Eknathji was set to create a legend!

**Transforming obstacles into opportunities**

Sri Bhaktavatsalam, Chief Minister of Tamilnadu had declared that he would not allow the memorial to come up. He cited the view expressed by Sri Humayun Kabir, Union Minister for Cultural Affairs, that the natural beauty of the rock would be spoiled. The reason for denying permission was political but he took shelter behind the comments of Sri Humayun Kabir. Eknathji realized that the ball had stopped near Sri Humayun Kabir. Eknathji sought his interview, but in vain.

Eknathji would go to the root of any problem to solve it. He always studied the situation and approached it in such a way that there was no possibility of failure. When he could not meet Sri Humayun Kabir, he decided to reach him in the only way a politician could be reached. Calcutta was the constituency of Sri Humayun Kabir. Eknathji went again to Calcutta and with the active support of Ramakrishna Mission; he first had one to one meeting with editors and journalists of all newspapers and magazines there. After preparing the ground, he called a press conference. In it, Eknathji explained how the Tamil Nadu Government was not giving permission for the memorial to Swami Vivekananda because Sri Humayun Kabir was against it. Next day, all the newspapers carried editorials and articles explaining the importance of Rock in the life of Swami Vivekananda. The rock was
not like any other place associated with Swami Vivekananda but it was a place where the unknown monk was transformed into a Jagadguru and a Nation Builder. The editorials and articles pointed out that the Committee was being denied permission by the State Government to build a Memorial because of the objection of Sri Humayun Kabir who was elected to the Parliament by the people of Calcutta. The tenor was of betrayal by Humayun Kabir. When such articles and editorials appeared in all the leading newspapers and magazines, the people of Calcutta were enraged. They had elected Sri Humayun Kabir and he was obstructing the Memorial of Swami Vivekananda who was born and brought up in Calcutta and of whom Calcutta was naturally very proud! It was too much to bear. The heat generated in the constituency of Sri Humayun Kabir hit him hard. He immediately asked Eknathji to meet him. In the meeting after prolonged discussion, Sri Humayun Kabir made it clear that he was not against the memorial on the rock.

About the scenic beauty of Kanyakumari, I held the same view earlier with respect to Gandhi Mandapam, but the Government of Tamil Nadu did go ahead and built Gandhi Mandapam. Now why should they quote me and stall the permission. I am neither against Swami Vivekananda nor his memorial. Please note this and inform all the journalists too.

Knowing how politicians are in the habit of changing their statements to suit their own needs, Eknathji had developed a strategy to overcome this. He would invariably prepare minutes immediately after a discussion with a political leader and send it to him for confirmation. Eknathji’s memory was phenomenal. He would remember verbatim all that was discussed. When Sri Humayun Kabir received the copy of their conversation, he even appreciatively remarked whether Eknathji had brought a tape recorder with him. He endorsed it gracefully.

Crossing over the first hurdle, Eknathji again approached Sri Bhaktavatsalam. However, Sri Bhaktavatsalam was very firm on his
stand. He reiterated that rock was “Vivekananda Rock” beyond any doubt but a memorial there was out of question. How could he be made to agree? Eknathji decided just to sail along with him and keep the dialogue open.

Sri Bhaktavatsalam might agree if only Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, the Prime Minister of India, prevailed upon him. How could Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru be made to talk to Sri Bhaktavatsalam? Eknathji could not directly contact him. Eknathji met Sri Lal Bahadur Shastri who advised him to wait for the right time.

**Purity, Patience and Perseverance: Key to Success**

Our motive should be pure. We should be ready to wait for the proper opportunity and we should also persevere in our efforts. This is key to success, said Swami Vivekananda. This period was a test for patience and perseverance for Vivekananda Rock Memorial Committee. This waiting was a very difficult period. Some of Eknathji’s friends and well-wishers warned him that this memorial would not come up during his lifetime, as the Government would never give permission for it. Panditji’s dislike of Sangh was well known and Eknathji, being from Sangh, getting permission was a dim proposition. It was a test of nerves. Eknathji was a man of steel. But then, it was not a question of Eknathji alone; he had to keep high the morale of the *karyakartas* too. He wrote in one of his letters dated 30 September, 1963,

> You have to use your ingenuity and imagination in seeing that the people do not forget the Rock Memorial issue or that they do not become hopeless. In your mind also, there should not be any doubt about the ultimate success. A statue of Swamiji on the Vivekananda Rock should be considered as a foregone conclusion.
In thought, word and deed, Eknathji saw to it that the memorial became a reality. He wrote on 7 November, 1963 to a karyakarta, “I do not doubt in the least the ultimate grant of permission by the Madras Government for the Rock Memorial. It would not be also too long before the permission is granted.”

Eknathji’s conviction was not just a pious wish. Conviction never comes out of pious wish. Convictions come out of the vision strengthened by preparedness for hard work. When Sri Lal Bahadur Shastri told him to wait, Eknathji did not merely wait; he used his time to contact different political leaders, Parliamentarians and brief them about the Rock, its importance in the life of Swami Vivekananda, the desire of the Committee to put up the memorial and also the problem of getting permission.

In order to underscore the point that he was not against the memorial for Swami Vivekananda, Sri Bhaktavatsalam suggested to the Vivekananda Rock Memorial Committee that the Memorial could be built on the shore. He even offered not just the permission but also all necessary support. However, Eknathji insisted that the memorial should be on the Rock itself, as it was on the Rock that Swami Vivekananda meditated and hit upon a plan for the regeneration of India. Sri Bhaktavatsalam was very unhappy at this refusal by the Vivekananda Rock Memorial Committee to build the Memorial on the shore. Eknathji had thus to face the test of derailment on the path of his goal. But, he stuck to having the memorial on the Rock.

The whole nation aspires for the Memorial

The issue of Rock memorial was a test case for Eknathji to prove that if a project was clear of politics and an appeal rightly made, all people - irrespective of their political, religious or secular affiliations - would come forward to support it. Thus, the work of the Rock Memorial became a project to bring all the nationalistic and social forces together.
Leaders like Sri Kalyanasundaram of the Right Communist Party, Madras, thought that the Vivekananda Rock Memorial Committee would never approach him. However, when Eknathji approached him he was very happy. Swami Vivekananda had given back to India her lost respect and self-confidence. Therefore, Swami Vivekananda touches the right chords in the heart of each Indian. What required was a clear vision, large heart to accommodate all people, readiness to approach without prejudice and proper language and deeds! Eknathji had all these qualities. Therefore, when he appealed in the name of Swami Vivekananda, every heart - whether in the Communist party or Jana Sangh, Congress, or Dravid Munnetra Kazhagam or the Forward Block - responded positively.

But time was running out. If permission was not secured before the Birth Centenary year of Swami Vivekananda was over, the issue would lose its urgency, if not importance. Eknathji again met Sri Lal Bahadur Shastriji, and enquired whether he could collect the signatures of some Members of the Parliament appealing for permission for the Rock Memorial. Shastriji told Eknathji, “Do not be impatient. It will take time. I shall let you know when to prepare and present the memorandum with signatures of some Members of the Parliament.” Eknathji then camped at Delhi. He prepared the ground so well, that when he got a green signal from Shastriji, within two days he collected the signatures of 323 Members of Parliament. He contacted first the leader of the party with whom he had already had discussions and obtained support. Seeing the signatures of their leaders, the rest of the MPs too signed. No party was left un-approached. No Member of the Parliament present in Delhi at that time was left out. All the 323 MPs then present in Delhi signed two copies of the memorandum appealing for permission for the memorial to be built at mid-sea Rock off Kanyakumari. No caste, creed, region, religion or political affiliation became a hurdle in expressing the desire that the memorial should come up on that very Rock -the hallowed spot where Swamiji had meditated.
Eknathji handed over one copy of the memorandum to Sri Lal Bahadur Shastriji. He was so surprised to see the signatures of the MPs from all the parties that he asked Eknathji, “Are these signatures real?” Eknathji said, “Of course, you may check up with your records”. Shastriji was very happy. He said, “Mr. Ranade, you go home and sleep. When all the MPs of all the parties desire the memorial, it means the whole nation wants it. Who can stop it?” Shastriji was impressed with the capacity of Eknathji to bring all the people together on an issue which could have otherwise flared into a controversial communal issue.

Sri M.S. Aney the senior most Parliamentarian presented the memorandum to the Prime Minister in the Parliament. Immediately journalists contacted Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru to know his reaction. He said, “I am to meet Bhaktavatsalam shortly; at that time, I shall talk with him. Ultimately it is a decision of the State.” Bharat rose as one and it became a win-win situation for all.

