



Vivekananda Way

ISSUE 25

PULLOUT FOR REFERENCE

Series 5: Issue 4: Vedantism - contd.

- ✓ I Defining Hinduism
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focus in this issue:

Vedantism - part 2

This is the second issue of the talk 'Vedantism', delivered in Jaffna on 24th January 1897. In the first issue of this series we explored Sections I & II as shown above. Please refer Vivekananda Way Issue 24 for the same. In this issue, we explore Section III >>

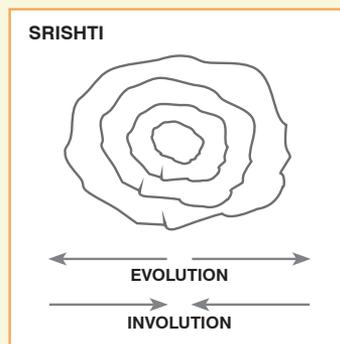
The Core Principles of Hinduism

1: Who created this world?

- The world was not created on a specific day.
- It is not as if a God came one day and created the world. God is eternally creating - is never at rest.
- The Sanskrit word for creation, properly translated, should be projection and not creation. Thus, the word we use is "Srishti" which means projection.



To say, therefore, that it [the world] had a beginning is utter nonsense. No question can occur as to its beginning or its end. Therefore wherever in our scriptures the words beginning and end are used, you must remember that it means the beginning and the end of one particular cycle; no more than that.



2: What is God?

- What makes this creation? God.
- Although we use the English word God, there is a good deal of difference in meaning. It is better to confine to the use of the Sanskrit word Brahman.
- Brahman is the general cause of all manifestations.



What is this Brahman? He is eternal, eternally pure, eternally awake, the almighty, the all-knowing, the all-merciful, the omnipresent, the formless, the partless... He creates this universe.

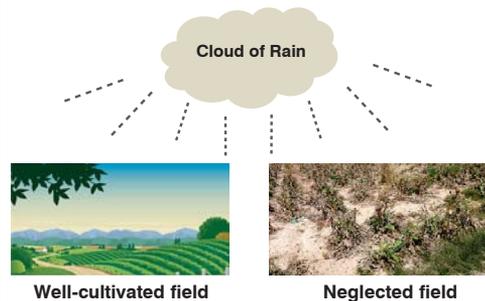
3: Is God partial or impartial?

- God's mercy falls equally on all people. It is we who make the difference.
- God's mercy is like a cloud of rain, which falls equally on all fields. But it is the well-cultivated field that gets the advantage of the shower.

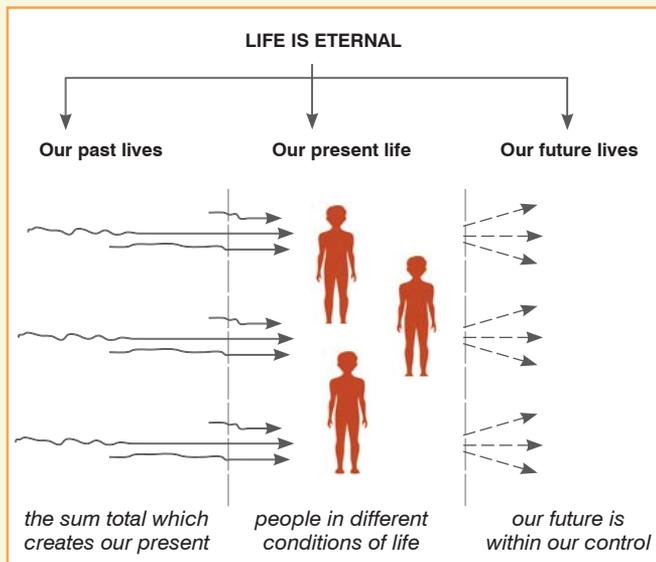


The mercy of God is eternal and unchangeable; it is we that make the differentiation.

God's mercy is equal for all



4: Why are some people happy or unhappy?



— It is not this birth that is responsible for people's happiness or unhappiness. What they did in their last birth is responsible for this difference in the current life. This is the Law of Karma.

— Each one of us carries within us the burden of our past, and therefore we are responsible for what we suffer; yet, each of us is the maker of our own fate.

— Therefore, we alone are responsible for what we suffer and we are also free to transform our circumstances.



The human will stands beyond all circumstance. Before it — the strong, gigantic, infinite will and freedom in man — all the powers, even of nature, must bow down, succumb, and become its servants.

5: What is the Soul?

