



Vivekananda Way

ISSUE 34

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 & 29-33, we have covered his lectures at Colombo, Jaffna, Pamban, Rameshwaram, Ramnad, Paramakudi, Shivaganga & Manamadura, and Madura.

focus in this issue:

Mission of the Vedanta - 1

Moving on from Madura, Swami Vivekananda visited the ancient town of Kumbakonam. Here he delivered his first address on the Mission of the Vedanta. For the purpose of our exploration, we have divided this lecture into two parts:

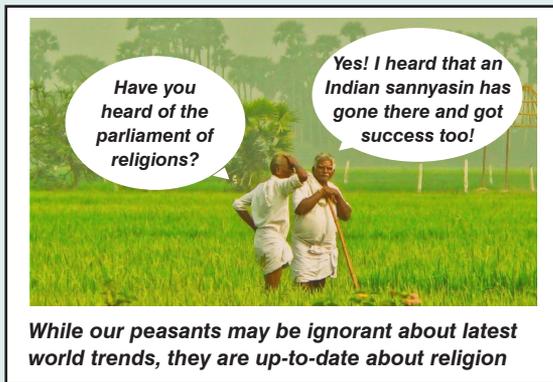
Part 1: Swami Vivekananda explores the Hindu religion and also explores why Vedanta is the best religion.

Part 2: Swami Vivekananda lays out the role of Vedanta in awakening India.

In this issue we will focus on Part 1.

[A] RELIGION IS THE BEDROCK OF INDIA

1.0 “ Religion is the one and sole interest of the people of India.



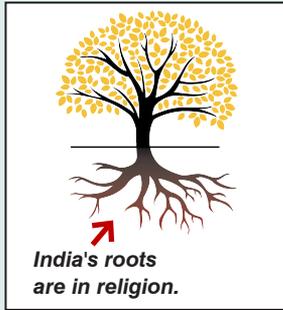
“ I found that the very peasants working in the fields... were already acquainted with the fact that there had been a Parliament of Religions in America, that an Indian Sannyasin had gone over there, and that he had some success.

1. The Hindu race is one whose vitality, life principles and very soul is in religion.
2. Almost every great nation has one great ideal which forms its backbone. With some it is politics, with others it is social culture; others again may have intellectual culture and so on for their national background.
3. But this, our motherland, has religion and religion alone for its basis, for its backbone, for the bed-rock upon which the whole building of its life has been based.

Continue overleaf >>



2.0 “ This is the line of life, this is the line of growth, and this is the line of well-being in India — to follow the track of religion.



1. The religious ideal has been living in India for thousands of years. For good or for evil, our vitality is concentrated in our religion.
2. You cannot change it. You cannot destroy it and put in its place another. Just like you cannot transplant a fully grown tree into another soil.
3. We have been born and brought up in the very midst of these ideas of religion, till it has entered into our very blood and become the very vitality of our lives.

[B] COMPARING RELIGION IN INDIA AND THE WEST

3.0 “ Ours is the true religion because it teaches that God alone is true, that this world is false and fleeting, that all your gold is but as dust, that all your power is finite, and that life itself is oftentimes an evil; therefore it is, that ours is the true religion.



Religion in the West	Religion in India
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – For the West, God is the Being who helps to clean and furnish the world for people. – Hence, the world (politics, social improvement, etc.) is the goal of mankind and God and religion are helpers to attain that goal. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – This little sense-world of three days duration is not to be made the end and aim of all, is not to be our great goal. – It teaches renunciation, and tells all nations - 'Children, you are slaves of the senses. There is only finiteness in the senses'. Renunciation is the way to the goal, and not through enjoyment.

“..that our religion does not conduce to well-being in this world, that it does not bring gold to us, that it does not make us robbers of nations, that it does not make the strong stand upon the bodies of the weak and feed themselves with the life-blood of the weak. ...It cannot send cohorts, under whose feet the earth trembles, for the purpose of destruction and pillage and the ruination of races. Therefore they say — what is there in this religion?”

4.0 “ It is a curious fact that while nations after nations have come upon the stage of the world, played their parts vigorously for a few moments, and died almost without leaving a mark or a ripple on the ocean of time, here we are living, as it were, an eternal life



Western approach	Indian approach
The West is trying to solve the problem of 'how much a man can possess',	We are trying to solve the problem of 'on how little a man can live'.
<i>Those who train themselves to live on least and control themselves, will gain in the end, and those who run after enjoyment and luxury, however vigorous they may seem, will have to die and become annihilated.</i>	

“ There is vitality enough, and it comes out in torrents and deluges the world when the time is ripe and requires it.

