



Vivekananda Way

ISSUE 31

PULLOUT FOR REFERENCE



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

This series is a presentation of a set of lectures that Swami Vivekananda gave over three years, as he travelled from Colombo to Almora (January 1897- March 1901). In Issues 22-27 & 29, we have covered his lectures at Colombo, Jaffna, Pamban, Rameshwaram and Ramnad.

Issues 30-31 cover his lecture at Paramakudi.

focus in this issue:

At Paramakudi (Part - 2)

This issue is a continuation of the study of Swami Vivekananda's lecture at Paramakudi. Before we proceed, here is a quick recap of the key arguments covered in the previous issue:

1. There come periods in history where the human race or nations are forced to re-examine their models of social life.

2. Materialism and spiritualism follow each other in wave-like motions.

3. The choice before India.

While materialism has helped India, in a sense, but the models of material civilization in the West are also decaying.



4. Whether on the ground of materialism, or of intellect, or of spirituality, the compensation that is given by the Lord to every one impartially is exactly the same.

Therefore we must not think that we are the saviours of the world.

5. We can teach the world what it is waiting for.

- The world is waiting to strengthen its spiritual foundations.

- The world seeks to transform its basis for governing humanity.

6. India's solution - the religion of the Upanishads will help the world.

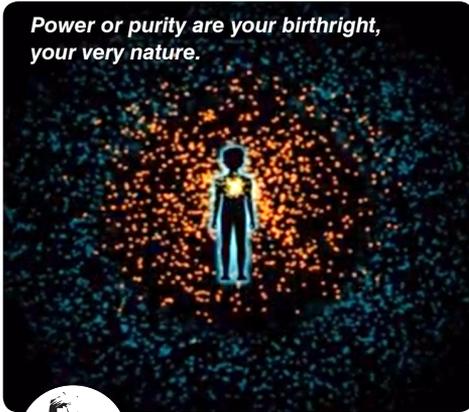
In this issue, we continue the second part of the lecture at Paramakudi where Swami Vivekananda explains why India has the answer to the crisis in world civilization.

Turn overleaf to explore >>



1

India possesses a unique doctrine: belief in the soul of man, the Atman. This is the one idea that can change the whole tendency of the world.



Power or purity are your birthright, your very nature.

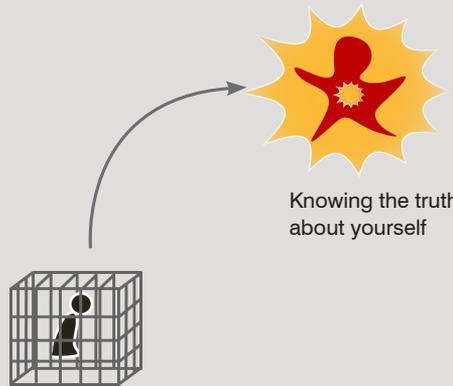


...everywhere in India, there is the idea of a spiritual soul which is the receptacle of all power

- The one underlying doctrine among the different sects, philosophies, and scriptures (Hindus, Jains, Buddhists, and others) is the belief in the soul of man, the atman. It is this idea that can change the whole tendency of the world.
- Everywhere in India there is the idea of a spiritual soul which is the receptacle of all power. All systems of philosophy in India teach that you cannot get this power or purity or perfection from outside. But believe these are your birth right, your very nature.
- Impurity is a mere superimposition under which your real nature is hidden. But the real you is already perfect, and already strong.

- You do not require any assistance to govern yourself; you are already self-restrained.
- The only difference is in knowing it or not knowing it.
- Therefore the one difficulty has been summed up in the word, Avidyâ (ignorance).
- Q: What is the difference between God and man, between saint and the sinner?
A: Ignorance
- Q: What is the difference between the highest man and the lowest worm?
A: Only ignorance
- Inside every little crawling worm is lodged infinite power, knowledge, and purity — the infinite divinity of God Himself. It is unmanifested; it will have to be manifested.

Inside each of us is the infinite divinity of God himself. It is unmanifest. It will have to manifest.



