

VEDANTA SOCIETY

STATISTICS

The data given for 1926 represent three active organizations of the Vedanta Society, all reported as being in urban territory. The total membership was 200, comprising 75 males and 125 females. The classification of members by sex and by age was reported by all of the three churches, in none of which were there any members under 13 years of age. No Sunday schools were reported.

The membership includes persons 18 years of age and over, of good repute in the community, who may desire to associate themselves with the society; there are four classes, active members, annual members, life members, and honorary members.

Comparative data, 1906-1926.—Table 1 presents, in convenient form for comparison, a summary of the available statistics of this body for the censuses of 1926, 1916, and 1906.

TABLE 1.—COMPARATIVE SUMMARY, 1906 TO 1926: VEDANTA SOCIETY

ITEM	1926	1916	1906
Churches (local organizations).....	3	3	4
Increase ¹ over preceding census:			
Number.....		-1	
Per cent ²			
Members	200	190	340
Increase ¹ over preceding census:			
Number.....	10	-150	
Per cent.....	5.3	-44.1	
Average membership per church.....	67	63	85
Church edifices:			
Number.....	2	2	2
Value—Churches reporting.....	2	2	2
Amount reported.....	\$45,000	\$37,500	\$52,000
Average per church.....	\$22,500	\$18,750	\$26,000
Debt—Churches reporting.....	1	2	
Amount reported.....	\$15,000	\$20,000	
Parsonages:			
Value—Churches reporting.....	2		
Amount reported.....	\$20,000		
Debt—Churches reporting.....	1		
Amount reported.....	\$7,000		
Expenditures during year:			
Churches reporting.....	3	1	
Amount reported.....	\$15,686	\$3,000	
Current expenses and improvements.....	\$3,000	\$1,750	
Benevolences, missions, etc.....	\$500	\$1,250	
Not classified.....	\$12,186		
Average expenditure per church.....	\$5,229	\$3,000	

¹ A minus sign (-) denotes decrease.

² Per cent not shown where base is less than 100.

State table.—Table 2 presents by States the number and membership of the societies for the three censuses from 1906 to 1926, together with the membership for 1926 classified by sex.

TABLE 2.—NUMBER AND MEMBERSHIP OF CHURCHES, 1906 TO 1926, AND MEMBERSHIP BY SEX, 1926, BY STATES: VEDANTA SOCIETY

STATE	NUMBER OF CHURCHES			NUMBER OF MEMBERS			MEMBERSHIP BY SEX, 1926		
	1926	1916	1906	1926	1916	1906	Male	Female	Males per 100 females ⁽¹⁾
United States.....	3	3	4	200	190	340	75	125	60.0
Massachusetts.....	1	1		(?)	40				
New York.....	1	1	1	50	100	200	25	25	
Pennsylvania.....			1			50			
California.....	1	1	2	150	50	90	50	100	50.0

¹ Ratio not shown where number of females is less than 100.² Not reported.

HISTORY, DOCTRINE, AND ORGANIZATION¹

The Vedanta Society, as a religious or philosophical factor in American life, dates from the Parliament of Religions at the World's Fair in 1893. At that time the various Hindus who were present attracted much attention, and one of them, Swami Vivekananda, who came as a delegate, gave a series of lectures on Vedanta philosophy in New York in 1894. He made no attempt at an organization, but three years later Swami Abhedananda arrived in that city to carry on the work started by Swami Vivekananda, and organized the Vedanta Society, which was incorporated in October, 1898. Slowly but steadily the work grew, and finally the society became strong enough to have a permanent center in New York City, and now has other centers in San Francisco, Los Angeles, Boston, and Portland, Oreg., all under the leadership of Swamis of the order of Sri Ramakrishna in India. Some of these centers have country places where schools are held in the summer.

The term "Vedanta" is the name of an ancient philosophy of India, and as interpreted by the society it means literally "end of all wisdom." The Vedanta philosophy explains what the end of wisdom is and how it is attained, and claims to harmonize with the ultimate conclusions of modern science, and to give to religion a scientific and philosophic basis. The society has, however, no purpose of forming a new sect or creed; but by explaining through logic and reason the spiritual laws that govern life, it seeks to harmonize all systems.

The society has six trustees who, with three other officials, form the executive board. Members residing elsewhere than in New York City are given lessons and instruction by correspondence. The society has published a large number of works on its religious philosophy, most of which were written by Swami Vivekananda, and his successors and followers. Following the custom of the Hindu priesthood, the Swamis do not accept a salary or any remuneration for their services but freely devote their time and energy to the spiritual growth and unfoldment of all men and women, without regard to caste, creed, or nationality.

¹ This statement, which is substantially the same as that published in Part II of the Report on Religious Bodies, 1916, has been revised by Swami Bodhananda, of New York City, and approved by him in its present form.