[C] VEDANTA: A UNIVERSAL RELIGION?

5.0 “ The thoughtful men of the West find in our ancient philosophy, especially in the Vedanta, the new impulse of thought they are seeking.



1. There is a tide of world-weariness that seems to have come upon the Western world. The races of the West are eager for some new philosophy.
2. While most people still cling on to political and social changes as the panacea for all evils, among the great thinkers of the West new ideals are growing; they are recognizing the need for a change of soul itself to cure the evils of life.



6.0 “ It is Vedanta, and Vedanta alone that can become the universal religion of man, and that no other is fitted for the role.



The theory of the Ishta

“..our religion a most intensely impersonal one – a religion based upon principles ... Yet as I have said, our religion has ample scope for the authority and influence of persons

- Through the wonderful theory of the Ishta, Vedanta gives each and every individual the fullest and the freest choice possible among all the great religious personalities.
- One may take up any one of the prophets or teachers as one's guide and the object of one's special adoration. But one must keep to a firm background of eternally true principles.

1. All other great religions are connected with the life of their founders, and if the historicity of that life is challenged, then the entire edifice comes crumbling down. Indian religion, on the other hand rests on eternal principals, and no person can claim to have created it.
2. If it ever becomes possible to bring the largest portion of humanity to one way of thinking in regard to religion, it must be always through principles and not through persons.

7.0 “ Of all the scriptures in the world, it is the one scripture the teaching of which is in entire harmony with the results that have been attained by the modern scientific investigations of external nature



Western mind	Indian mind
The ancient Greek mind started by analysing the external world.	The ancient Hindu mind started by analysing the internal world.
<i>It is easy to see that both these vibrations of thought are tending to produce similar echoes of the goal beyond.</i>	

“ It seems to us, and to all who care to know, that the conclusions of modern science are the very conclusions the Vedanta reached ages ago; only, in modern science they are written in the language of matter. This then is another claim of the Vedanta upon modern Western minds, its rationality, the wonderful rationalism of the Vedanta

[D] TWO GREAT IDEAS THE WORLD IS WAITING FOR

8.0 “ The world is waiting for this grand idea of universal toleration

1. No civilisation can grow unless fanatics, bloodshed, and brutality stop.
2. No civilisation can begin to lift its head until we can look charitably upon one another, and the first step in this direction is to look kindly upon the religious convictions of others.
3. We need to understand that we should not only be charitable, but positively helpful, however different our ideas and convictions may be.

एकं सद् विप्रा बहुधा वदन्ति

"He who exists is one; the sages call Him variously."

“ This is one of the most memorable sentences that was ever uttered, one of the grandest truths that was ever discovered. And for us Hindus this truth has been the very backbone of our national existence. For throughout the vistas of the centuries of our national life, this one idea — एकं सद् विप्रा बहुधा वदन्ति — comes down, gaining in volume and in fullness till it has permeated the whole of our national existence, till it has mingled in our blood, and has become one with us. We live that grand truth in every vein, and our country has become the glorious land of religious toleration.

9.0 “ The other great idea that the world wants from us today — is that eternal grand idea of the spiritual oneness of the whole universe.

Vedanta offers the only universal and impersonal basis for ethics

- The rational West is bent on seeking out rationality as the basis of its ethics. But ethics cannot be derived from the mere sanction of any person.
- The highest thinkers seek to go beyond the sanction of any person for creating ethical and moral codes, rather they want some eternal principle of truth as the sanction of ethics.

“ Where is that eternal sanction to be found except in the only Infinite Reality that exists in you and in me and in all, in the Self, in the Soul? The infinite oneness of the Soul is the eternal sanction of all morality, that you and I are not only brothers — every literature voicing man's struggle towards freedom has preached that for you — but that you and I are really one. This is the dictate of Indian philosophy. This oneness is the rationale of all ethics and all spirituality.

1. It is shown in the Vedanta that behind that idea of the unity of the whole show, the real Soul is one. There is but one Soul throughout the universe, all is but One Existence.
2. This great idea of the real but basic solidarity of the whole universe has frightened many, but it is the one great life-giving idea that the world wants from us today.
3. Without this, our mute masses cannot be lifted, and this land of ours will never be regenerated.

To be continued...

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.