Naturally, Sri Bhaktavatsalam had to bow to the wishes of the Parliament that is, the people themselves. Perhaps it was the only non-war and non-death issue, which the whole Parliament supported. Sri Bhaktavatsalam told the reporters on 5 February, 1964 that the State Government would agree to the installation of the statue of Swami Vivekananda on the Vivekananda Rock but it should be small and enclosed in a shrine. Newspapers carried this news item on 06 February, 1964. How did Eknathji feel about this outcome? All his running about had ultimately met with success. But then, it was not the end; only the beginning. He had to take up the work of building the Memorial, which he turned by his genius into a nation-wide movement.

**Paramacharya guides the design for the Rock Memorial**

Though Sri Bhaktavatsalam consented for the memorial, he was bit unhappy and thought that the Committee would now act with impunity. But Eknathji was full of humility and with carefully chosen words gradually turned the opponent in Sri Bhaktavatsalam into his
supporter and close friend. After the permission was granted in the very first meeting on 13 February, 1964 Eknathji told Sri Bhaktavatsalam,

I have read the (Press) statement. Personally speaking, it has satisfied me. It has satisfied me for two reasons. Firstly, because you have generously agreed to the basic or the primary thing, namely, that the statue should be on the Rock. Whether it should be in the open or it should be enclosed in a shrine, and again whether the shrine should be small or large in size, were all secondary things. Secondly, because this marks the end of my tussle with you – a tussle, which was most artificial in so far as it was a sort of fighting on the same side. Had you been anti-Hindu or anti-Vivekananda, there would have been some point in the struggle. But to be required to come in conflict with a devout Hindu and a devotee of Vivekananda was really something very painful.

This was Eknathji’s style; he would disarm his opponents, then shake hands with them and even touch their feet.

Though he accorded permission, Sri Bhaktavatsalam stuck to his stand that the memorial should be encased in a 15’ x 15’ dimension room. There was a history behind this 15’ x 15’ dimension. When he was denying permission for the memorial on the Rock, he wanted to make it appear that he was only against the location and not against the memorial. But the location was of great importance. For the Vivekananda Rock Memorial Committee, it was not a question of having a memorial somewhere in Kanyakumari, but only on that hallowed spot where Swamiji had meditated. Goddess Parvati in Her incarnation as Kanyakumari had meditated for the hand of Siva on that rock. That was the place where Swami Vivekananda had discovered the mission of his life. The memorial for Swami Vivekananda had to be on that Rock so that any one who visits it might also discover his
mission of life in the service of nation and experience the vibrations of Swamiji’s meditation.

Thus, the Committee was very firm about the location too. But when Sri Bhaktavatsalam insisted that the memorial should be built at Kanyakumari on the seashore, Swami Chidbhavanandaji, a very great Sannyasi of those days, came forward and erected the memorial for Swami Vivekananda on the shore. Its dimensions were 15’ x 15’! Therefore, after the granting of permission, Sri Bhaktavatsalam insisted in the course of his initial talk with Eknathji that the dimension of the memorial should not be more than 15’x15’ in any case.

Eknathji was aware that the issue of the Memorial had so seized the imagination of the entire nation that it would improper to settle the question of its dimensions between the two of them. When the whole nation aspired for the memorial, then it should reflect the aspirations of the whole nation. It should reflect Vijay, Bharat’s triumph in overcoming regional, political and social differences, to rise as One for Swami Vivekananda. Eknathji sought Sri Bhaktavatsalam’s consent to prepare appropriate designs, show it to at least six eminent persons based on which Bhaktavatsalam could finalize.

“Who are the six persons?” Bhaktavatsalam wanted to know.

“Prime Minister, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru; Home Minister, Lal Bahadur Shastri; President Dr. S. Radhakrishnan; Sri M. C. Chagla, very respected retired Chief Justice of India; the President of the Ramakrishna Mission and the Paramacharya of Kanchi Kamakoti Peetham”, Eknathji listed out.

When Sri Bhaktavatsalam heard the name of the Paramacharya of the Kanchi Kamakoti Peetham, he agreed to the proposal immediately. Eknathji had done his homework well. He knew that Sri Bhaktavatsalam
listened to Nehruji on political issues and in all other matters sought
guidance from Sri Chandrasekharendra Saraswati, the Shankaracharya
of Kanchi Kamakoti Peetham, reverentially known as Paramacharya, a
realized soul, a renowned and revered spiritual master.

It was in this meeting of 23 February, 1964 with Sri Bhaktavatsalam that
Ek Nathji first alluded to the Vivekananda Kendra, a service organization
that he founded later as the second phase of the Memorial to Swami
Vivekananda. A paragraph from the minutes of his discussion with Sri
Bhaktavatsalam shows the finesse in Eknathji’s language as well as his
first mention of the Service Organization.

**He told Sri Bhaktavatsalam,**

All right Sir, I shall address myself to all the works immediately. I shall contact you from time to time if
there is any difficulty. I beg of you to grant me that
much freedom to place before you my ideas as also the difficulties that might come in the way or various
suggestions I might be receiving from prominent people and to seek your guidance. I would like to
assure you, however, that ultimately that alone would be done which would be acceptable to you.

It is necessary and proper that the Memorial work is
completed as early as possible. Actually, I consider
this work to be quite small compared to the work,
which this issue has brought me face to face with.
I consider it very urgent and necessary that some
silent and constructive work is undertaken. And I
shall deem it a privilege to do my bit under your
guidance. Though I had been in a sort of conflict
with you up till now, I would like, in the new
context, to work as your trusted lieutenant if some
such work was under your contemplation.
Kanchi Paramacharya, Sri Chandrasekharendra Saraswati Swamigal took great interest in the work. He wanted Eknathji, to ask Sri S. K. Achari - the Sthapati (traditional architect) chosen for the memorial to sit with him. The Paramacharya explained to the Sthapati how the structure should be as per tradition. It could not be a temple as temples are built for Gods and Goddesses where regular worships are held. However, it should be a temple-like structure. With the design suggested by him and a few other designs, Eknathji reported to Sri Bhaktavatsalam that he had got three to four designs prepared for the Memorial and Paramacharya himself had suggested a design.

“Show me the design suggested by Paramacharya”, Sri Bhaktavatsalam said with great enthusiasm. Eknathji showed the designs and explained all the details except, of course, the dimensions.

“You go ahead with the design suggested by Paramacharya”, Sri Bhaktavatsalam said.

“But there is a difficulty”, said Eknathji, “The dimensions are slightly bigger”.

“That is all right! You go ahead”, Sri Bhaktavatsalam said expansively.

That dimension was ‘slightly bigger’. From 15’ x 15’, the Sabha Mandapam alone which would house the statue of Swami Vivekananda was 130’x 56’! It is also interesting how Eknathji gradually got the entire plan of the Memorial approved.

The Himalayan efforts to carry out a total plan

Swami Vivekananda discovered the mission of his life on the Rock. No life is purposeless. Each one should discover his or her mission in life and make it purposeful. Eknathji felt that when people from all over the country would come to visit the Memorial, they too should sit quietly
in meditation at least for a while and ponder over their life mission. With the vibrations of the penance of Goddess Kanyakumari and the meditation of Swami Vivekananda on the Rock, if they were earnest enough, they too might discover the mission of their life. For such contemplation, there should be a quiet and befitting place on the rock. Therefore, the Committee wanted to have a Meditation Hall - Dhyana Mandapam. There was a great depression on the eastern side of the rock. It would be costly to fill it up. The Government was approached after some months for permission to build a Dhyana Mandapam there. The Government of Tamil Nadu consented graciously.

After some two-three years, the Government was again requested to allow the construction of a Mandapam over Shripaadam - the footprint of Devi Kanyakumari. The point put forward was simple. A Mandapam for a devotee and no Mandapam for the Shripaadam of Bhagavati would be incongruous. The Government granted permission. Eknathji was careful that the Mandapam should not obstruct the main Memorial structure. He was not one who first worked on assumptions and repented later. He wanted to make sure that the height was just right. He writes in his letter dated 18 May, 1967,

I am writing this letter however with a special purpose. I want you and Sthapati to fully ascertain that the height of the proposed Devipaadam structure (later named Shripaada Mandapam) will not in any way obstruct the view of the Vivekananda Mandapam when viewed from the shore standing on the central line. I want you and the Sthapati to actually put up a post or some very temporary bamboo structure of the proposed height of the Devipaadam Mandapam at the said site, with similar suitable work on the Rock denoting the platform level of the Main Mandapam and then to view the whole thing from various points on the shore at varied elevations and to satisfy yourselves that the height we have proposed for the Devipaadam
Mandapam would in no way obstruct the view of the main Mandapam even if viewed from the PWD hut on the shore. As I am to submit the Devipaadam Mandapam drawings to the Government in the last week of June, I want your firm observations by 31st May.

