LIFE IS A VOYAGE¹: Swami Vivekananda's Mission and Teachings – A Cognitive Linguistic Analysis with Reference to the Theme of HOMECOMING

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Abstract

This study offers an in-depth analysis of the well-known LIFE AS A JOURNEY conceptual metaphor, applied to Vivekananda's mission as he saw it, as well as his teachings. Using conceptual metaphor theory as a framework, Vivekananda's Complete Works were manually and electronically mined for examples of how he conceptualized his own mission, which culminated in the formation of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission, a world-wide neo-Hindu organization. This was a corpus-based study, which starts with an overview of who Vivekananda was, including a discussion of his influence on other neo-Hindu leaders. This study shows that Vivekananda had a very clear understanding of his life's mission, and saw himself almost in a messianic role, and was glad when his work was done, so he could return to his Cosmic 'Home'. He uses these key metaphors to explain spiritual life in general as well as his own life's work.

Keywords: Vivekananda; neo-Hinduism; Ramakrishna; cognitive linguistics; conceptual metaphor theory

¹ As is convention in the field of Cognitive Semantics, conceptual domains are written in UPPER CASE.

Introduction

This article is an exposition of two conceptual metaphors based on the *Complete Works*² of Swami Vivekananda. Conceptual metaphor theory is one of the key theories within the field of cognitive linguistics. According to Janda (2015: 139), metaphorical thinking is one of the ‘most significant processes’ involved in higher order cognition, and this is arguably more significant when applied to an abstract domain like religious philosophy. Using this framework as a tool, the *Complete Works* are analysed with reference to two particular metaphors from the domain of JOURNEY, viz. SPIRITUAL LIFE IS A VOYAGE and VIVEKANANDA’S MISSION IS A VOYAGE. Obviously, a voyage is understood here as a type of journey.

Vivekananda was a monk from West Bengal, and his influence of modern-day Hinduism can hardly be exaggerated. He is a household name in India, and almost every Hindu family pay their respects to him. His birthday has been declared as ‘National Youth Day’ in India, and he has rubbed shoulders with many visionaries in many fields, including Max Müller and Nikola Tesla. However, he is remembered for instigating a paradigm shift in the field of Hindu philosophy, shifting the focus from Vedic Brahminism to Vedantic Hinduism. After explaining this in more detail in the next section, the article will then go on to explain the theoretical framework assumed for this study. Despite it being descriptive in nature, this is a useful tool to organize one’s thoughts when delving into a corpus like this one, which is so rich with meaning. The theory is presented in only enough detail as to give the reader an idea as to how it was applied in this particular study. Then, the ostensibly simple method used will be outlined, which while simple to apply, does entail a lot of time-consuming ‘sifting’ through raw data. Nevertheless, the method employed was useful for the purposes of the current study, and is a simplified version of a more elaborate method developed by Steen *et al* (2010), though the application of their method (known as MIP: metaphor identification procedure) was designed for much larger projects involving group work and big data.

The penultimate section is an analysis of the actual metaphors, which will be presented in a format introduced by Kövecses (2010), but that will be discussed in more detail below.

² For ease of reference, this corpus will be referenced as follows: ‘CW-1:1’, which will mean volume 1 of the *Complete Works*, page 1.

Swami Vivekananda's Standing in the Hindu Community and his Role in Re-conceptualising Hinduism

Swami Vivekananda was a disciple of Sri Ramakrishna, well-known Bengali mystic. Vivekananda was instrumental in making his guide and mentor a household name, as the latter has never left India. Vivekananda on the other hand travelled far and wide spreading the teachings of ancient Indian spiritual lore, mostly adapted to the Western audience. Following Sri Ramakrishna's death in 1886, Vivekananda, upon Ramakrishna's instruction, led a group of fellow disciples and established *The Ramakrishna Math and Mission*, with branches all over the world (Prabhananda 2009: iii).

Vivekananda was also instrumental in starting a new order of monkhood, the Ramakrishna Order of Monks. Until this point, women were not allowed to be initiated as monks, and people of lower castes were also barred from entering monastic life. Vivekananda changed that, and many influential religious leaders after him followed suit, such as Swami Sivananda, Sri Aurobindo, and Paramahansa Yogananda – all of whom are recognised as influential modern-day saints. The headquarters of *The Ramakrishna Math and Mission* is known as Belur Math and is located in the northern region of Kolkata, India. Monks from several ashrams³ have been asked about Vivekananda's reputation and influence, and the table below illustrates some of their responses; to eliminate redundancy, not all respondents are included.

