

[Monks' Millennial Conclave](#)

Category : [November/December 2001](#)

Published by Anonymous on Nov. 01, 2001

RELIGION

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Senior Ramakrishna swamis converge to discuss future plans for spreading Vedanta

Frank Parlato, Chicago

Anytime truly holy men gather together, that gathering itself is of great spiritual significance," said Mithilesh Mishra, who teaches Hindi at the University of Chicago. He was speaking in reference to a three-day event which took place in Ganges, Michigan, from June 22 to 24, 2001, entitled "Vedanta in the Third Millennium." The holy conclave featured twelve senior swamis of the Ramakrishna Order, founded by Swami Vivekananda (1863-1902). Vivekananda, the first Hindu monk to come to the West, is venerated for introducing Hinduism to the US at the Parliament of Religions in 1893.

Over the three-day session, the monks discussed Vedanta's role and impact in society, but personal spiritual instruction and practical guidance for

individuals was the main emphasis.

"Many people see the new millennium as the dawn of a new, more spiritual age," said Swami Chidananda, one of the twelve participants. "And the Vedanta movement, with its universality, and deep spirituality, is in harmony with this spirit."

In addition to inspired presentations by several swamis, the program included meditation, devotional bhajanas (religious songs), morning and evening worship services, Indian cultural events and a youth essay competition based on the ideals of Swami Vivekananda.

"The event was a milestone," said Joe Dziewa, a 26-year-old computer programmer from Buffalo, New York. "With all the changes and the chaos in the world, the Vedanta teachings teach unity and harmony, and in a perspective that deals with huge periods of time like a thousand years. It forces you to look beyond your own lifetime."