



Vivekananda Way

ISSUE 27

PULLOUT FOR REFERENCE



Series 5: Understanding India - through Swami Vivekananda's eyes

Lectures covered thus far in this series include:

1. First public lecture in the East
(Issue 22: India - the punya bhumi)
2. Reply to the address of welcome at Ramnad
(Issue 23: India - the giant awakens)
3. Vedantism
(Issue 24, 25, 26)

focus in this issue:

The responsibility placed on us

On the arrival of Swami Vivekananda at Pamban, he received a warm and hearty welcome. It was here that he first presented the future responsibility of India:

“ Our sacred motherland is a land of religion and philosophy — the birthplace of spiritual giants — the land of renunciation, where and where alone, from the most ancient to the most modern times, there has been the highest ideal of life open to man.

“ We Hindus have now been placed, under God's providence, in a very critical and responsible position. The nations of the West are coming to us for spiritual help. A great moral obligation rests on the sons of India to fully equip themselves for the work of enlightening the world on the problems of human existence.



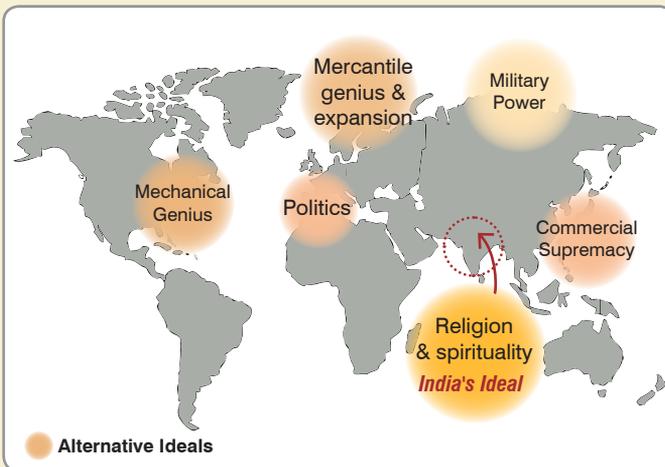
> Turn overleaf to explore further...



Key messages from the lecture:

1 Every race and nation has a particular ideal which is the backbone of national life

- Every race and nation appears to have a particular ideal which is the backbone of national life. While other nations have ideals like politics, military power, commercial supremacy, mechanical genius; India's ideal has always been religion and spirituality.



I have been in the countries of the West – have travelled through many lands of many races; and each race and each nation appears to me to have a particular ideal – a prominent ideal running through its whole life; and this ideal is the backbone of the national life. Not politics nor military power, not commercial supremacy nor mechanical genius furnishes India with that backbone, but religion; and religion alone is all that we have and mean to have. Spirituality has been always in India.

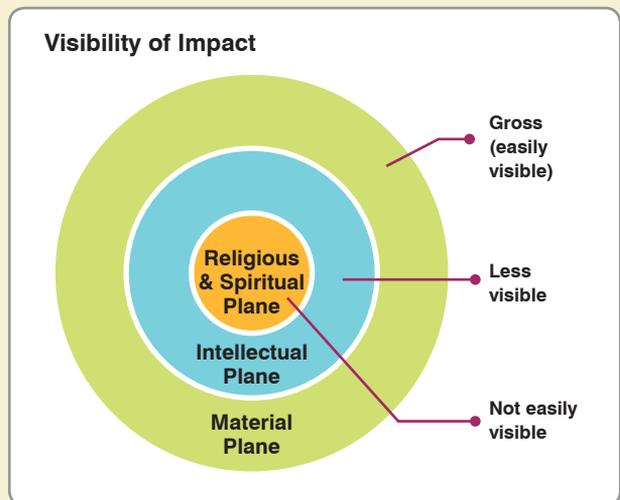


2 India continues to be ever active in the spiritual plane

I discard the idea that India was ever passive. Nowhere has activity been more pronounced than in this blessed land of ours, and the great proof of this activity is that our most ancient and magnanimous race still lives, and at every decade in its glorious career seems to take on fresh youth – undying and imperishable. This activity manifests here in religion.