Table 1: Opinions gathered from Hindu monks about Vivekananda's reputation

S1:	'Hinduism, I don't believe, has ever had a better spokesman. I think Swami Vivekananda would be acknowledged by all to be supreme; not just in the Ramakrishna Math, but amongst all Hindus as the greatest exponent'.
S2:	'He is one of <i>the</i> greatest souls on earth, not just for Hindus. He was fearless going to the world, and he had a Divine

³ During fieldwork conducted by the author from 2015 - 2018, which included living at ashrams all over India, South Africa, and two in the USA, involved interviews with eighteen Hindu monks. Most were from the Ramakrishna Order of monks, but four were from other orders.

	command from within to inspire the world. People who don't even know much about him will agree with closed eyes [that he is one of the greatest and most influential Hindu saints]’.
S3:	‘Swamiji embodied true humility and simplicity, and from that we all have a universal lesson to learn. What stands out for me is the kind of language he used. It is fresh and accessible, giving us the pearls of wisdom from the ancient scriptures’.
S4:	‘He simplified and presented ancient wisdom in modern language to a Western audience. He quoted from the <i>srutis</i> , and in that sense authenticated his message, so yes in that sense he was an authoritative voice of God; these truths were revealed to him in meditation’.
S5:	‘That is not an exaggeration at all [to say that he is the most influential modern-day Hindu saint]; he was truly an authentic voice [of God] for the modern age for sure’.
S6:	‘[He was] a dynamic world leader. He had a mission to fulfil, and Ramakrishna was to be the guide and mentor in getting him started on that mission’.
S7:	‘Vivekananda was a real ‘crest jewel of discrimination’. Aside from being a great saint, he was also a great intellectual. He approached the study of religion very scientifically and intellectually’.
S8:	‘He was the first one to bridge the gap between East and West, and he made us truly proud as a nation interacting amongst the intelligentsia of the Western world’.
S9:	‘Yes, of course; otherwise Ramakrishna would not have hand-picked him as a leader, with specific instructions to his other disciples to ‘follow Naren’s lead’’ ⁴ .

⁴ This swami seemed to be quoting from *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, where Vivekananda is referred to by his pre-monastic name, Naren.

S10:	‘Vivekananda was the most important saint in modern times, a spiritual giant. One of his most important contributions was not only to bring <i>Vedanta</i> to the layman, but to bring it to the West, where materialism and hedonism was becoming so rampant. He also inspired a sense of patriotism in his countrymen, not in a nationalistic sense, but in a spiritual sense’.
S11:	‘[...] there are a few things to be said. One is that he was the Master's chosen leader, and my first allegiance is to him, Sri Ramakrishna. Of course, he has a great intellect as well, and was perhaps chosen for that reason too, amongst others. Regardless, he is indeed an authentic voice of the Divine, and I think few would disagree’.
S12:	‘We forgot the life eternal, and Swamiji ⁵ brought it back. That's not only for Hinduism, but for the whole of life and to <i>all</i> religions. Surely God spoke through him, just as He did through Sankaracharya; he brought the truth, and Vivekananda updated it and brought it to the common people’.

Vivekananda travelled all over the world speaking on various aspects of Indian philosophy, but paid especial emphasis on the non-dualistic interpretation of the *Vedanta* philosophy. Regarding this aspect of his mission, Vivekananda said that ‘dry, abstract *Advaita* must become living — poetic — in everyday life; out of hopelessly intricate mythology must come concrete moral forms; and out of bewildering Yogi-ism must come the most scientific and practical psychology’ (CW-5: 71-72). He said elsewhere that he ultimately preaches ‘the religion of non-dual philosophy’ (CW-1: 502), and even said that ‘*Vedanta*, and *Vedanta* alone that can become the universal religion of man’ (CW-3: 103). Hence, it is from the perspective of modern day *Advaita Vedanta*; cf. Naicker (2019) for a study on how Vivekananda re-conceptualised this particular school of thought, paving the way for other modern-day Hindu leaders to follow suite, essentially making Hinduism what it is today.

⁵ Within the Ramakrishna Order, the term ‘Swamiji’ is only used to refer to Swami Vivekananda, and other monks are called by their pre-monastic names, followed by the honorific ‘Maharaj’.

Whilst touring in the USA, Vivekananda advertised for a scribe in a local newspaper, which attracted the attention of Josiah Jones Goodwin, a British stenographer, who took on the job and toured with Vivekananda all over the USA, England and India. Most of Vivekananda's teachings are a result of Goodwin's efforts, who meticulously compiled transcripts and made them available for publication. Of course, Vivekananda's *Complete Works* include notes which others took down during his speeches, as well as poems, letters and various other writings by Vivekananda.