How thorough Eknathji was in his work! Not by guesswork but by actually raising the structure would he make sure. It was only with such firm and solid groundwork that he used to meet the Chief Minister. Naturally, he could always get the consent for whatever he planned.

As the memorial took shape, the Committee again approached the State Government seeking one permission after another for various requirements: helipads for the visit of dignitaries. (as boats would be ruled out for security reasons), reservoirs to collect rainwater for cleaning purposes, administrative block and room for watchmen and other personnel to stay at night. The Government, which had long since ceased to be an opponent and had instead become a great supporter, readily sanctioned all the requests. Eknathji used to say that if the complete plan was unfolded in the beginning, it might have frightened others. So, it had to be done gradually. Thus, the process of obtaining permission for one or the other went on for years together till the memorial was completed.

**Dream as an emperor, not as a beggar**

The immediate task before Committee after obtaining the permission was to form a proper estimate of the plan. At the initial stages, the district level Swami Vivekananda Centenary Celebration Committee had proposed a budget of just Rs. 40,000/- for the erection of the statue. But as the conception of the Memorial had increased in size and shape directly proportional to the difficulties it faced and the support it received; the budget too had to be accordingly recast.
For Eknathji, the memorial did not mean only the one in stone on the Rock. He envisioned a memorial in action, a living memorial; so naturally taking all these into account the budget could be huge. Eknathji knew that if a very big budget for the granite memorial as well as the living memorial was presented, it might depress the karyakartas instead of enthusing them. Hence, even the budget was presented gradually. Eknathji minutely scrutinized the heads of expenditure at every stage.

Eknathji wrote detailed letters almost every week or sometimes everyday in connection with construction or collection campaign or inauguration or some other work. He had a tremendous eye for detail. He also saw to it that detailed instructions to the Karyakartas were given for proper execution of the work. A leader should not presume that others would understand everything and leave the work to the karyakartas and then blame them for not doing it properly. The seriousness of the leader is reflected in other Karyakartas also. Otherwise, every one works casually. Eknathji by his own hard work always brought out the best in those who worked with him.

**Clarity of Purpose and Determined Will Leads the Way**

After the memorial was sanctioned the initial budget was presented – hundred times more than the first budget for Statue of Rs 40,000. The budget of Rs. 40,00,000/- drew a gasp from all. A karyakarta remarked that it was too big even to dream. Eknathji replied smilingly, “When you want to dream, why dream like a beggar? Dream like an emperor!” Some of Eknathji’s friends told him, “This gigantic memorial in the sea is only a fantasy. How will you carry big stones onto the Rock? You are throwing money into the sea. Who will give you money to throw into water?” Hardly anyone believed him that such a grand memorial could be built. Eknathji had to instill hope in the karyakartas at this stage too.

It became necessary to ascertain whether the rock was solid enough to withstand the grand memorial. The huge work of chiseling of stones
started swallowing the money. The war of 1965 added to the difficulty in raising funds. Resources were scarce. Costs escalated. It was suggested in some quarters that the budget be re-estimated. Eknathji was cautious and did not want to do it in 1966, even before the General Body of the Vivekananda Rock Memorial Committee (VRMC). In one of his letters dated 2 August, 1966 he wrote,

It may also be necessary to revise the estimate not only on account of rising prices but also due to many other factors. But we should do it a little later. The mode of transport of the stone to the Rock island is yet to be finalized. Even the jetty construction work is still hanging fire and we do not know how much more financial burden we shall have to bear on that account. The stage therefore has yet to come when we shall be able to form a fairly correct idea about the estimate of the ultimate cost.

In any case, I do not consider it possible or even desirable to discuss the matter in the ensuing General Body meeting. The report of the General Body meeting is to be subsequently sent to the members all over the country. I do not think it wise to spread an unnecessary scare among our karyakartas all over the country about a possible rise in our present estimate, which is considered unavoidable; we shall certainly apprise all our karyakartas of the same at that stage. My personal feeling is other things being equal; our estimate is not likely to rise on account of rising prices. We had already kept a margin for such a probable rise in prices while preparing the budget. I therefore feel that neither should we include the subject in the agenda nor should we think of bringing it for
discussion in the ensuing General Body meeting. If found necessary, we can bring the subject in the General Body Meeting of 1967.

Thus, he assured those karyakartas who were depressed because of rising costs and lack of visible sources, that the situation was well in hand. As the fund collection gathered momentum and the grand memorial rose steadily the confidence of the karyakartas as well as the public increased. Thus, when they were ready, the second phase of the Memorial was unfolded to them. The initial budget of Rs. 40,00,000/- rose ultimately to a whopping sum of Rs. 1,35,00,000/- by the end of the 1960s. It was an enormous amount in those days.

**Where will the money come from?**

The work of constructing a memorial and collecting money for it was new for Eknathji. He actually was not comfortable with it in the beginning as explained by him in *‘The Story of the Vivekananda Rock Memorial’*,

Probably it may not be clear to you how I felt after permission was secured for the Memorial. I had the satisfaction that some positive work had been done. But then that I should engage myself in this Memorial work for many years made me feel bad. ...I will have to engage myself in a work, which was never in my plan of life. ...I was interested in meeting people, bringing them together, organizing and mobilizing them. And where have I landed myself? The very nature of the case -the whole endeavour - would take several years, precious years, of my life. Thinking on personal terms, putting stone upon stone was not in my nature. It was not in my line. But circumstances had so conspired that I had to engage myself in this work... This frightened me but then there was no other
alternative... But I thought that I must handle the whole thing in a way that while the construction was in progress, I should be able to engage myself in some fruitful activities – not by simply spending money and time, collecting stones and building a structure on the Rock. How will I justify while talking to the people for money for putting up the structure? Will a simple structure be enough to perpetuate Swamiji’s memory? All these thoughts came to my mind. I said to myself that whatever came should be welcomed and at the same time we should plan in a way that some good was achieved out of this Memorial when it came up. This Memorial should form a nucleus for something still greater. What should be that and how this situation could be made best use of for that purpose?

However, as a master organizer, Eknathji had learnt to transform every challenge, every work into an opportunity for awakening the people and bringing them together for a noble cause. He turned the mundane and materialistic work of building a granite Memorial and collecting money for it into a nation-wide campaign to take the message of Swami Vivekananda to the people.

The collection of funds was the biggest challenge. The memorial was not to be built as and when the money came, but to be built within a time frame. Again, it was not to be just constructing a memorial in stone, it had to be a forerunner to the work in the name of Swami Vivekananda. That decided how the money would be collected. Eknathji says in *The Story of the Vivekananda Rock Memorial*,

If we had concerned ourselves with just a memorial ...then perhaps our collection campaign would have been organized on different lines. We would have met a few who
had money and we would not have wasted our energy in meeting people with limited capacity to donate. Then, the modus operandi would have been to concentrate on Bombay, Calcutta and other industrial centres, and we would have got the requisite funds from leading industrialists.

We had the second phase in mind while taking up the first phase - the work that we had to do and for which we had to pave the way. So that geared up the whole machinery for the collection campaign under the first phase.

Thus, even the collection campaign was aimed at not only the collection for the Rock Memorial construction but for awakening the nation. As the memorial in granite took shape, Eknathji wanted the memorial for Swami Vivekananda in the hearts of the people too should be strengthened so that they were motivated to work out Swamiji’s vision.

**Carving poetry in granite**

As soon as the permission was received for the plan advised by Sri Kanchi Paramacharya and approved by Sri Bhaktavatsalam, the chiseling work began on 6 November, 1964. After adequate numbers of stones were chiseled, the masonry work on the Rock was taken up from 12 October, 1967. The overriding question was as to how to start collecting the required money? The work would not wait for money to be collected. Unless there was a vision and systematic plan, the required funds could not be collected.

The pain caused by the opposition to the memorial by a section of the Christian community, had to be contained by seeking the support of the entire country for its construction. Eknathji could get the support of the Christian community all over the country because he did not consider a section represented the entire community. The
government’s initial refusal for the Memorial had to be blunted, to be made a non-issue by seeking financial support of all the State and Central Governments. It was the case of drawing a longer line to make the earlier line inconsequential. It was the case of uniting all in the name of Swami Vivekananda and thus creating a win-win situation. All became participants in actualizing the grand memorial for Swami Vivekananda.

A plan was made to form public committees in each state. Eknathji chose and picked the appropriate persons for these committees. In Maharashtra he wanted Sri S.K. Patil to head the Committee. He took time to reach Sri S.K. Patil, but Eknathji was clear that if the committees were launched properly with adequate publicity and right persons to head them, the collection would be faster, easier and of course purposeful for the second phase.

