



# Vivekananda Way

ISSUE 32

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 & 29-31, we have covered his lectures at Colombo, Jaffna, Pamban, Rameshwaram, Ramnad and Paramakudi.

### focus in this issue:

## Talk at Shivaganga and Manamadura

Swami Vivekananda was received by a group of zamindars (landlords) and citizens of Shivaganga and Manamadura, who gave him a very hearty welcome, and hailed him for marking a new era in the annals of India's spiritual history. In response to this welcome, Swami Vivekananda gave a short but power-packed talk.

In this issue, we present a walkthrough of his talk:

- Swami Vivekananda began this speech by continuing on a theme which he first spoke about at Pamban – how every nation and every race has a unique ideal around which their entire national life is organized, and how in India's case this ideal was its religion and spirituality. (See Issue 27).
- Subsequently, in his talk at Ramnad, he reminded his audience that India's foundation is religion and spirituality – the proof of which could be seen simply by talking to any common peasant on this subject. (See Issue 23).
- In this present lecture to the zamindars of Shivaganga and Manamadura, Swami Vivekananda again stresses the point of how India is an unbroken tradition of religion & spirituality, and how this spiritual treasure of India has a key role to play in the world.

**Explore further to study the main arguments presented in this lecture >>**



**India is the land of religion; the Hindu understands religion and religion alone. Centuries of education have always been in that line; and the result is that it is the one concern in life; and you all know well that it is so.**

**It is not necessary that every one should be a shopkeeper; it is not necessary even that every one should be a schoolmaster; it is not necessary that every one should be a fighter; but in this world there will be different nations producing the harmony of result.**

## **India is still living; who says she is dead**

**The vibrancy or activity of a civilization is not necessarily measured only through military conquests, or through trade, but can be determined through other parameters.**

Great periods of every country have been usually described in terms of military conquest, or in terms of extension of trade networks. For example, the golden years of the British Empire are described when it spread all over the world.

However, a different metric of vibrancy or activity should be used to describe India.

**India's vibrancy should be measured in terms of the religious and spiritual activity being carried out in India.**

*By that parameter*, India continues to be as vibrant as many other countries in the world, though on a different dimension.

## **Why then has European materialism swamped India? Or for that matter, why have so many people left the fold of Hinduism, right from the Buddhistic period, to the Islamic and Christian conversions?**

### *THE PROBLEM*

**The fault for this should not be placed at the door of any foreign/ external influences, but on the Hindus themselves. They must attribute this failure to themselves and to their own karma.**

As Vedantists, the first duty of Hindus is to look inwards and see whether they are at fault for this state of affairs or the external influence.

*Hindus need to ask themselves what did they do for the poor and the less privileged — for centuries?*

Seen from this point of view, they can attribute this failure to themselves and to their own karma.



**India is still living; who says she is dead?**

**But the West wants to see us active. If they want to see us active on the field of battle, they will be disappointed — that is not our field — just as we would be disappointed if we hoped to see a military nation active on the field of spirituality.**

**But let them come here and see that we are equally active, and how the nation is living and is as alive as ever.**

**We should dispel the idea that we have degenerated at all.**



**We are weeping for these renegades now, but what did we do for them before?**

**Let every one of us ask ourselves, what have we learnt; have we taken hold of the torch of truth, and if so, how far did we carry it? We did not help them then. This is the question we should ask ourselves.**

## THE DIAGNOSIS

**We can draw an analogy to the human body. Just as the human frame cannot be attacked by any bacilli unless it is itself weak, similarly, if Hinduism has succumbed even partly to external threats, it is because of its weakness.**

The primary cause of its weakening has been an excessive focus on the intricate rituals of day-to-day conduct rather than the vast and noble philosophical ideas and the glorious spirituality, that are the real foundations of the religion.

In other, words, Hindus have stopped being Vedantists, or Pauranics, or Tantrics, they have simply become 'don't touchists'.



**Think of the last six hundred or seven hundred years of degradation when grown-up men by hundreds have been discussing for years whether we should drink a glass of water with the right hand or the left, whether the hand should be washed three times or four times, whether we should gargle five or six times. What can you expect from men who pass their lives in discussing such momentous questions as these and writing most learned philosophies on them!**

## THE POTENTIAL CONSEQUENCE



**If this goes on for another century, every one of us will be in a lunatic asylum. It is a sure sign of softening of the brain when the mind cannot grasp the higher problems of life; all originality is lost, the mind has lost all its strength, its activity, and its power of thought, and just tries to go round and round the smallest curve it can find.**

## What then is the task ahead of us?

### THE SOLUTION

We must recognize the extraordinary heritage and treasure that Hindus have.

Furthermore, we must also recognize that the world is in dire need of this treasure, and will, in fact, die if it does not receive the treasure of spirituality lying hidden in India.

**The task ahead of us is to give.**

There are three kind of giving — the giving of food, the giving of secular knowledge and the giving of spiritual knowledge.

Of these three, Indians have already assimilated the ideal of giving of food into its culture. Now the focus must be on the giving of secular and spiritual knowledge.

### OUR TASK AHEAD

Where  
we must  
focus  
now

**Giving spiritual  
knowledge**

**Giving secular  
knowledge**

**Giving food  
(already a part of our culture)**

*"If we were all brave and had stout hearts, and with absolute sincerity put our shoulders to the wheel, in twenty-five years the whole problem would be solved, and there would be nothing left here to fight about..."*

## **The kind of knowledge Swami Vivekananda wanted us to give freely...**

Knowledge that human beings are essentially divine and their goal in life is to manifest this divinity

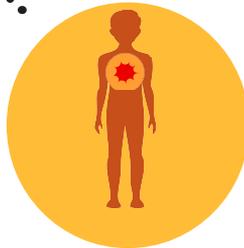
Knowledge that helps people to go beyond their narrow selfishness and serve other human beings seeing the divinity in all

Knowledge that helps people to stand on their own feet

Knowledge that enables people to build their character & personality and results in man-making

Knowledge that enables people to build solutions to the challenges of life

Training in concentrating their physical, emotional, and thought energies -- which is the means of acquiring knowledge



## **SWAMI VIVEKANANDA'S TAKEAWAY MESSAGE TO US..**



It is a great thing to take up a grand ideal in life and then give up one's whole life to it. For what otherwise is the value of life, this vegetating, little, low life of man? Subordinating it to one high ideal is the only value that life has. This is the great work to be done in India.



If you have any questions on this lecture, do post your queries on [www.vivekanandaway.org](http://www.vivekanandaway.org).

You can also access previous issues of Vivekananda Way here.