The writings were first published in four volumes, but new material has since surfaced and it currently comprises nine volumes. They are considered to be key foundational works, not only within the *Ramakrishna Mission*, but by neo-Hindu organisations the world over. Hence, a study of these texts will shed light on one of the most influential teachings within neo-Hindu philosophical thought in general. One of Vivekananda's closest disciples, Sister Nivedita, wrote the introduction to an early compilation of the *Complete Works*, in which she had the following to say: 'Of the Swami's address before the Parliament of Religions, it may be said that when he began to speak it was of 'the religious ideas of the Hindus', but when he ended, Hinduism had been created' (CW-1: 2). Of course, this be seen as coming from a sycophantic disciple, but it is nonetheless telling, given the influence his teachings have on Hindu philosophy as it is conceptualised today. It is in this spirit that the said corpus is taken as the empirical domain for the current study.

After travelling for a few years, Vivekananda returned to India as a veritable hero, where he spent his last days, before dying at the age of 39 on 4 July 1902 (Prabhananda 2009: 231).

Theoretical Framework

This study assumes the tenets embedded in what is known as conceptual metaphor theory, which falls under the domain of cognitive semantics. Lakoff and Johnson (1980) popularized the idea that metaphors are not only cross-domain mappings, but also part and parcel of the human conceptual system. What this means is that linguistic metaphors are actually surface manifestations of underlying conceptual metaphors. For example, when we speak about the *price of petrol going up*, the *price of real estate going down*, or referring to someone as a *high energy* person taps into a MORE IS UP conceptual metaphor, and therefore LESS IS DOWN. There is a source domain, which in

this case is UP, and a target domain, pertaining to AMOUNT. With this in mind, one can postulate how the conceptual mapping process works as follows.

Table 2: Hypothetical Mapping for the MORE IS UP conceptual metaphor

Source: UP		Target: MORE
Upward orientation	➔	Increase in price/volume/amount
Downward orientation	➔	Decrease in price/volume/amount

This method of presenting the data, followed by an explanation of the metaphors import within a particular context was introduced by Kövecses (2010: 9-10), and an adapted method of presenting the data will be used here. The mapping process takes place from the source domain to the target domain, with the source domain usually being more concrete, and relevant aspects get mapped onto the target domain, which helps the reader/listener to parse the metaphor and understand what is being said.

Another conceptual metaphor that has been analysed is LIFE IS A JOURNEY, and instances of such can be found as far back as Lakoff and Johnson (1980: 90-93), and has been used to illustrate the ubiquity of conceptual metaphors in textbooks like Evans and Green (2006: 298), and has been revisited in classic key texts in cognitive semantics, including Lakoff and Johnson (1999: 61) and Lakoff and Turner (1989), which revisits this particular metaphor in several places throughout the book. In his review article on current developments on conceptual metaphor theory, Lakoff (2014: 2) discusses the JOURNEY domain again, but with reference to the LOVE IS A JOURNEY conceptual metaphor. The point is that this domain is also used quite often by Vivekananda, where he uses the following from the JOURNEY domain:

- THE MIND IS A BOAT
- THE HUMAN IS A BOAT
- THE UNIVERSE IS A RIVER
- INDIAN CULTURE IS A SINKING CUP
- **SPIRITUAL LIFE IS A VOYAGE**
- **VIVEKANANDA'S MISSION IS A VOYAGE**

In this article, the last, two selected in bold, have been chosen for analysis, because an in-depth analysis of all these metaphors are beyond the scope of the

current paper. These were selected for this study because they pertain to a similar theme: one refers to spiritual life in general, and conceptualizes it as a voyage across an ocean, and the other is more personal, where Vivekananda explains his own mission as a voyage, and the two complement each other, in that one is from a personal perspective (Vivekananda's), and the other is more impersonal.

How these conceptual metaphors were arrived at will be discussed in the next section.

Methodology

The method employed in this study to mine the corpus is a fairly simple one. Two versions of Vivekananda's *Complete Works* were acquired, one electronic, and the other a hard copy purchased. The electronic version was available online for free download, and there are now sites like <https://advaitaashrama.org/cw/content.php> where the entire corpus can be viewed and searched online.

The first step was to do a reading of selections from the corpus, and manually note the various metaphors that were used. The sample selected from each of the nine volumes was fairly arbitrary, though the author tried to get an overview of the different types of texts within each volume, so a selection of letters, poems, commentaries, dialectic 'Q&A' sessions and so on were chosen from each volume.

