



Finding the spiritual underpinnings of thought again: Swami Vivekananda's persistent significance in the present

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Abstract

A visionary representative of Indian philosophy, Swami Vivekananda drew from his rich spiritual and philosophical background to bring the transformational wisdom of yoga and Vedanta to the West, leaving his lasting impression on contemporary thought. His spiritual teachings were founded on the inspiring belief that each person possesses a dormant divine potential that is just waiting to be developed and awakened, turning human life into a manifestation of its most luminous and highest nature. Vedanta philosophy, universal religion, practical vedanta, education and personal growth, self-realization, and service are the spiritual foundations of Vivekananda's primary teachings, which will be outlined below. Influenced by his mentor Sri Ramakrishna, Vivekananda reinterpreted Advaita Vedanta as a non-sectarian, life-affirming philosophy that offers a spiritual ethics of social service and an ontological foundation for religious cosmopolitanism. His opinions on the boundaries of reason, the dynamics of religious faith, and the difficult problem of consciousness are still pertinent today. He also embraced novel cosmopolitan approaches to perennial philosophical issues. His Vedantic cosmopolitanism offers an enduring and comprehensive vision for social justice, individual empowerment, and world peace. His worldview cuts over cultural and theological divides by promoting the universal nature of all religions and the innate unity of all creatures, providing a road forward toward a more just and compassionate society. Reviewing and putting Vivekananda's views into practice can help promote a spirit of togetherness, tolerance, and respect for one another—all of which are crucial for tackling the complicated issues of our day and age, which is characterized by growing globalization and intercultural relationships. Examining his fundamental teachings and their applicability to contemporary problems is actually necessary to reexamine the spiritual foundation of his concepts and their applicability today.

Keywords: Vedanta, vivekananda, oneness, spirituality, humanism, universal religion, self-realization, divinity, education, interconnectedness, karma yoga, nationalism, compassion

Introduction

Regarding Vedanta Philosophy

Vedanta, which emphasizes the unity of existence, the divinity of the soul, and the unity of all religions, lies at the heart of Vivekananda's teachings. He advocated for Vedanta, which defines its central tenet as the possibility of achieving the same objective through a variety of routes, which may be broadly categorized into four areas: knowledge, psychology, love, and work. One Brahman, an endless and formless mind that pervades everything, is the ultimate reality, according to Vedanta, which is based on the ancient Indian texts known as the Upanishads. All beings are expressions of this one divine truth, according to Swami Vivekananda's interpretation of Vedanta as a philosophy of oneness. Advaita Vedanta, which holds that there is no essential distinction between Brahman and the individual soul (Atman), was advocated by Vivekananda. This non-dualistic viewpoint emphasizes the notion that all differences, even those based on nationality, ethnicity, or religion, are only surface-level. Realizing Sat-Chit-Ananda, the state of highest consciousness, is the ultimate goal in order to achieve complete freedom. At first, ignorance obscures our vision, allowing us to see only the transient worldly events without realizing the existence of God. But when we become aware of the truth, our eyes change and we see only God; the fleeting cosmos vanishes, exposing the timeless nature that underpins all. Beyond the conventional Vedant philosophy, Swamiji asserted that in order to eradicate poverty, illiteracy, and illness, all religions must help the weak and disenfranchised. He claimed that all faiths pursue the same truth and ultimately lead to the same divine objective, and he envisioned a religion that is global and transcends sectarian bounds. The Vedantic concept of oneness in variety serves as the foundation for this philosophy. Deeply humanistic, Vivekananda's cosmopolitanism promotes the advancement of humanity by moral and spiritual growth. He underlined that genuine spirituality manifests itself via love, compassion, and selfless service rather than being limited to rituals.

Therefore, a deeper examination of the term "Vedanta" is instructive. Combining the words "Veda" (knowledge) and "anta" (the ultimate aim), Vedanta represents the pursuit of transforming insight that goes beyond simple academic endeavors. It acknowledges the realization of our true identity as the primary goal of human life and aims to shed light on our divine nature and connection to the ultimate truth. We set out on a deep voyage of self-discovery via the teachings of Vedanta, where spiritual development and self-realization merge to reveal our innate divinity, which is the ultimate goal of our life. Because it is an unchangeable fact that our deepest core is divine and that discovering it is our soul's ultimate destiny, we are driven irresistibly down this path towards the understanding of our true nature, an awakening that may occur during this life or the next.