While committees were being formed and the state governments were being approached, money was required to continue the work. There were times when no money was available even to pay the wages of the stone workers. But most workers inspired by the message of Swami Vivekananda rose to the occasion. Many workers came forward saying, ‘You just feed us every day. Whenever money comes, you can pay our wages. Until then our families back home would manage somehow. But just give us food everyday so that we can work on the stones and the Memorial work does not lag behind.’ Eknathji was touched by the spirit of these heroic workers. But even to feed so many workers (on an average 650 workers worked per day) every day a lot of money was required apart from other expenses. Therefore, money had to be borrowed.

Vivekananda Rock Memorial Committee approached big industrialists for donations. But at the initial stages they were skeptical whether VRMC could collect that much money and whether really the memorial would come up in their lifetime. Even the Birlas who always came forward to finance good causes of which they were confident, agreed to contribute
only one lakh rupees that too after a lot of persuasion. As suggested by Eknathji, they gave Rs. 50,000/- immediately, stipulating that the remaining Rs. 50,000/- would be paid only if Rs. 10 lakhs donation was collected. At the behest of Sri Guruji, some of the Swayamsevaks from Nagpur gave interest free loan for the Committee to keep it ticking.

**Come what may, the work will go on unhindered.**

When the fund position became precarious, some members from the Vivekananda Rock Memorial Committee suggested that the work be withheld for some time. But this idea was suicidal; it would have affected even the confidence of the people about the capacity of the Committee to raise the required money as well as to complete the memorial in time. This idea of suspending the work was unbearable to Eknathji. He wrote in a letter-dated 16 June, 1965,

> If Rajasthan and Delhi-Punjab are able to remit their quota of collection for this month to Madras, then the burden may be lessened. But is it possible in the prevailing situation today? Whatever it may be, the efforts on that work should not stop and should continue without any hindrance. My mind does not accept even the thought of any obstacle in this work for any reason whatsoever. God will surely show some way and the work will continue unhindered. This is my firm conviction.

In one of his letters written in Hindi on 29 June, 1965, Eknathji wrote, “Come what may, I know this much that the *Nirman Karya* (construction work) will go on undisturbed. It is crystal clear that the unseen Power which wills this work will also procure the needed means”. His faith in God was complete. Nor did he lack in his efforts. However, the difficulties did test his resolve.
Dedication and commitment are not everyone’s strengths, that too when the wages to be sent to the families were not received for weeks together. Some of the workers went on strike saying unless part of the wages was given, they would not continue the work. Again, the suggestion from some of his colleagues and Committee members mounted on him for reducing the work force. But, Eknathji’s approach was different. He wrote in his letter of 22 September, 1965,

In his last letter Sri… had proposed to reduce the number of skilled workers by nearly half. He wanted to dismiss all those workers who had gone on strike in spite of exhortations and appeal to them by the authorities against doing so. I therefore wanted to tell him that he should not make such retrenchment on any ground, because that would affect our time schedule adversely. Going a step further, I would suggest that Rs. 5/- should be given to all the wage earners by way of extra payment in order to somewhat compensate for the inconvenience they had to suffer on account of inordinate delay in the payment of weekly wages.

In the same letter he further continued,

I am expecting a donation of Rs. 1 lakh from the State Government of West Bengal in the immediate future. However, I shall inform you about it only when the probability becomes an actuality. You may even get the news from the press.

As expected by Eknathji this donation was soon received. This donation of Rs. one lakh was a very precious one. Because of the war looming large on the borders, getting donations had become extremely difficult.
The stone workers who had left their families in the villages to work at Kanyakumari were getting restless. Hence this donation was timely.

When Eknathji met the Chief Minister of West Bengal for donation, he asked irritably, “Do you understand? There is war on the border. Again a big wave of refugees will come to Bengal and you are asking for donation? You can ask from some other State. Why Bengal?”

“Precisely for the same reason: it is Bengal”. Answered Eknathji calmly and further continued, “The work of the memorial is otherwise coming to a grinding halt. If even Bengal cannot help for the memorial of Swami Vivekananda in such difficult times then who will help?” Eknathji’s point went home. And the donation - a much needed one - was given by the Government of West Bengal.

The timely donation from West Bengal Government was used up quickly to pay all the pending bills, salaries etc. Therefore, the shortage of funds continued and became acute. It was at this time that a donation of Rs 1 lakh was received from Mangalore Ganesh Beedi works. How Eknathji was getting strained in this effort of collecting money, what mental and spiritual phases he passed through, can be gathered from his letter dated 21 October, 1965 sent to the Mangalore Ganesh Beedi Works, Mysore,

It was the most pleasant and meaningful experience I ever had in my life when I hit upon a news item in Jugantar, a Bengali daily about the gracious donation of Rs. 1 lakh made by your firm to the Vivekananda Rock Memorial Fund.

It was pleasant for most obvious reasons. As an Organizing Secretary of the Memorial Committee what can be more pleasant to me than a handsome donation to the cause? But the experience was something more than mere pleasantness. While
it gave me great comfort, it also renewed and
revitalized my faith in God and gave me immense
strength.

That morning I had got up from my bed somewhat
fatigued on account of almost a sleepless night
spent on brooding over the tight position of the
Committee, the contemplated time schedule of
the Memorial Project and the prevailing disturbed
atmosphere in the country threatening to upset the
Committee’s plans for general collection of funds
necessary for the implementation of the memorial
plan. In fact, it was the culmination of my prolonged
ruminating and worrying during the whole previous
fortnight. That morning however when after saying
my prayers, I was alone with myself, I succeeded in
recomposing myself when I realized that all things
would be accomplished by His Grace and that my
over worrying about one of His works only meant
arrogating to myself a greater role than what a mere
instrument was entitled to claim for itself. It was
thus with that particular frame of mind that on that
memorable day I casually took up a newspaper to
read. You can well imagine the pleasant surprise
the news of your firm’s contribution must have
sprung upon me. Whoever or whatever factor may
have been therefore instrumental in making you
arrive at this noble decision; I believe from the core
of my being that it was only His prompting that
(has) been carried out by your firm.

Eknathji also insisted that money received was properly utilized. He
would not hesitate to spend to get the best work done as he did in the
case of printing of folders. But at the same time, he made sure that
each and every karyakarta in the Committee understood the need for
economy. In one of his letters dated 12 July, 1965 he wrote,
I read your letter addressed to Dr. B.C. Roy of Calcutta. In that letter you need not have referred to your willingness to bear the expenses of to-and-fro passage of one who might be deputed by him to survey the site. The reference was totally unnecessary and uncalled for. That gives the impression that the Committee had abundant funds under its control. In a way, it runs counter to your earlier request to him to do the survey work free of charge. Sometimes, you are over-enthusiastic.

While being continuously on tour he had to mould and guide the *karyakartas* who were in-charge of various works at Kanyakumari and Madras. In a letter dated 14 January, 1966, he wrote in a detailed way,

Kanyakumari work-site is our base because it is the place to which the funds that are being raised all over the country would ultimately flow and where they would be expected to be purposefully spent in the implementation of the memorial project. We have therefore to be very conscientious in every little expenditure that we make. The people’s complete faith in not only the integrity but also in the wisdom and alertness of the men who are on the spot to execute the whole work is really the guarantee of the success of the collection drive in the country. Similarly, it is also true that that kind of faith alone will ensure continued corruptionlessness, honesty and diligence from the present fine team of our workmen and *Karmacharis* who in the present vicious atmosphere of the country all around might otherwise be degenerated into mere mercenaries or even self-seekers.
I am sure you are aware that in any organization while a particular virtue in a very high degree at the top tends to trickle down only in a very small measure in the lower strata of the organization, even a little dilution of the same nay even an appearance of a dilution - at the top descends down to the lower rungs in a form and degree ten times degenerated. All of us therefore who are heading different wings of this great project at Madras, Kanyakumari or elsewhere, have to be meticulously careful while taking decisions or conducting ourselves on behalf of the Committee.

There is one more important thing that we the karyakartas have always to keep in mind. It is that while one completely absorbed in carrying out his duty and thus fully possessed of the very spirit of the work itself, goes on taking decisions and behaving in the manner he deems fit in his absolute discretion, oblivious to the critical eyes all around, he lands himself in enormous difficulties in spite of the best of his motives and great physical hardships he might suffer in their implementation. This is the reason why a queer sounding dictum has been prescribed for karyakartas by great organizers and social leaders for being obeyed in toto. The maxim is not only should you be honest, conscientious, frugal, un-arbitrary and undictatorial etc., but also should appear to be so.

**Donation campaign: Collect money to spread the message**

When a Chief Ministers’ Conference was underway in at New Delhi in August 1966, Eknathji tried to meet some of them to expedite donations from their respective states. But after the war, devaluation
had taken place and the Centre had recommended ‘Cut’ in expenditure in all the states. Even those states, which had promised handsome donations, expressed their inability to contribute during that financial year. Nevertheless, for Eknathji every difficulty was an opportunity for doing something better.