Thereafter, conceptual domains were noted and the metaphors were grouped accordingly. For example, once the JOURNEY domain was noted as a pervasive metaphor in the corpus, words relating to that domain were searched for electronically, like *leave, arrive, path, road, car, ship* and so on, and when these words were used metaphorically, they were noted with respect to the context within which they were used. When common phrases collocate in a metaphorical context, these were also searched; for instance, the use of 'I am' in *I am captain of my Soul*. Once a motif was established, the mappings were postulated followed by an explanation of the import of the metaphor. A variety of domains emerged from the corpus, but of course it is not viable to expound on all of these, so two metaphors were selected from the JOURNEY domain for this article, viz. SPIRITUAL LIFE IS A VOYAGE and VIVEKANANDA'S MISSION IS A VOYAGE.

In the next section, the first metaphor will be presented, followed by selected examples of instances of the conceptual metaphors are listed in a table,

followed by a hypothetical mapping for this metaphor, and then a discussion of the import of the metaphor.

Analysis of metaphors

Metaphor 1 – SPIRITUAL LIFE IS A VOYAGE

Table 3: Examples of SPIRITUAL LIFE IS A VOYAGE

‘Is God a nervous fool like you that the flow of His river of mercy would be dammed up by a piece of meat?’ (CW-4: 200)

‘The brutal mania for leading has sunk many a great ship in the waters of life’ (CW-5: 23)

‘[...] he who has to steer the boat of his life with strenuous labour through the constant life-and-death struggles and the competition of this world must of necessity take meat’ (CW-5: 314)

Table 4: Mapping for SPIRITUAL LIFE IS A VOYAGE

Source: VOYAGE		Target: SPIRITUAL LIFE
Boat	→	An individual's life-span
Voyage across the ocean	→	Spiritual journey
Waves/whirlpools/storms	→	Trials and tribulations
Means to get across the ocean	→	Guidance from spiritual texts and preceptors; an appropriate diet etc.
Flow of river	→	God's Grace
Progress on the voyage	→	Systematic transcendence of ritual and strict adherence to scriptural injunctions (like dietary restrictions)

Import of Metaphor: Spiritual life here is conceptualised as a journey across a vast body of water, which can be aided by the current, scriptural texts, and a spiritual mentor. Impediments in getting across include living an immoral life, eating an inappropriate diet, and so on. A well-known Hindu application, composed by Sankara, implores the Divine Mother for assistance in getting out

of ‘the boundless ocean of the worldly life’, within which one is constantly ‘frightened by the great miseries thereof’⁶ (Sivananda 2011: 73).

Vivekananda here speaks about human life as a voyage on a boat trying to traverse an ocean. It is also important to note that ‘[m]any of the sacred texts of *Vedanta* describe the body as a boat, with the help of which the spiritual seeker crosses the ocean of mortality and sorrow’ (Adiswarananda 2011: 213). Just as in a voyage of this nature, one would need to steer the boat, and overcome various trials and tribulations like storms and so on, so too in the spiritual journey one faces challenges like the everyday problems one encounters, and overcoming these would be like getting one’s ‘boat’ through a ‘storm’. Just as a responsible captain can get a boat through such things by advising accordingly, should the crew listen, so too can one get through life’s challenges with the assistance of a spiritual mentor.

However, Vivekananda is making a very particular point here pertaining to diet, especially with regard to meat-eating and whether it is appropriate for people to do so. Vivekananda says that people get to a point where they can ‘rest’ our oars, and let the momentum ‘take the boat to the other side’ (CW-5: 92), but in order to get to the point, one has to first get to a fairly advanced stage in one’s spiritual life, here conceptualised perhaps as the tail-end of the metaphorical voyage. In order to get to this point, one must have gone through the four stages of human life, which are student-hood, that of a householder, humanitarian and spiritual recluse. One can ‘skip’ the first three if one is advanced enough, and has been able to transcend one’s desires and so on for such.

Typically, to get to the fourth stage, one has to go through the ‘learning curve’ of the first three stages, and this is when one has of necessity to live a worldly life, as one has to be trained for a particular profession during his student-hood, then start a career, get married and raise a family, and perhaps post-retirement start to do some work for the community and expand one’s influence and love. It is at this point that one can rest the oars and let the momentum carry one to the shore on the other side. This metaphor does not necessarily mean that death is the arrival on the other side. Progress on this journey is marked by one’s ability to overcome selfishness and various other

⁶ Sankara is one of the early exponents of *Advaita Vedanta* (non-dual), who wrote extensive commentaries on various Hindu scriptures, interpreted from a non-dualistic perspective.

forms of attachment and desire. The more one is able to transcend these, the more progress is made on this journey. It is expected that towards the end of one's life, one learns to detach more from the children, and even from one's spouse, and one ought to feel the urge to help others less fortunate, and share the life lessons one has learnt with them. Should one be just as attached at the end of his life as he was at the beginning, then he would have to be born again in this world until he has learnt to overcome those desires.