Regarding Universal Religion

Vivekananda argued for a global religion founded on spiritual experience rather than doctrine and advanced the notion that all faiths lead to the same truth. He claimed that all faiths pursue the same truth and ultimately lead to the same divine objective, and he envisioned a religion that is global and transcends sectarian bounds. The Vedantic concept of oneness in variety serves as the foundation for this philosophy. Swamiji adopted a practical, logical, and all-encompassing view of religion, placing a higher value on serving others with compassion than on following rituals. Swamiji promoted a nuanced and contextual concept of spiritual reality, in contrast to traditional Vedantists who saw the world as illusory and unreal. Swamiji also acknowledged the need of interacting with the world and its intricacies. In the history of Vedantism, Vivekananda was arguably the first philosopher to speak so forcefully and publicly in support of the world's reality^[4]. His profound belief in the potential of man served as the foundation for his fundamentally and practically humanistic ideas on society. He was against the tradition of child marriage and caste-based discrimination. He was adamant about giving women chances so they could use their skills. Buddhism had an impact on Vivekananda. "Buddha's great glory lay in his incredible sympathy for everyone, especially the poor and ignorant," he remarked.

Regarding Humanism

Building on the groundwork he had established since 1886, he solidified his humanistic worldview into a coherent framework in 1897. He had meticulously laid the foundation for this revolutionary change with his relentless labor over the previous ten years, finally formalizing his transformational humanistic beliefs. When he traveled to the south of India around Christmas 1892, he walked from Ernakulam to Kanyakumari. He reflected on the Vivekananda Rock Memorial, the "last bit of Indian rock," near Kanyakumari. At this crucial point in his journey, Swami Vivekananda thought back on his deep experiences with the hardships faced by the nation's poor, which led to a life-changing realization that solidified into his imaginative idea of "One India"—a united and peaceful country where class and creedal divides would vanish. This is now known as "The Kanyakumari Resolve of 1892," which states that helping the poor or those in need is a way to honor God. A fundamental transition from an emphasis on personal interests to a compassionate engagement with the well-being of others, when the worries of others become an intrinsic part of one's own being, is marked by humanism, a transforming practice that expands the bounds of the human self. Humanism asserts the superiority of human reason and action and places a high value on human concerns and goals. According to Protagoras' timeless claim, Swami Vivekananda thought that humans are the ultimate arbiter, judging the existence, importance, and nonexistence of all things using human sense and reason. "The human individual is not just a part of the universe, but the universe itself, with every person containing the entirety of existence within," he said, making a radical departure from the Greek philosopher's reflections. Since I am that essential truth, I am unable to know what it is. In conclusion, Vivekananda's humanism, which emphasizes the divinity inside every individual, the unification of faiths, selfless service, and the harmonic fusion of science and spirituality, is firmly anchored in the philosophical and spiritual traditions of Vedanta. People all throughout the world are still motivated to pursue their own personal and societal well-being by his teachings.

Vedanta in Practice

Swami Vivekananda was an advocate of incorporating Vedantic concepts into daily life. He was a prominent practitioner of yoga and vedanta who espoused a humanistic philosophy that praised the divine nature of all people and made serving others an act of devotion. He validated the limitless potential and intrinsic value of every individual by introducing the Western world to the transformational power of Indian ideas via his ground-breaking work. His understanding of Vedanta, the philosophical underpinning of Hinduism, serves as the basis for his humanist teachings. Vivekananda emphasized the significance of self-discovery and self-realization. He urged people to examine themselves, discover their own selves, and work toward bettering themselves in order to realize their hidden potential. The fundamental divinity and unity of all people are among the basic ideas of Vivekananda's philosophy. He thought that attaining world peace and harmony depended on acknowledging this interconnectedness. He believes that each person is a manifestation of God and should be treated with dignity and