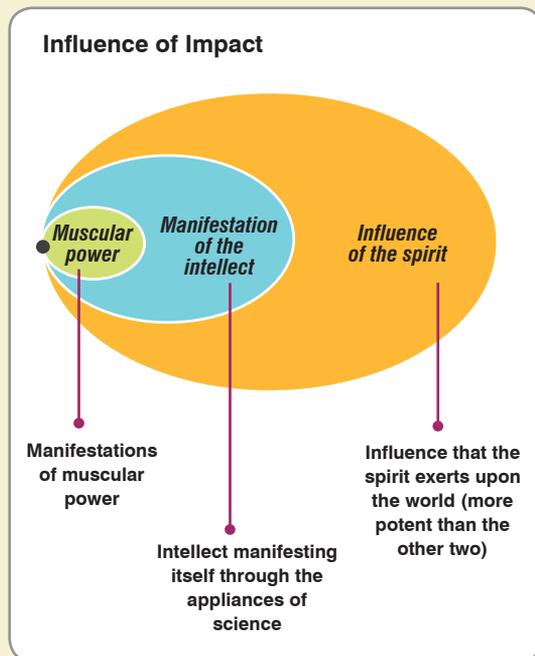
- There is a widespread belief that the Hindu is mild and passive. This is not true. On the contrary, India has been exceptionally active, the proof being that this ancient race seems to rejuvenate itself – time and again.
- This activity in the Hindus manifests itself in religion. But, those engaged in grosser activities tend to judge the Hindus through their own standards of activity (which are in other planes).



- Moreover, activity in the religious/ spiritual plane is not visible easily to those engaged in activities in the grosser intellectual and physical planes.
- It is also important to recognize that while the manifestations of muscular power are marvellous, the manifestations of the intellect through the machines of science are even more so. Yet, not one of them is more potent than the influence which the spirit exerts upon the world.



Great indeed are the manifestations of muscular power, and marvellous the manifestations of intellect expressing themselves through machines by the appliances of science; yet none of these is more potent than the influence which spirit exerts upon the world.



3 The world is looking to India for spiritual food

- The eyes of the whole world are now turned to India for spiritual food; and India has to provide for all races.
- There is a widespread exploitation and abuse of power in the world. Everybody needs to know that there is no salvation except by conquering of desires, and no man is free who is subject to the bondage of matter. All nations are coming to understand and appreciate this important truth.
- When a thirst for knowledge arises then Divine Providence responds by making such knowledge available through the right source.
- The unique understanding that it is the same God manifesting in multiple creeds and religions is available in India alone.



The eyes of the whole world are now turned towards this land of India for spiritual food; and India has to provide it for all the races. Here alone is the best ideal for mankind; and Western scholars are now striving to understand this ideal which is enshrined in our Sanskrit literature and philosophy, and which has been the characteristic of India all through the ages.

As soon as the disciple is in a position to grasp this truth, the words of the Guru come to his help. The Lord sends help to His own children in His infinite mercy which never ceaseth and is ever flowing in all creeds. Our Lord is the Lord of all religions. This idea belongs to India alone; and I challenge any one of you to find it in any other scripture of the world.

Here alone is the best ideal for mankind

THERE IS NO SALVATION EXCEPT THROUGH THE CONQUERING OF DESIRES, AND NO MAN IS FREE WHO IS SUBJECT TO THE BONDAGE OF MATTER.



4

Hindus are now placed, through God's providence, under a great moral obligation

- Since the dawn of history, no missionary went out from India to propagate Hindu doctrines and dogmas; but a wonderful change is coming upon us, inspired by the Lord.
- Hindus have now been placed under God's providence in a very critical and responsible position. The nations of the West are coming to us for spiritual help.
- A great moral obligation rests on the sons of India to fully equip themselves for enlightening the world on the problems of human existence.



Since the dawn of history, no missionary went out of India to propagate the Hindu doctrines and dogmas; but now a wonderful change is coming over us. Shri Bhagavân Krishna says, "Whenever virtue subsides and immorality prevails, then I come again and again to help the world."

We Hindus have now been placed, under God's providence, in a very critical and responsible position. The nations of the West are coming to us for spiritual help. A great moral obligation rests on the sons of India to fully equip themselves for the work of enlightening the world on the problems of human existence.

5

We can become great again only if we begin to work in earnest on behalf of our religion

- In other countries, good and great men take pride in tracing back their descent to some robber baron in the past. But we Hindus take pride in being the descendants of Rishis and sages who lived on roots and fruits in mountains and caves, meditating on the supreme.
- However degraded and degenerated we may be today, we can become great only if we begin to work in right earnest on behalf of our religion.

One thing we may note, that whereas you will find that good and great men of other countries take pride in tracing back their descent to some robber-baron who lived in a mountain fortress and emerged from time to time to plunder passing wayfarers, we Hindus, on the other hand, take pride in being the descendants of Rishis and sages who lived on roots and fruits in mountains and caves, meditating on the Supreme. We may be degraded and degenerated now; but however degraded and degenerated we may be, we can become great if only we begin to work in right earnest on behalf of our religion.



For the full lecture, refer to The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda, Vol. 3, Lectures from Colombo to Almora - Reply to the address of welcome at Pamban

If you have any questions on this lecture, do post your queries on www.vivekanandaway.org.

You can also access previous issues of Vivekananda Way here.