One cannot simply 'jump over' the initial stage of the journey without first having transcended one's desires, which is why it is necessary to first go through the initial stage of the journey, to 'weather the storm', so to speak. And Vivekananda is making the point that while going through these initial stages, it is unnecessarily utopian to expect each and every person to follow the same rules and regulations which apply to the monks who are in the final stage of the journey. Of course, for those who have dedicated their lives exclusively to spiritual pursuits, Vivekananda strongly advises 'a strict vegetarian diet' (CW-5: 314), though as will be discussed later, even this is not a categorical injunction.

In the context of dietary restrictions (which may be necessary in the early stages of the 'spiritual voyage'), it should be noted that even within the Ramakrishna order of monks, there is no restriction 'on what one eats' (Sankar 2011: 92), and indeed the current researcher, whilst doing fieldwork on another project in various parts of India, had seen first-hand at Belur Math, the headquarters of the *Ramakrishna Math and Mission*, that fish was served to guests and consumed liberally even by some of the monks; similarly, in Kamarpukur, a place especially significant in the life of Sri Ramakrishna⁷. At one particular ashram in Shillong⁸, the author came to learn that that six of the nine resident monks consume various kinds of meat, including fish, chicken and goat meat.

Be that as it may, Vivekananda says that if one is working through the 'storm of life', one should indulge in a healthy, high-protein diet, which typically is a meat diet. In a commentary on *Food and Cooking*, Vivekananda clearly says, in the context of pointless arguments put forth by in defence of either side, that 'the flesh of the goat makes the intellect like that of the goat, the flesh of the swine like that of the swine, and fish like that of the fish. The other declares that it can as well be argued then that the potato makes a potato-

⁷ That being his birthplace.

⁸ During his two-month stay there in 2016.

like brain, that vegetables make a vegetable-like brain' (CW-5: 311). Later on he adds that '[a]fter carefully scrutinising all sides of the question and setting aside all fanaticism that is rampant on this delicate question of food', that such 'restrictions' 'must be different according to the difference of birth and profession', and of course none must be condemned for their predilections either way (CW-5: 313).

Vivekananda's master, Sri Ramakrishna, was even more liberal when it came to matters pertaining to diet, even in the context of spiritual life. In Nikhilananda (1974), the following is noted.

In Chapter 19, which details Sri Ramakrishna's conversations whilst recuperating from a broken arm, he says that '[t]he rishis of olden times, endowed with the Knowledge of Brahman and having experienced divine bliss, ate everything, even pork'.

In Chapter 29, while speaking to devotees on the topic of Durga Puja, which is an offering to God in the form of the Divine Mother, he said: 'Blessed is he who feels longing for God, though he eats pork'. Later on, in Chapter 41, he says the same thing almost verbatim, and again in Chapter 47, that '[blessed] is the man who retains his love for the Lotus Feet of God, even though he eats pork'. Ramakrishna himself, upon the advice of his doctor, when he was very sick with throat cancer, was advised to eat some mutton to regain his strength, agreed: 'On having heard their advice Sri Thakur [being another appellation for Sri Ramakrishna] said to the attendants, 'Look, you should not buy mutton from a butcher's shop where there is no image of butcher's *Kali*'. The devotees according to his instructions, would deliver mutton to Sri Ma [Sri Ramakrishna's consort] who would boil the same for a few hours and strain out the soup for Sri Thakur' (Abedhananda 1970: 73). When the pain came back afterwards, the doctor asked him to try eating snails, which his consort was hesitant to prepare for him; he said the following to her: 'I shall take it, you will cook it for me, there will be harm in doing so. The boys will collect snails [...] from the tank and prepare them for cooking, you will then cook' (Abedhananda 1970: 75-76).

Swami Abedhananda narrates an incident where they decided to go out in search of some chicken curry at 'Piru's Restaurant in Beadon Street', and how 'Narendranath [Swami Vivekananda's pre-monastic name] ordered fowl curry' while they 'silently waited on the bench', and points out how 'Narendranath consumed almost the whole of it with great delight' (Abedhananda 1970: 79). They saw this as an act of rebellion against orthodoxy, which stated

that food must only be consumed from others belonging to the same caste, which the restaurant owner seemingly was not.