respect. He placed a strong emphasis on eliminating discrimination between women and men, as well as across professions and sects. Since selfless service dissolves sectarian divisions and reveals the shared humanity at the core of all spiritual traditions, Vivekananda's consecration of service to the poor as a form of worship established a universal platform for harmony among various faiths. His philosophy of Vedanta, which visualizes that the underlying essence of the self (Atman) is divine and that acknowledging this divinity is the key to fulfilling one's full potential, represents his idea that every person is born with the capacity for divinity. Serving others as a means of worshipping the divine is one of Vivekananda's most well-known teachings. He held that people might discover their own divinity by helping others and promoting societal well-being ^[12]. Swamiji's above claims may be comprehended by scientific reasons. Our bodies are dynamic, self-communicating systems in which a steady stream of intelligence coordinates all of their many processes. Notably, neurological peptides, which act as chemical translators and transmit our mental landscape to our physical being, allow our immune system to listen in on our thoughts and emotions during this internal dialogue. Our neural system and immune system communicate closely. Indeed, some of the same peptides that the brain produces can also be produced by immune cells ^[13]. As a result, his teachings place a strong emphasis on humanism and universalism, inspiring people to transcend their limited identities and strive for the advancement of mankind. His beliefs emphasize the value of selfless service for the greater good and the recognition of one's own divinity. Man's greatest motivation is the desire to do good, provided we have the right attitude toward service. "It is a blessing to us, so we must work and consistently perform well," he says. There is no other way to achieve perfection. We are unhappy because we are obstinately attached to certain results and the outputs of our labor. To go beyond this, use the knowledge of non-attachment, allowing your actions to emerge with effortless ease, like a lotus growing in the muddiest of waters, but with no dirt; let your thoughts be a calm lake, free from the murmurs of anticipation and want. The main idea behind Swamiji's sublimation of labor in our lives is that we ought to work like masters rather than slaves.

Education and Personal Development

According to Vivekananda, education is a sacred catalyst for spiritual growth and self-discovery that enables people to recognize their divine essence, reach their full potential, and awaken their inner strength. He supported all-encompassing education that cultivates spirituality and character. He also underlined the significance of self-realization by introspection and meditation, together with selfless service to others (karma yoga). Vivekananda emphasized the value of education as a tool for character development, spiritual growth, and personal and societal reform, all of which may result in the empowerment of both people and communities. Vivekananda promoted the fusion of spiritual knowledge with scientific investigation. He believed that religion and science were complimentary aspects of human knowledge rather than antagonistic forces. Each illuminated the mysteries of life, and when combined, they revealed a deeper reality. Their peaceful coexistence would result in a comprehensive comprehension of human existence ^[15]. He highlighted fearlessness as a crucial quality and the strong conviction that people should have faith in their own skills and not be scared to take on obstacles in life. In addition to teaching academic information, the educational system should promote moral and spiritual growth so that people can live happy, full lives. Vivekananda placed a high value on the admirable task of "man-making." A humanist believes in the intrinsic potential of people, whereas a religious person believes in a greater force. Destructive emotions like hatred, envy, greed, and wrath automatically vanish when we acknowledge the divine nature of Brahman that is inside every person, creating a world that is compassionate and peaceful.

On Using Karma Yoga to Realize Oneself

An average individual cannot completely give up their thoughts all at once. The core idea is to continue carrying out one's own tasks by conducting unselfish service for others with discrimination of mind; reading Vedanta or texts alone causes more damage than benefit. ¹⁷Our inner channel widens as we learn to trust and follow our intuition, allowing more life energy to enter and bringing our heart, mind, and spirit into harmony with the rhythm of the heavens. In fact, our body's cells acquire more energy and undergo faster renewal and revitalization. We feel a deep feeling of aliveness when we balance our mental, emotional, and physical selves. Our spiritual light, which had previously been hidden, now shines brightly again, illuminating our presence and our journey. Our body exudes life and remains youthful, healthy, and attractive ^[18]. In order to utilize the intrinsic energy of self-spiritual renewal, Swamiji stressed the need of having a large heart and an open mind when helping mankind. Serving people to the best of our abilities is necessary if we wish to have peace of mind. There have been several phases in the development of spiritual activities, each with its unique method of transformation. After a period of austerities, there was a period of devotion and divine love, and then, according to the demands of the moment, there was a period of intellectual reflection and renunciation. However, Swamiji stressed that karmayoga, or selfless service to others, will provide spiritual benefits fast in the present day ^[19]. "Swamiji was a yogi of unparalleled spiritual stature, attuned to the deepest truths, who had dedicated his life to the noble pursuit of elevating the moral and spiritual fabric of his nation and humanity as a whole, embodying the highest ideals of selfless service and