(Avidya)
Not knowing the truth about yourself

Knowing the truth about yourself

What makes the difference between God and man, between the saint and the sinner? Only ignorance. What is the difference between the highest man and the lowest worm that crawls under your feet? Ignorance.



2 It is the religion of the Upanishads that will make humankind strong and fearless.



If there is one word that you find coming out like a bomb from the Upanishads, bursting like a bomb-shell upon masses of ignorance, it is the word fearlessness.



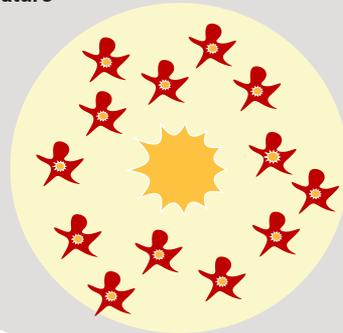
What makes a man stand up and work? Strength.

- Strength is goodness, weakness is sin.
- If there is one word that you find coming out like a bomb from the Upanishads, bursting like a bomb-shell upon masses of ignorance, it is the word fearlessness. The only religion that ought to be taught is the religion of fearlessness.
- Either in this world or in the world of religion, it is true that fear is the sure cause of degradation and sin. It is fear that brings misery, fear that brings death, fear that breeds evil.
- And what causes fear? Ignorance of our own nature.

3 When this vision of oneness and divinity of each being is understood, it will change the way humankind looks at life.

- Each one of us are of the substance of God Himself. In fact, according to the Advaita, we are God Himself though we have forgotten our own nature in thinking of ourselves as little men.
- We have fallen from that nature and thus made differences — I am a little better than you, or you than I, and so on.
- This idea of oneness is the great lesson India has to give. And when this is understood, it changes the whole aspect of things, because you look at the world through other eyes than you have been doing before.

We are God himself, only forgotten our own nature



Each of us is heir-apparent to the Emperor of emperors; are of the substance of God Himself. Nay, according to the Advaita, we are God Himself though we have forgotten our own nature in thinking of ourselves as little men.

These are some of the implications of the vision of oneness...

Implication 1: We see the world differently – we see it not as a battlefield but as a playground

And this world is no more a battlefield where each soul is born to struggle with every other soul and the strongest gets the victory and the weakest goes to death. It becomes a playground where the Lord is playing like a child, and we are His playmates, His fellow-workers.



Implication 2: Hope comes to the weakest, when each of us knows that divinity is our very nature (and is not alien to us)

When we have known the nature of the soul, hope comes to the weakest, to the most degraded, to the most miserable sinner. ...Your nature is pure. It may be hidden for millions of aeons, but at last it will conquer and come out.



Implication 3: We have the freedom to manufacture our own destiny

Your own Karma has manufactured for you this body, and nobody did it for you. ...you have yourself manufactured your body bit by bit just as you are doing it this very moment. You yourself eat; nobody eats for you. You assimilate what you eat; no one does it for you. You make blood, and muscles, and body out of the food; nobody does it for you. So you have done all the time. One link in a chain explains the infinite chain. If it is true for one moment that you manufacture your body, it is true for every moment that has been or will come. And all the responsibility of good and evil is on you. This is the great hope. What I have done, that I can undo.



At the same time, the Grace of the Lord is always available to the pure at heart

... our religion does not take away from mankind the mercy of the Lord. That is always there. On the other hand, He stands beside this tremendous current of good and evil. He the bondless, the ever-merciful, is always ready to help us to the other shore, for His mercy is great, and it always comes to the pure in heart.



4 This vision will have to form the basis of a new society



Your spirituality, in a certain sense, will have to form the basis of the new order of society. ... if a man has a very crude form of religion and wants temples and forms, he can have as many as he likes; if he wants a Personal God to love, he can find here the noblest ideas of a Personal God such as were never attained anywhere else in the world. If a man wants to be a rationalist and satisfy his reason, it is also here that he can find the most rational ideas of the Impersonal.

Indian vision of spirituality is all encompassing

The noblest ideas of a Personal God (based on love)

The most rational ideas of the Impersonal (based on reason)

This aspect has not been elaborated in this lecture because Swami Vivekananda did not have the time at Paramakudi. However, this has been made up in subsequent lectures which we shall cover in due course.

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.