In Chapter 28, Sri Ramakrishna explicitly states: 'I don't give the youngsters a pure vegetarian diet', referring to the group of youths who came to him for spiritual guidance, a group which included Naren, or the young Swami Vivekananda. Hence, it does not strain credulity that this would have influenced his philosophy and informed his teachings later on in life.

Of course, Vivekananda himself would justify his opinion with reference to various scientific facts, including scriptural injunctions. In defence of the charge that the Kshatriya caste (which Vivekananda was born into, and which Lord Krishna, Lord Rama and Buddha was born into) he would say that '[m]eat or no meat, it is they who are the fathers of all that is noble and beautiful in Hinduism' (CW-4: 200). When talking about *The Education that India Needs*, he would point out that 'so long as vegetable food is not made suitable to the human system, ... there is no other alternative but meat-eating' (CW-4: 276), and later that 'the forcing of vegetarianism upon those who have to earn their bread by labouring day and night is one of the causes of the loss of our national freedom', and that man can never lead a productive and active life 'except through meat-eating' (Ibid.). When asked whether it is 'proper or necessary to take fish and meat', Vivekananda's answer was an unambiguous 'Ay, take them, my boy!' (CW-5: 265). Vivekananda also believed that an excessive emphasis on a vegetarian diet was detrimental to the Indian people in the sense that it was making the people weak and submissive, and that was why he said that: 'I teach meat-eating throughout the length and breadth of India', partly in the hope that an invigorating diet would lift them out of their stupor (CW-9: 386). This is because Vivekananda was of the opinion that 'the nations who take the animal food are always, as a rule, notably brave, heroic and thoughtful' (CW-5: 313). And further that '[t]here is not a word of truth in' the claim that Hindus believe in reincarnation, and would not kill anything for food for fear that they would have to be reborn and suffer the same fate (CW-9: 490).

In his *Memoirs of European Travel*, he would detail how they tried to capture a shark by enticing it with a piece of pork (CW-7: 221), later describing that '[i]t was real English pork, tied round a huge black hook, heaving under water most temptingly!' (Ibid.: 222). One of Vivekananda's closest brother-monks, Swami Abedhananda, recalls in his autobiography how they would go fishing and enjoy the catch afterwards in the form of a hearty meal

(Abedhananda 1970: 81). When they wanted to eat fish, they would always go out and catch it themselves; afterwards they would fry it ‘in an earthen pot’, and thereby fulfil their ‘desire for taking sea-fish’ (Ibid.: 125-126).

It was said that ‘[t]here was a time in this very India when, without eating beef, no Brahmin could remain a Brahmin’, but this changed as India became a more agrarian society (CW-3: 95). About beef-eating specifically, Vivekananda believed that people must always be adaptable, because, and as ‘circumstances change, ideas also must change’, which is why ‘[b]eef-eating was once moral’ (CW-6: 61). In the context of justifying a butcher’s livelihood, he would say that ‘[i]f we did not eat beef and mutton, there would be no butchers’ (CW-4: 2). Vivekananda was also known to quote from the Manu Smriti⁹, a well-known scripture detailing the Hindu ‘code of conduct’ at the time; chapter 5, verse 30 of this scripture says that ‘[i]t is not sinful to *eat meat* of eatable animals’. There are other references to beef-eating in the said scripture as well. However, it is to be noted that the smriti portion of Hindu scriptures are not taken as the ultimate authority on spiritual matters, and are seen as general guidelines, perhaps relevant to a particular society in history, and must never be taken and interpreted out of context.

It seems evident, then, why Vivekananda would say that eating meat is a necessary means to in this journey of life in order to get through the initial stages of the journey, which requires hard work and therefore a lot of energy. In conclusion, and at the risk of mixing metaphors, Vivekananda also pointed out later in a note to an acquaintance that God will not withhold his grace from a devout disciple on the basis that he is eating meat (see second metaphor cited above), and from the above discussion, it is evident that meat-eating in certain circumstances is necessary in order to succeed in crossing the ‘ocean of life’ and getting to the other side – the ‘shore’ of eternal beatitude.