While informing about it to his colleagues Eknathji expressed in his letter of 5 August, 1966,

The coming months therefore might prove trying and difficult. But this unfortunate development may be considered as a boon in disguise. This will make the Committee strive hard to tap other effective sources without losing time. Let us see. In any case, one thing is certain. The work at Kanyakumari would go on uninterrupted and without slackening its present pace of progress.

And really that was so. Within five months, the Mysore State Committee collected Rs. 4.5 lakhs as first instalment and handed over a cheque to Eknathji on 25 December 1966. What gladdened Eknathji more than the handsome amount was the way it was collected. Commending it, Eknathji said at the function arranged for handing over the precious cheque,

The whole collection-campaign took the form of a joint endeavour, not only of the people and the government but also of all people at all levels, rich and poor, belonging to all shades of opinions, cutting across barriers of party affiliations and group loyalties, sects and communities. In the background of present-day India, this phenomenon looks all the more impressive and heartening. When, generally, the people are seen divided in water-tight compartments as it were, when the prevalent fashion is to conduct works, even of national importance, under party-labels, this
combined effort carried on by all people working shoulder to shoulder, really opens a new chapter in our social work and undertakings. I am sure, if more and more of similar works of national importance are taken up and accomplished in this fashion that would go a long way in restoring the lost health of the nation.

The total collection by the Mysore State Committee rose to around Rs. 6.4 lakhs, but the initial installment set the tone for collection campaign in other states. Gradually one after other, the other State Committees took up the campaign and ensured a steady flow of money to Kanyakumari.

**Involving the masses – the appeal of one-rupee and two-rupee folders**

When Swami Vivekananda was to leave for Chicago he desired to go as a representative of the masses. It was their condition that touched him the most and it was for their uplift that he urged everyone to work. Eknathji, therefore, sought the involvement of the masses for the memorial to be a truly National one. He planned to print One Rupee folders for these campaigns. A rupee was affordable. Eknathji’s precision and perfection was such, that he asked the *karyakartas* at Kanyakumari to send two square pieces of the dressed stones of both the varieties (red and gray granite), by air parcel to Bombay as he wanted the artist to paint the picture of Rock Memorial in identical colours.

These folders were so beautiful that many persons donated a Rupee just to preserve the folder. In 1995 when the Vivekananda Kendra Institute of Culture, Guwahati contacted a scholar in Meghalaya to participate in a seminar, he was hesitant as his wife was seriously unwell. His wife overheard the discussion, came out and asked whether Vivekananda Kendra was associated with the Vivekananda Rock Memorial Committee. When it was confirmed, she went inside and brought out
the One Rupee folder and showed it to her husband as well as the karyakarta of the VKIC saying, ‘When I was a college student, I had donated One Rupee for this memorial and I am so happy that from the same organization you are invited, you please go. Do not worry about me!’ As desired by his wife, the scholar came for the seminar. It turned out to be her last wish as she passed away within a few days. That One Rupee folder motivated her for 35 to 40 years and urged her even while on her deathbed to work for the society.

The thoughtfully made folder, served also as a receipt. The message of Swami Vivekananda on it, his inspiring picture in standing pose as if giving a rousing call to the nation and the picture of the proposed Vivekananda Rock Memorial, made a great impact on the donor. Eknathji saw to it that by giving this donation to the granite memorial, the heart of the donor was also opened to the living memorial of Swami Vivekananda to be founded later. Along with the collection of money, a great amount of goodwill was also created in the society and government establishments.

Out of Rs. 1,35,00,000/- collected, Rs. 85,00,000/- came through One-Rupee and Two-Rupees donations from 30 lakhs of people (1% of the adult population of the country at that time). All the state governments including the Jammu and Kashmir government headed by Sri Sheikh Abdulla and the government in Nagaland were persuaded to donate. The highest donation of Rs. 21,00,000/- was from the public committee of Maharashtra. Even now when a person from Rajasthan or from Assam or from Odisha or Maharashtra or any other state comes to Kanyakumari and sees the Memorial, s/he recalls happily, “I had also given money for this Memorial.” The whole nation owns it. In that sense, it is really a National monument.

Though the people have an urge to support such a cause, a master organizer is required to awaken it and organize the public. The public committees did excellent work. Eknathji had worked very hard in forming the committees and in organizing the collection campaign.
Steer clear of politics: See the unity beyond all differences

The Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh was associated with the Memorial work right from inception. The people of Kanyakumari, and the visitors to Vivekananda Library in Kanyakumari since 1935 had expressed the desire for some sort of Memorial at the Rock. Respecting the wishes of the people the Sangh had taken a lead in forming the Swami Vivekananda Centenary Celebration Committee at the district level which later became Vivekananda Rock Memorial Committee at the All India level. The *karyakartas* of the Sangh were in the forefront in the door-to-door collection of funds. Eknathji, who had held as high an office in the Sangh as that of a Sarkaryavah for six years, led the work of VRMC, yet no non-Sangh person hesitated to associate with the Rock Memorial work. Many eminent people from all walks of life were associated with the Rock Memorial. Those were the days, when people - especially government employees - hesitated to associate with the Sangh.

Eknathji was always proud of the training he had received in the RSS and never disowned or hid it. He appealed to the people openly: “Can we not come together forgetting our colours to work for the Nation?” The appeal touched many hearts. Once when Sri S.K. Patil was asked in an AICC meeting at Jabalpur how he could associate with the RSS people, Sri S.K. Patil retorted bluntly: “I am the President of the Maharashtra State Committee of Vivekananda Rock Memorial Committee. Where is the RSS? Do you mean to say because x,y,z are in the RSS the entire Committee is in the RSS? What do you want? You also come. I will give you a place. You become the President of the Committee. You start the work. You collect funds. There is no restriction on anybody. You tell me what you want. I will do it”.

Sri S. K. Patil was aware that generally persons with vested interests or scores to settle made “RSS” as an issue. But that gentleman who raised the issue in the AICC meeting did not keep quiet; he again raised it in the evening session when Sri C. B. Gupta was the Chairman. Sri C. B. Gupta remarked, “It seems you are suffering from an RSS phobia. I
know the organization (Vivekananda Rock Memorial Committee) very well; I know all the people and one should not take such view on a non-controversial work as to who belongs to which party and which group. That should not be the criteria; the work is good, all people should join it”. Vivekananda Rock Memorial Committee under the leadership of Eknathji had succeeded in steering the work of the Memorial clear of political or creedal controversies. Thus, he got the co-operation of all.

How Eknathji achieved such whole-hearted support is really worth knowing. Eknathji details it in The Story of the Vivekananda Rock Memorial. It is a story of Eknathji’s skill in organization. The Story of Vivekananda Rock Memorial is also a tribute to the people of India of all colours and all hues as they overcome their individual affiliations and stood for Swami Vivekananda. The Story of Vivekananda Rock Memorial is in essence the story of Ek Bharat–Vijayi Bharat, One Bharat-Victorious Bharat!

**Accounts – a corollary of donations**

The donation campaign was never a “Drag-On” affair. As the word “campaign” implied, it was time-bound, not extending beyond six-months from the time of launching. For example, the West Bengal collection campaign was inaugurated on 10 March, 1968 and was concluded by July-end the same year. The completed accounts were audited and sent to Kanyakumari along with the remainder unused folders. The accounts were completed before the completion of the Memorial. That did not mean that committees became defunct or were dissolved at the end of the mass campaigns. It was only the mass campaigns in which one-rupee folders were used, that were concluded. The committees continued to pursue their appeal for funds pending with other organizations. Eknathji thus beautifully balanced and achieved the continuance of the state and district committees’ work for the Memorial and the tough task of conscientiously and timely accounting of the money collected through folders.
In some committees such as for example, the Mysore State Committee, the Pranta Karyavah was the Secretary of the State unit. As narrated by Eknathji in the *The Story of the Vivekananda Rock Memorial*, many important persons from the Sangh manned the campaigns. He said that because of their training and norms in life, “They not only collected money but deposited it with all receipt books to the office and the account was completed within a record time of 2-3 months.”

**Swamiji’s posture reflects his ‘Rousing Call to the Nation’**

Swami Vivekananda meditated on the Rock. Therefore, it was natural for many to suggest that the statue of Swami Vivekananda should be in meditative posture. However, Eknathji was not for it. It was on this Rock that Swamiji meditated not for his own *Mukti* but for the regeneration of Mother India. It was here that Swamiji realized that not *Dharma* but its ignorance was responsible for the degradation of India. Thus, Swamiji wanted to give the life-giving principles of Hindu *Dharma* to people. He had said, “I shall continue to inspire people everywhere until the world knows that it is one with God”. That means until India fulfils her mission of giving this Vedantic truth to the world, Swamiji would continue to work in spirit. It was this purpose of the meditation and its outcome, which decided for Eknathji the posture of the statue. It should inspire one to work for fulfilling the world mission of India. Swamiji’s statue should be such that it would reflect his timeless message “*Arise! Awake! And stop not till the goal is reached*”.