- We cannot understand God in our scriptures without knowing the soul.
- Souls are without beginning and without end, and immortal by their very nature. All powers, blessing, purity, omnipresence, omniscience are buried in each soul.
- Thus, in every man and in every animal, however weak or wicked, great or small, resides the same omnipresent, omniscient soul - the Atman.
- The Atman is separate from the mind, as well as from the body. The Atman goes through birth and death, accompanied by the mind, the Sukshma Sharira.



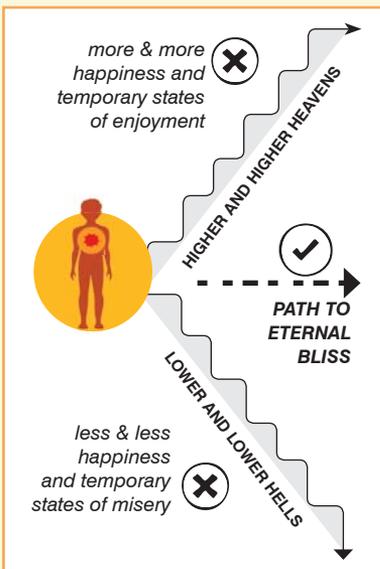
Between me and the smallest animal, the difference is only in manifestation, but as a principle he is the same as I am, he is my brother, he has the same soul as I have. The talk of the brotherhood of man becomes in India the brotherhood of universal life, of animals, and of all life down to the little ants — all these are our bodies.

The Atman is the real soul of man

1. My gross body or Sthula Sharira - this is the first layer.
2. My subtle body or Sukshma Sharira - this is the second layer, and lies behind the gross body. It is mind; the fine body, made of fine particles, which goes from birth to death, and so on.
3. Atman - lies behind the mind. This is the Soul, the Self of man. The Atman is separate from the mind as well as from the body, and this Atman goes through birth and death accompanied by the mind (the sukshma sharira)

[In the West manas (mind) is often identified as soul; while the Hindu regards the soul as a manifestation of God]

6: What is the goal of the human soul?



- The goal of the soul is neither to go to higher & higher heavens nor to go to lower & lower hells.
- According to the Hindu scriptures, even in the highest heavens you are a slave! Whichever state you climb to, you are still bound by the conditions around you.
- Therefore, the goal of human life is to be free of internal or external nature - i.e. to attain Mukti or freedom.



Nature must fall at your feet, and you must trample on it and be free and glorious by going beyond. No more is there life; therefore no more is there death. No more enjoyment; therefore no more misery. It is bliss unspeakable, indestructible, beyond everything. What we call happiness and good here are but particles of that eternal Bliss. And this eternal Bliss is our goal.

7: What is the cause of birth & rebirth, and what is the cure?

- The Atman is not the cause of birth and rebirth.
- It is our ignorance which is the cause.
- The cure is Knowledge. It will free us from bondage.
- Knowledge is born when we develop intense love for God. And, knowledge is also born when we love all human beings as temples of God.



It never ages; the ancient One is always the same. How did It come down to earth? There is but one answer to that in our scriptures. Ignorance is the cause of all this bondage. It is through ignorance that we have become bound; knowledge will cure it by taking us to the other side.

... with that intense love will come knowledge, and ignorance will disappear, the bonds will break, and the soul will be free.

8: What is the relationship between soul and God?

There are two types of relationships mentioned in our scriptures - the personal relationship and the impersonal relationship, as shown below:

In the personal relationship, God is viewed as -

The Omnipresent creator, preserver, and destroyer of everything.

The eternal Father and Mother of the universe.

One who is eternally separate from us and from all souls.

And, liberation is in coming near Him and living in Him.



...liberation consists in coming near to Him and living in Him.

In the impersonal relationship, God is viewed as:

An impersonal, omnipresent Being, where adjectives are taken away as superfluous and illogical, such as:

- *Not a knowing being - as knowledge belongs to the human mind*
- *Not a thinking being - as thinking is a process of the weak*
- *Not a reasoning being - as reasoning is a sign of weakness*
- *Not a creating being - as none creates except in bondage*
- *Not someone who works - as work is for fulfillment of wants and desires*

The impersonal "It" is used to refer to this impersonality. This is the Advaitic conception of God.

Every one is but a manifestation of that Impersonal.

And, liberation consists of knowing that we are He - and realizing our unity with this wonderful impersonality.



...misery consists in thinking of ourselves as different from this Infinite, Impersonal Being; and liberation consists in knowing our unity with this wonderful Impersonality.

TO BE CONTINUED...