Metaphor 2 – VIVEKANANDA’S MISSION IS A VOYAGE

Table 5: Examples of VIVEKANANDA’S MISSION IS A VOYAGE

‘I have launched my boat in the waves , come what may’ (CW-8: 179)
‘ My boat is nearing the calm harbour from which it is never more to be driven out’ (CW-8: 334)

⁹ Available at <http://www.sacred-texts.com/>

Table 6: Mapping for VIVEKANANDA'S MISSION IS A VOYAGE

Source: VOYAGE		Target: VIVEKANANDA'S MISSION
Boat	→	Vivekananda's Mission
Boat's crew	→	Element inspiring the mission
Boat's captain	→	Vivekananda himself
Ocean	→	The foreign lands in which Vivekananda finds himself
Waves	→	The struggles he faces in these foreign lands
Harbour	→	His return to India, or even his Cosmic Origin

Import of metaphor: Vivekananda saw his mission as fraught with difficulties, and his life's work was therefore often conceptualised as a hazardous voyage, knowing that India at the time was frowned upon by the Western world as a 'conquered nation', with a belief system that was seen as quaint and primitive at best, and his job was to change that perception.

Vivekananda often compares his mission to a voyage. In conversation with one of his brother-monks, known by the name Kaliprasad (who later became Swami Adbhedananda), it was mentioned that Vivekananda's teachings in the West are very different from the discourses he used to give in the early days at the Baranagore Math soon after Ramakrishna's passing away. The latter were, according to Kaliprasad, far more philosophical, in-depth and abstruse. Vivekananda responded then that whenever he spoke in public, especially in the West, it was none other than the Master (Sri Ramakrishna) speaking through him. This implies that throughout his sojourn, his Master was not only watching over him, but also working through him via some mysterious means. So although Vivekananda was the one steering the 'boat', he was always guided. Others who also made his mission successful are often conceptualised as being part of a crew, like the citizens of Madras who initially sent him to the West, and received him upon his return, or the Maharaja Ajit Singh who financed not only his trip to the West, but also provided funding to Vivekananda's family, as they were in dire straits after the premature death of Vivekananda's father.

The 'boat' which Vivekananda steered travelled all over the world (the 'ocean'), stopping here and there and inspiring people with his message. What Vivekananda connotes in his boat metaphor is that just as the boat cannot be

said to belong to any particular part of the sea, Vivekananda's mission does not belong to any particular country; the captain also does not belong to any part of the sea, or even to the boat which brings 'goods' (the message/teachings) – he just happens to be chosen as the conduit.

Vivekananda faced many challenges whilst overseas, often ones which could have been avoided, had his countrymen been a little more helpful. He was very critical of the fact that nobody was willing to send a letter from India to the USA saying that Vivekananda represented the Indian people; at that time, there was no organisation to which he was affiliated. This was a precondition to speaking at the World Parliament of Religions, where he gave his first-ever public address on September 11th, 1893. He was told that he could not speak at this event, since he was not a representative of any registered organisation. The lack of funding in his early years in America, libellous attacks from various rival organisations particularly the Theosophical Society¹⁰, and Christian missionary groups who felt that he was advocating paganism were all compared to waves which impeded his peaceful mission. He overcame these 'waves of opposition' in various ways, due to help from various sources, which often are conceptualised as his loyal crew. A renowned professor from Harvard University, for example, named John Henry Wright, happened to make Vivekananda's acquaintance in his very early days, and Prof. Wright happened to be closely acquainted with the organisers of the World Parliament. After meeting Vivekananda, Prof. Wright was so impressed with him that he immediately wrote to the organisers and said that to ask Vivekananda for any credentials is as presumptuous as asking the sun whether it has the right to shine; and added that Vivekananda was a man more learned than all their learned professors put together. After a few months in America, some scholars comprising theologians and philosophers invited him to a public debate, where he was challenged on various points from the perspectives of Western philosophical thought. Instead of seeing it as a hostile attempt to sabotage and undermine him, Vivekananda embraced the idea, and saw it as a forum where he could express his views and persuade people. Like that, the tumultuous waves of opposition he faced were always calmed somehow, enabling him to continue his work.

¹⁰ Who offered Vivekananda financial assistance on condition that he joins their organisation; he refused on the grounds that he did not agree with their metaphysics.

The 'harbour' could represent one of two things. It could refer to his return to India, where the headquarters of his newly founded organisation, the Ramakrishna Math and Mission in Belur is, where he spent his last days in peace and quiet on the banks of the sacred Ganges River prior to his death. But given that he knew when he was going to die, it could refer to his return to his ethereal home. A few years before, he said to his brother-monk, Swami Adbhedananda that he had only five or six more years left to live. When he was told not to speak of death at such a young age, Vivekananda explained that one needs to understand the following: he said that his consciousness was expanding on a daily basis, and that a time would come when his body would no longer be able to hold him. The Vedantic belief is that one's consciousness is restricted by the body which it is in. The earth-worm has a soul which is qualitatively the same as a human being's, or any other being; it's just that the body in which it is housed precludes the soul from manifesting its potential. A human body is more suited for this, which is why humans can display acts of creativity in the form of art and so on, and highly spiritual people who have transcended the state of body-consciousness are often to leave their bodies during states of meditative trance, to return hours and sometimes days afterwards. Both Vivekananda and Sri Ramakrishna have experienced this phenomenon on various occasions, and they both would need onlookers to chant certain mantras into their ears to bring the soul back to body-consciousness. The expanding of consciousness, then, refers to this state of being where the soul starts to melt like a block of ice in the ocean, where it simply merges with the ocean. Ramakrishna often said that 'Naren' needed his mind to be grounded on earth, or else he would simply leave his body and return to the place from whence he came.