Such a powerful statue had to be sculpted. Eknathji was not a person who would compromise on quality. In order to prepare a mould for the statue, the right type of painting of Swamiji was needed. Eknathji contacted the best portrait artists in the country. About this, Eknathji recounts in *The Story of the Rock Memorial*,

All renowned portrait makers in the country were approached. I said to them, “Make a picture of Swamiji moving. You must be able to convey the
movement in the standing pose as if he is setting on a mission, with confidence – that he has something on his hand and he is out to give a message to the world. That should be conveyed. Can you draw a portrait like that? If you are able to draw such a portrait, then that portrait will be given to the sculptor and then that sculptor will be able to reproduce that sentiment or thought in the statue”. And it took more than a couple of years to get the right man. Even after getting the right man, the portrait he gave us in the first instance was far from what we desired. He was asked to try again and at the second attempt, he made a marvelous portrait”.

Eknathji gave his book, *Rousing Call to Hindu Nation* and also other books of Swami Vivekananda to Sri S. M. Pandit to read. Sri Pandit too took the assignment very seriously. He went through all the books and also undertook certain austere practices so as to imbibe the spirit of Swami Vivekananda. Eknathji even requested one monk of Ramakrishna Mission to dress like Swami Vivekananda and stand in a posture to reflect the dynamism. Such photos along with the photos of Swami Vivekananda were given to Sri Pandit. It was only after he was imbued with the spirit of Swami Vivekananda could he draw an inspiring portrait as desired by Eknathji. Today it is one of the most well-known portraits of Swamiji in the country.

**Sculpting the statue with motion and mission**

After that, the search was on for the right sculptor. Eknathji says,

The portrait was given to nearly eight sculptors in the country – top sculptors. One was from Calcutta, another from Madras, the third from Delhi, the fourth and fifth from Bombay, the sixth from Baroda and so on and so forth. They were asked to prepare model statues in clay – full statue, not a miniature
model. We agreed that for the statue made in clay, if not acceptable to us, we would pay Rs. 2,000/- towards the labour charges. In this manner, eight clay models were tried. I went to all the sculptors every 2-3 months to see how it was coming up. The great sculptor of Calcutta, Devi Prasad Roy Choudhari was also given the work. But then, only two people in Bombay succeeded and those two model statues were ultimately approved. These two statues cast in bronze, were brought here, and were installed on trial one after another at the sight. Then out of the two, one was selected (made by Sri N. L. Sonavadekar, Assistant Lecturer of Sculpture, Sir J. J. School of Art, Bombay) The other statue is also an equally good statue, with a little difference and of more height. Its height would not have been fitting on the Rock, because we so designed it that Swamiji’s eyes in the statue should fall on the Shripaadam.

In the entire memorial, the focal point is the Shripaadam. The whole structure is designed according to the situation of Shripaadam and as soon as the main door is opened, Swamiji’s eyes fall on the Shripaadam; so if the statue was of more height, then the eye-line would not synchronize. If it was less, then also it would not do. The height of the second statue was more. We could not lower down the pedestal. If we did not lower the pedestal, the statue went up. Therefore, that statue was not suitable to be installed. ((It was subsequently installed in Vivekanandapuram.)

The question of the statue’s eyes focused on the Shripaadam is yet another example of Eknathji’s ability to carry people with him. Many
Eminent persons were emotionally involved in the construction of the Vivekananda Rock Memorial. Many suggestions with respect to the statue poured in. Some said it should be facing East. Some said it should be facing India, etc. The question was how could all be satisfied without making anyone feel his/her suggestion was rejected. Eknathji suggested that Swami meditated on the Rock because Mother Kanyakumari had meditated here; it would be befitting if the statue looks at the feet of the Mother. Everyone happily accepted this suggestion.

Even while choosing the posture, the thought of the Second Phase – a Service Organization - was very much in Eknathji’s mind. He says in *The Story of the Rock Memorial*

By choosing a statue with a standing posture, we ensured that Swamiji on the Rock will not inspire people merely to simply meditate. Enough of meditation. He has done enough meditation for all of us and he has found a way and let people be set in motion. Let people work ..; whatever religious experiences you have achieved, whatever are your observations, now put them in practice. Do it.

So, to inspire people to act, what pose will be the best? Our organization is not envisaged as *Sadhana* oriented. It is work oriented. Whatever *Sadhana* is necessary to put a man on proper lines and to make him active is there. But the entire second phase we have envisaged is not for *Sadhana*; for hours and hours of communion with God. It is not that type of organization that we thought of giving birth to; thereafter, we preferred the standing posture, the posture in motion.

Eknathji wanted Swami Vivekananda to be a source of inspiration and not just an object of worship. As such, he was against the deifying
of great persons. Therefore, it was decided that the statue would be installed where no daily ritualistic worship would be offered to Swami Vivekananda.

The dream of the nation becomes a reality

The grand memorial took shape in record time. Starting with whether the Rock itself was strong enough to bear the weight of a massive granite structure, to tackling such questions as how to transport heavy stones onto the Rock, or how to collect required funds, the challenges had been many.

Eknathji was clear and firm that the construction should be completed before 1970. The minute timetable of when, how-much portion of the Memorial and what work associated with it should be completed on a day-to-day basis was prepared. Eknathji had asked for the weekly progress reports from Kanyakumari and they had to match with the timetable drawn. Whenever Eknathji came from his tour to Kanyakumari, he would go straight to the Rock. There was no question of travel fatigue. After reaching it, he would see whether the progress was as per schedule. Only then would he proceed to his residence for wash and refreshment.

Once when Eknathji returned from a tour, the renowned Sanskrit scholar, Sri S.B.Varnekarji was also with him. As usual, Eknathji went straight to the Rock. The flooring was to be completed in the Sabha Mandapam and the two stone elephants were to be installed as per the schedule. As he reached the Rock, some workers suggested that the function proposed for the next day in the Sabha Mandapam, be held on the shore. Eknathji did not reply. He went straight ahead and reached the front of the Sabha Mandapam. He demanded, ‘Where are the elephants?’ Sri Varnekarji was puzzled, and wondered why the elephants were needed for the next day’s function. The workers started stammering an explanation. Eknathji said, “Go and call all the workers; the elephants should be installed today.”
It was already evening. Eknathji climbed the steps of the Sabha Mandapam and as he entered, he saw that the flooring was incomplete. It was only then that he realized why the workers wanted the program to be arranged on the shore. Again he declared, “Call all the workers; fix the lights properly for doing the work in the night. The flooring work will start now. It should be over before morning. The function will be held here itself. I shall also sit here till the flooring is completed.” The work started in right earnest. Eknathji was requested to go and take rest and the workers promised to complete the work before morning. However, Eknathji refused to go. He was aware of the strain of working in the night, so he too denied rest for himself. He sat through the night. Naturally, Sri Varnekarji too sat there.

“Why do you insist so much? In construction work, it does happen often that the work drags”, asked Sri Varnekarji after some time.

“Dada, if a delay of one day is tolerated, then slowly it would expand into months and years and this memorial would not come up even in my lifetime. After this is completed, a bigger and living memorial to Swami Vivekananda is to be developed. For the sake of the nation, therefore, we cannot afford the delay of even one day”, Eknathji replied.

Vivekananda Rock Memorial Committee was aware of the dangers the workers faced while working on the memorial. They had to lift big and heavy stones, to climb very high scaffolding and naturally were exposed to accidents. Therefore, Committee saw to it that all the workers were insured. But it is worth mentioning that no accidents took place during the entire period of construction. It was as if Mother Kanyakumari herself took care of all.

Not only the risk of accidents, there was also the possibility of some man-made problem. In November 1968, a hand grenade exploded on the Rock. However, Eknathji and his colleagues always took care that such incidents were not given publicity, as that would have unnecessarily divided the people of Kanyakumari into two warring
groups and perhaps have a cascading effect in other parts of the country. It would be detrimental to the completion of the Memorial and to the sacred cause it represented. Nevertheless, that did not mean that the guilty should go unpunished or the incident ignored. This stand by the workers at Kanyakumari earned the appreciation of Eknathji as seen in his letter of 23 November, 1968:

Received your letter dated 16.11.1968 together with a copy of your letter addressed to the Collector in connection with the hand grenade incident. I have also received from Madras a copy of the letter written by Sri. V. Rajagopalachari to the Inspector General of Police, Madras.