spiritual leadership," as Subhash Chandra Bose correctly stated. As demonstrated by S.C. Bose's personality, the complex link between spiritual development and moral behavior to help mankind is essential. Vivekananda's philosophical legacy is a unique and comprehensive vision of spiritual development and self-realization that combines the Buddha's sublime humanism, with its emphasis on empathy and the intrinsic value of all beings, with ĀEaEkarācārya's Māyāvada, with its nuanced understanding of the illusory and the absolute ^[21]. A greater connection with both God and oneself is ensured when we let go of the restricting emotions of our adversaries and focus on arousing the co-creative emotions of brotherly love and being efficient in our contribution to mankind.

Regarding Nationalism

Vivekananda's nationalism emphasizes the moral and spiritual advancement of society and is inclusive and compassionate. In his ideal India, many cultures and faiths would coexist together. He gave nationalism a spiritual foundation by highlighting the necessity for people to be ready for independence and self-government. He held that self-awareness and spiritual development are the only paths to ultimate freedom. Beyond national boundaries, Vivekananda's comprehensive humanism encompassed a global vision of harmony, collaboration, and understanding where many nations and cultures might unite in a spirit of empathy, solidarity, and shared human experience. By cultivating a unique Indian consciousness that peacefully coexisted with global humanism, he promoted an all-encompassing approach to liberation that went beyond simple political engagement and preserved a feeling of national identity without sacrificing the larger ideals of humanity. Vivekananda's philosophical system was based on a deep humanism that cut beyond national borders, highlighting humanity's commonalities and fostering intercultural understanding to create a fabric of world peace and unity. Maulana A.K. Azad, who made the striking observation that nationalism and humanism are complimentary aspects of a same organism that are inseparable and interdependent, is relevant here. He passionately maintained that the quest for knowledge and the development of civilization live in a domain outside the bounds of man-made boundaries, unhindered by national borders, geographic limitations, or the polarizing forces of race, color, or creed. Although they may have come from anywhere in the world, they are now a shared human legacy and the property of all nations. The liberal and secular perspective of Indian nationhood advancing towards the collective upliftment of all was central to Swami Vivekananda's support of nationalism and humanism philosophy.

Examining Vivekananda's spiritual concepts again provides insightful analysis and workable answers to today's issues, highlighting harmony, kindness, and holistic growth. Vivekananda's conception of Vedantic cosmopolitanism provides a framework for accepting cultural variety while acknowledging our common humanity in the age of globalization and multiculturalism, which is characterized by an increasingly linked globe. It fosters international cooperation and respect for various cultural customs. His lessons on selfless service and moral behavior might motivate modern leaders to put everyone's well-being first and to lead with compassion and integrity. Vivekananda's focus on self-realization via introspection and meditation is consistent with contemporary mindfulness techniques and can support mental health and personal fulfillment.

Conclusion

Vivekananda's teaching that all religions are fundamentally one fosters tolerance and understanding in the religiously divided world of today. His focus on recognizing the divine in all people can encourage a more humane and caring response to societal problems like prejudice, poverty, and inequality. His idea of holistic education, which incorporates intellectual, physical, and spiritual growth, might be advantageous to today's educational institutions. His views on leadership and selfless service can serve as an inspiration for moral behavior in politics, business, and social activity. Vivekananda's emphasis on social service and self-empowerment can serve as a template for community involvement and individual growth in tackling global issues. Vivekananda's Vedantic cosmopolitanism will always be relevant because it can improve pluralism and multiculturalism in a world that is divided by fostering tolerance, inclusion, and variety. His tolerance for all religions promotes respectful dialogue and tolerance amongst many religious traditions, both of which are critical for world peace. In a same vein, his ideology promotes equality and social justice by highlighting the divinity inherent in every individual. This viewpoint can motivate initiatives to fight poverty, inequality, and other social injustices. Given that individuals are frequently split along slender lines of identification in today's culture, it is acceptable to say that Vivekananda's concepts are still applicable. His teachings will continue to motivate people to strive toward a more peaceful and spiritually advanced society because they foster harmony, togetherness, and the understanding of a greater purpose that transcends personal interests.

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