On that note, Sri Ramakrishna tells a story which could be interpreted in various ways. He explains that one day, whilst in a state on meditation, he went into a state of *samadhi*, which is a state in meditation when the soul leaves the body and travels to various places. During one these (astral) travels, Sri Ramakrishna is said to have transcended the seven heavens, and the realms of the gods, and went to a 'place' where the seven sages are said to sit in an eternal state of meditation. In Pillai (2012: 1682), these seven sages are named as follows:

1. Mareechi;
2. Atri;
3. Anjiras;

4. Pulaka;
5. Pulastya;
6. Kratu; and
7. Vashishta.

Ramakrishna merely refers to them as the seven sages mentioned in the *puranas*¹¹, says that when he saw him in his cosmic vision, he approached one of them and told them that he was from earth, and that he was going back to teach mankind, and asked the sage¹² if he would be prepared to come down to earth with him to assist in this mission. Without saying anything, the sage opened his eyes slightly, and smiled, implying his assent. Ramakrishna then says that the moment he saw Vivekananda, or the young Naren, he recognised the latter as that very sage. It was said that when Ramakrishna first saw Vivekananda (Naren), he was ecstatic with joy, literally jumped up and down like a child, fed him various sweet-meats, and kept repeating that his ‘man has finally come’. Nobody understood what he meant until this rather haunting and cryptic explanation was proffered. Getting back to the point, maybe Vivekananda was referring to his return to his Cosmic Home, in the realm where the seven sages dwell, given that this metaphor is taken from an epistle written on April 7th 1900, not too long before his death¹³.

Conclusion

This study focussed on two metaphors employed by Vivekananda within the JOURNEY domain, seen as an analogue to VOYAGE. The framework assumed was from a paradigm within the field of cognitive linguistics, and postulates that metaphors are often conceptual in nature – hence the theory is known as conceptual metaphor theory. This was a tool used to mine a corpus of Vivekananda’s *Complete Works* with reference to two conceptual metaphors: SPIRITUAL LIFE IS A VOYAGE ACROSS AN OCEAN and VIVEKANANDA’S MISSION IS A VOYAGE TO UNKNOWN LANDS.

¹¹ A set of scriptures comprising the *smriti* portion of Hindu scripture, made up of the epics and other such works.

¹² Which of the seven exactly is not mentioned.

¹³ It must be noted that the line between fact and fiction gets blurred in Hindu philosophy, and whether this particular story is meant literally or allegorically will never be clear.

The former conceptual ties in to the theme of HOMECOMING because the culmination of spiritual life signifies a return to 'God', or a reclamation of the Divinity within the human being. OCEAN is seen as an analogue to the various obstacles faced on this spiritual journey – crossing the ocean here is the epitome of the spiritual seeker's life. These obstacles include the transcending of desires and detachment from the world. The latter pertains to a literal journey which Vivekananda undertook, with his return to his Mother-land being a significant event for several reasons: it was the culmination of his sojourn around the world, spreading the wisdom of the east; but also as the climax of his own spiritual journey, as he left his physical body and returned to his spiritual 'home'.

Furthermore, this article shed some light on how Vivekananda viewed religion, as well as his own purpose as a revolutionary figure in Indian history. As is evident in the analysis, the concept of 'going home' was a very prominent theme for both these metaphors, and there is a multiplicity of meanings attached to this concept.

Nivedita (1910: 18 – italics added), one of Vivekananda's closest disciples from England, said of Vivekananda's use of metaphors that the '*very newness of these metaphors, and of the turn of thought, made them an acquisition*'. It is telling that she considered this Vivekananda's 'greatest intellectual achievement' at the time (Nivedita 1910: 25). Furthermore, when interpreting these metaphors, it also requires creative thought and inspires a new understanding of the Vivekananda and his teachings.

Vivekananda's writings are rich with metaphorical language, and one strong recommendation for future research is to go deeper into the various metaphors employed by him. Another direction would be to do the same with other influential figures, like Aurobindo, Yogananda and Radhakrishnan.

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