It is good that we have immediately apprised the Government both at the local and State Level of the whole incident and about our apprehensions in this regard.

I am equally happy to note that the incident was not given undue publicity by newspapers. If it is presumed that some mischief monger planted the hand grenade at that place, it must have been with a sinister purpose of creating commotion in the country. I am glad that these purposes stand totally defeated. Some wicked mind or minds jealous of the ideal atmosphere of harmony and enthusiasm prevailing at present among Kanyakumari people, irrespective of communal or group loyalties may have planted that object with a calculated move to sow seeds of suspicion and dissension and arrest the present trend of happy fusion of groups and communities. I trust we have been able to maintain the general atmosphere of suspicionlessness while vigorously striving at the same time to locate the mischief, if any.
In this connection, I would like to reiterate my old suggestion to arrange to send someone responsible every evening by turn to the Rock for night stay there. I think that may inject in our watchman on the Rock more vigilance and alertness. Regarding your inquiry about Gurkha watchman in your letter addressed to Sri——— I think we can procure good watchman even locally”.

The memorial was completed as planned. Of course, Eknathji overworked and brought out the best in others by making them work hard. Everyone was so possessed by the spirit of work that those became magical days when many ordinary persons did extraordinary work. They rose to the occasion as ‘one’ and that became the most memorable period in their lives. This work gave them fulfillment.

Dressed granite stones weighing 6,000 tons were used for the Memorial alone excluding flooring. The total number of stones used was 73,155 excluding what was needed for flooring. The maximum weight of a single stone was 13 tons. The massive monument needed 2,081 days of continuous work with an average of about 650 men every day at work. The number of man-hours involved was 7,83,767!

**Grand inauguration of the Grand Memorial**

The inauguration of the Vivekananda Rock Memorial was equally grand, very much in ‘Eknathji style’. As the whole nation was associated in the construction of the Memorial, a large number of people might like to attend the inauguration. All the members of all the State Committees and District Committees were to be the honoured guests for the inaugural function. Kanyakumari with a population of 7,000 had hardly any lodging facility for all of them.

Therefore, for this unique memorial even the inauguration ceremony was made unique by extending it for two months. Specific dates were
allotted for people of different areas of the country in such a way that on no single day the number of pilgrims exceeded 5,000 and the inaugural program went on for two full months. ‘Temporary’ structures to accommodate the guests were erected in Vivekanandapuram a place purchased from around 180 persons over the years for the second phase of memorial. These ‘Temporary’ structures were of such good quality that even now after fifty years these are used to house pilgrims and tourists.

Yet another abiding contribution

On the eve of the inauguration, Vivekananda Rock Memorial Committee planned another ambitious project - publication of the Vivekananda Rock Memorial Commemoration Volume. It was really a lasting work in itself. An eight hundred-page volume of rich content and abiding value titled, *India’s Contribution to World Thought and Culture* was published. Eminent scholars from all over the world contributed articles for the volume. The entire proceeds of this publication were earmarked for the second phase of the Memorial. This book was also an example of perfection and purposefulness. It would not be an exaggeration to say that Eknathji was aware of each and every stone laid on the Rock Memorial, was personally acquainted with each and every person in the Public Committees and had seen each and every page in the monumental commemoration volume.

Dedicating the Memorial to the Nation

The Memorial was consecrated by Srimat Swami Vireswaranandaji, President of Ramakrishna Math and Mission, Belur and inaugurated by the then President of India, Sri V. V. Giri on 2 September 1970 - *Bhadrapad Shukla Dwitiya* - the day as per the Indian Calendar on which Swami Vivekananda addressed the Parliament of World Religions at Chicago in 1893. Sri M. Karunanidhi, the Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu at that time, presided over the function. Many dignitaries like Prime Minister Smt. Indira Gandhi, Vice President of India, Sri G. S. Pathak visited the Memorial during the two-month long inaugural ceremonies.
In India, every significant change comes after spread of spiritual message

When the preparation for the Vivekananda Rock Memorial started, the country was in gloom as it had lost the war with China. The message of Swami Vivekananda was the need of the hour to make the nation regain its confidence. Eknathji wrote about it in his introduction to the book, *Rousing Call to Hindu Nation*.

While the people were getting ready to honour the memory of the great hero and the celebration committees had just started functioning, the nation was violently shaken into a realization that she was urgently called upon to rally all her might to contain the invading hordes of a ruthless and perfidious enemy from the North....This state of affairs of our nation lends a new significance to the message of Swami Vivekananda. For his was the message of strength of the body, the mind and the will. And this strength in all its aspects is the greatest need of the hour. Swami Vivekananda wanted the nation to have “muscles of iron and nerves of steel inside which dwells a mind of the same material as that of which the thunderbolt is made”. …These are precisely the things needed in the present hour of crisis and peril, and these are precisely the qualities, which have been neglected by us in the post-independence period under the influence of the imported hedonistic philosophies and materialistic view of life.

If we were to sum up Swamiji’s teachings, we could say that he gave us one great Mantra: the Mantra of Faith in God, Faith in ourselves. Faith in oneself is based on that great Upanishadic truth which declares: “I am the Spirit. Me the sword cannot cut;
nor the weapon can pierce; nor the fire burn; nor the air dry. I am omnipotent; I am omniscient”. This is the Mantra; Swami Vivekananda was constantly dinning into the ears of his countrymen. ...It is time we grasp the inner meaning of this Truth and try to live up to it. If we do that, no power on earth can harm us.

He further declares that in aspiring to attain Moksha, we have to fulfil our Dharma first. In fact, there is no Moksha without Dharma. This is a truth which needed re-emphasis at a time when our religion tended to become life-weary. He rehabilitates a house-holder’s life and gives it a new dignity. He reminds his countrymen of their Shastras which declare that only “heroes enjoy the world” and urge them to “show heroism”. He asks us to remember that the Shastras enjoin upon us to accept the moral conditions under which we work and have to function. Only by such acceptance of our conditions and environment can we hope to improve them and raise them. Therefore, Swami Vivekananda exhorts his countrymen not to forget the Shastric injunction: “Apply according to circumstances the fourfold political maxims of conciliation, bribery, sowing dissensions and open war to conquer your adversaries and enjoy the world – then you will be Dharmika. Otherwise you live a disgraceful life if you pocket your insults, when you are kicked and trodden down by any one who takes it into his head to do so; your life is a veritable hell here and so your life hereafter.”

This is a message of great value and efficacy for the purpose of steeling our nerves and strengthening our resolve at this critical hour of our history when
the nation is called upon to take up arms in defense of its freedom and its way of life, its destiny and its Swadharma.

Time and again he preached that “the national union in India must be a gathering up of its scattered spiritual forces”. He thought that “a nation in India must be a union of those whose hearts beat to the same spiritual tune”. This message demands our most careful attention, particularly at this present hour when the nation needs all the unity and quick mobilization of her forces.

Swamiji has one more message to give to the Hindu nation. He asks us to give up our ‘Tamas’. For ‘Tamas’ gives birth to all the evils such as imbecility, superstition, pettiness of mind, mutual quarrels and bickering about trivial things. Giving up these evils, we should build up great power on the rock of unity and organization. And thus, by co-ordinating our separate wills we should build up a future far more glorious than our past. This message of Swamiji too is timely. For only under a peril like the one we are facing at present, do nations take to stock-taking and self-searching.

In the course of the Birth Centenary Celebrations of Swami Vivekananda, his message again galvanized the nation. The meeting of MPs for help in getting permission for the memorial and the collection campaign helped in spreading the message of Swami Vivekananda. Therefore, it was not just a co-incidence that after the Rock Memorial was completed in 1970, the war that India had to fight in 1971 brought spectacular success to our Motherland. In India, every significant change always follows the spread of spiritual ideas.
Bringing the whole nation together to build this grand Memorial was a unique service that Eknathji did for the nation. It strengthened the national will. It proved that we could come together and work for a national cause. All the political parties supported it. The people of India contributed for it. Swami Chinmayananda was the first person who donated Rs 10,000 for Vivekananda Rock Memorial, The President Maharaj and all the senior monks like Swami Ranganathananda, Sri Guruji, Swami Chidananda, Swami Chidbhavananda, The Paramacharya of Kanchi Kamkoti and others Peethams and many spiritual luminaries contributed, supported the cause of Memorial. As envisaged by Swami Vivekananda all good forces in the country were brought together and so triumphantly the memorial stood up on the Rock.

The Paramacharya of Kanchi Kamakoti Peetham, Sri Sri Chandrasekharendra Saraswati Swamigal, recognized the real import of this work by Eknathji. He said that whether government recognizes these services or not but he would like to. He specially sent his successor Shankaracharya, Sri Jayendra Saraswati, to Kanyakumari to honour Sri Eknathji. In the monthly magazine of Kamakoti Peetham “Kamakoti Pradeepam” dated 14 June, 1972 this incident is given.

Later in the evening of 21 April 1972, the devotees of Kanyakumari organized a meeting to seek his blessings. In this meeting, Sri Shankaracharya conferred the title of “Bharat Seva Ratna” on Eknathji and honoured him. Sri S. K. Achari was honoured with the title “Shilpa Kala Ratna”.

Eknathji felt too delicate to receive this honour. As it was unexpected and coming from Sri Paramacharya he got up and received it. But, as a Karyakarta of an organization, as a real Karmayogi, he was aware that no individual can achieve anything without the support of the society and blessings of Ishvara. The feeling “I did it” was totally absent in him. Irrespective of the same, the Vivekananda Rock Memorial stands today
as a testimony to his organizing skills, planning and execution and above all to his vision.

**Charaiveti! Charaiveti!! Onward! Forward!!**

Eknathji did not want to limit the Memorial for Swami Vivekananda to the granite memorial. As he discussed with many Swamis, great leaders from all fields, the shape of the second phase of the Memorial also got finalized.

The second phase of Memorial to Swami Vivekananda is a living Memorial; in the lives of young men and women as envisaged by Swami Vivekananda,

> A hundred thousand men and women, fired with the zeal of holiness, fortified with eternal faith in the Lord, and nerved to lion’s courage by their sympathy for the poor and the fallen and the downtrodden, will go over the length and breadth of the land, preaching the gospel of salvation, the gospel of help, the gospel of social raising up – the gospel of equality

The second phase of Memorial focus on Swamiji’s message of ‘Serve Man, Serve God’; As Swamiji had told to worship the Virat, to see the living God in needy, downtrodden, suffering people around.

The second phase of Memorial is a thought movement rooted in the Upanishadic thought of “Ishavasyamidam Sarvam – everything is pervaded by Ishwara”. Everything as interconnected, interrelated and interdependent and therefore to live with confidence in oneself, to live to manifest the excellence in oneself and to serve others with feeling of oneness.

The second phase of the Memorial works for the regeneration of India so that she can fulfill her ordained mission of guiding the humanity in spirituality.
The second phase of memorial is to establish the vibrant meaning of \textit{Dharma}. \textit{Dharma} is to manifest the Divinity in us by serving and fulfilling our duty towards family, society, nation and the whole creation.

Thus, on 7\textsuperscript{th} January 1972 Vivekananda Kendra a spiritually oriented service mission came into existence. Those young men and women who want to dedicate their life in the service of the society are given training and posted in different parts of the country. There these Jeevanvrati \textit{Karyakartas} reach out, identify and work with those who commit some time and energy for the good of the society. Thus, today Vivekananda Kendra has many branches all over the country and service projects in the field of Education, Rural Development, youth development, Natural resource Development, cultural research, publications etc. Today Vivekananda Kendra is working in 25 states and three union territories in over 1005 places through its branch centers and service projects and is growing day by day.

Thus, Vivekananda Rock Memorial perhaps became the only such example in the world that the Memorial in granite gave birth to a living Memorial, to a mighty service organization.
The second Phase of Memorial to Swami Vivekananda

VIVEKANANDA KENDRA, KANYAKUMARI
A Spiritually Oriented Service Mission

With the twin objectives of ‘Man Making and Nation building’, 245 branch centers of Vivekananda Kendra regularly conduct Yoga Varga, Sanskar Varga, Swadhyay Varga and Kendra Varga. Periodically Yoga Satra, Personality Development camps, Youth Motivation camps, Vimarsh - Interactive sessions on different topics for a cross section of society, Swadhyay Competitions for School & College students followed by residential camps, various celebrations are also organized.

Vivekananda Kendra renders service in following fields. Thus, Kendra through its branch centres and service activity centres works at present in 1005 places.

EDUCATION:
1. Total 85 Vivekananda Kendra Vidyalayas – 42 in Arunachal Pradesh, 28 in Assam, 11 in Andamans, 2 in Tamil Nadu and one each in Nagaland and Karnataka
3. 195 Balwadis for pre-primary children in Tamil Nadu, Arunachal Pradesh and Odisha.
5. One School of Nursing in Numalighar, Assam

HEALTH SERVICES:
1. Runs hospitals with help of Oil refineries in - Numaligarh, Assam; Bina, Madhya Pradesh; Paradip, Odisha.
2. 15 Medical Dispensaries in Tamil Nadu under V.K. Rural Development Program, Mobile Medical vans in Arunachal Pradesh, Medical services at Pimplad in Nashik & Amlipani in Odisha.
3. Regular eye camps, surgery camps

RURAL & JANJATI WELFARE & SKILL DEVELOPMENT:
1. Vivekananda Kendra has projects for Rural and Janajati welfare at Khatkhati in Assam, Southern five districts of Tamilnadu, at Nasik in Maharashtra, Deoband (Kendujhar) & Amlipani (Sambalpur) in Odisha.
2. It also has weaving and tailoring centres, skill development courses in plumbing, motor mechanics, computer literacy etc.; self-help groups and various camps for the leadership development among women and youth, protection of natural resources etc. It is also engaged in reviving the traditional water bodies in Rameshwaram.

PUBLICATIONS:
Vivekananda Kendra publishes monthly magazines in Hindi, Marathi, English and Tamil languages, periodicals in Gujarati, Malayalam,
Assamese and books on Swami Vivekananda and His message, Indian cultural traditions and Sadhana of Service, etc., in total 17 languages.

INSTITUTES FOR CULTURAL STUDIES & RESEARCH, TRAINING AND HUMAN EXCELLENCE:

At places like Delhi; Nagdandi in Jammu and Kashmir; Kodungallur in Kerala; Guwahati in Assam; Solapur in Maharashtra; Bhubaneswar in Odisha; Hyderabad in Telangana and at Kanyakumari.

ACTIVITIES AT HQs AT VIVEKANANDAPURAM, KANYAKUMARI

1. Providing good accommodation to the pilgrims in a clean and serene atmosphere. Double / Triple bedded deluxe and A.C. Rooms and A.C. Cottages are available.

2. Training Centre and hostel for the dedicated Karyakartas who join Kendra as Shiksharthi / Sevavrati / Vanaprasthi

3. Maintenance of Vivekananda Rock Memorial

4. Providing out-patient medical facilities for the pilgrims and surrounding villages in the Allopathic and Siddha medicines.

5. Facilities available inside the Kendra Campus for the benefit of the pilgrims who stay there -
   a) State Bank of India branch with ATM facilities, Post Office, Vegetarian restaurant
   b) 24 hour water and power supply
   c) Vachanalaya (Library and reading room)

6. Dhyan Mandir (Daily Pratasmran at 5.15 a.m., Gita chanting at 7.30 a.m., Bhajan at 6.30 p.m.)

7. Vidyalaya (school) catering to nearly 1500 rural students.

8. Vivekananda Mandapam and Samadhi of Sri Eknathji Ranade, the Founder of Vivekananda Kendra, Vivekanandapuram beach and sunrise point

9. Care and maintenance of following Exhibitions -
   a) Arise – Awake
   b) Ramayana Darshanam – Bharat Mata Sadanam
   c) Gramodaya Darshan Park
   d) Gangotri – Swargeeya Eknathji Ranade’s life & message
   e) Wandering Monk (in Kanyakumari Town)

10. Sale of Sri Ramakrishna, Vivekananda literature

11. Yoga Shiksha Shibirs for 15 days in May and December and Spiritual Retreats for 7 days in August and February.

“Then only will India awake, when hundreds of large-hearted men and women, giving up all desires of enjoying the luxuries of life, will long and exert themselves to their utmost, for the well-being of the millions of their countrymen.”

Swami Vivekananda
About the book

2019-20 marks 50 glorious years of the Vivekananda Rock Memorial located in mid-sea, off Kanyakumari. This is the Rock on which Swami Vivekananda meditated from 25-27 December, 1892 and took the momentous decision of going to America to participate in the World Parliament of Religions held at Chicago in September, 1893. Swami Vivekananda shook the world with his message of spirituality; it became a defining moment in the history of India.

In the course of Swami Vivekananda’s birth centenary celebrations, the Vivekananda Rock Memorial Committee, under the able leadership of Sri Eknathji Ranade, effectively overcame massive hurdles in order to build, on that very hallowed Rock, the grand Memorial to Swami Vivekananda.

This book is a case study in management of time and resources - human and material. It narrates the inspiring story of how the impossible was turned into possible. It narrates Eknathji’s amazingly inclusive approach that brought together all sections of people from all over the country making the Vivekananda Rock Memorial a truly national monument. In short, it narrates how when even ordinary people come together for a higher purpose, they can achieve extraordinary success.