



# REVIEW OF RESEARCH

ISSN: 2249-894X

IMPACT FACTOR : 5.7631 (UIF)

VOLUME - 11 | ISSUE - 3 | DECEMBER - 2021



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## IDEAS OF SWAMI VIVEKANANDA & ESSENCE OF VEDANTA IN INDIAN CULTURE

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### ABSTRACT:

*As per Swami Vivekananda (1863-1902), an extraordinary otherworldly pioneer, scholar and reformer of India, otherworldliness is the actual spine of India. He sees that each country has a specific ideal going through its entire presence, framing its actual foundation. With some it is legislative issues, while with others it is social culture, scholarly culture, etc. According to vivekananda, ... . Our country has religion and religion alone for its spine, for the bedrock whereupon the entire structure of its life has been based.' Since otherworldliness is the quintessence of religion, we should check that Vivekananda has involved the term religion in a similar sense as otherworldliness*



*In the event that we concentrate on the historical backdrop of Indian culture we find even in the Rig Veda, the most seasoned of sacred writings, the Indian psyche encountering the suggestion of something heavenly and everlasting inside itself. The internal hunt of man assembles volume and power in the Upanishads. The Upanishads look to understand the supernatural element of man-the element of Divinity rising above humankind. In this profound bearing human mindfulness heads past the body, the sense and the encompassing scene: man acknowledges himself as the unfading Self. Coming right after the Upanishads, the Bhagavad Gita works out a total way of thinking of life, accommodating the hallowed and the mainstream, work and love. The otherworldliness that returns from the Vedas and the Upanishads, and supported by Sri Krishna, Buddha, Shankara and others, is freed into comprehensiveness by Swami Vivekananda. He contributes religion with the ability to light up and direct human existence all in all. The current paper is a work and investigation of Vivekananda's translation of Vedanta, which is otherwise called the Hindu religion. We will endeavor to zero in on the places where his translation recovers the otherworldly, legacy, making it fit for the advanced world.*

**KEYWORDS:** *specific ideal , historical backdrop , Indian culture.*

### INTRODUCTION

Swami Vivekananda, one is the finest flowers of Indian Culture and one of the profound interpreters of Vedanta Philosophy, strove to extend the frontiers of human freedom by heightening a man's faith in the eternal varieties. His every concept of man is rooted in the philosophical background of Vedanta and the practical relevance of Vedantic thought. He dealt with the multidimensional aspects of freedom as expression of a single existential urge in a man to be free and this is derived from the intrinsic freedom of man. For Vivekananda, this very concept of freedom is necessarily connected with another significant concept called fearlessness (Abhij). Because, according to Vivekananda, fear come

only from the false notion of the self that is the not-self. Therefore, self-knowledge which is freedom is such is integrally non-different with fearlessness. Vivekananda held freedom to be the primary motive behind human actions. Man's quest for freedom to eradicate the veil of ignorance, so that the potential powers of the major aspects-a negative aspect expressed as freedom for. In Indian culture, it is understood in the sense of freedom to be. Freedom has different variety in its expression-social, moral, intellectual, spiritual etc.

Swami Vivekananda takes the form of living Vedanta entering in our ordinary life and conduct. The core of Vivekananda's role lies in his bold attempt of bringing down the sky-high elevated thoughts of Buddha and Sankara down to the level of practical life and application. His philosophical thoughts drawn from different studies of Indian philosophy particularly Sankara's Advaita Vedanta and Buddhism have his uniqueness about it. Their philosophy inspires and stimulates further thoughts, which can be translated, applied and implement into the framework of human society.

## VEDANTA

Thus the term Vedanta stands for three inter-related things.

**(a) The Upanishads collectively, which form the last and the most important part of the Vedas;**

**(b) The eternal truths and principles of the spiritual realm;**

**(c) The system of philosophy based on Brahma Sutras.**

Nonetheless, it is generally in the last feeling of Vedanta Darshana (Vedanta Philosophy) that the term Vedanta is ordinarily utilized. Vedanta is anything but a static way of thinking or religion. It is a profoundly powerful, always developing way of thinking and religion equipped for meeting difficulties and conquering hindrances. In this course of development, Vedanta has gone through three stages.

- (i) **Formative phase:** This stage reached out from around 1000 B.C. to third century B.C. during this period the Upanishads, the Gita and the Brahma-sutras (these three sacred writings are together called prasthan-traya) gave the fundamental ideas of Vedanta like Atman and Brahman.
- (ii) **Scholastic phase:** This stage stretched out from about the eighth century A.D. to the thirteenth century. During this period incredible instructors like Shankara clarified and extended the first instinctive bits of knowledge of Vedic Rishis and the lessons of the Gita, and laid out Vedanta as an apt, thorough arrangement of reasoning - the most pertinent and far reaching strict way of thinking the world has at any point seen. Be that as it may, during this period Vedanta split into various philosophical schools and strict groups. The super philosophical schools were the accompanying:

- Advaita or Non-dualism propounded by Shankara
- Vishishtadvaita propounded by Ramanuja
- Dvaita propounded by Madhva
- Shuddhadvaita propounded by Vallabha
- Achintya-bheda-abheda propounded by Jiva Gosvamin

These schools of theory carried on sharp discussions among themselves which kept up the scholarly life of individuals. India created during this period numerous extraordinary researchers and scholars.

The main religious sects were: Vaishnavism,

**Shaivism and shaktism.** Every one of these had a few sub-groups. These groups created many holy people. These holy people spread vedantic thoughts among the average folks through melodies and lessons.

Here notice ought to be made of two other religio-philosophical practices related with Indian culture, in particular Buddhism and Jainism. They emerged as otherworldly developments in the sixth century BC. They shared a portion of the essential ideas of India's old conviction framework like Karma, resurrection, samsara, Dharma and direct profound experience. Yet, their dismissal of the power of the Veda, position qualification, faith in a Ultimate Reality as the Supreme Deity and extreme reason for the

universe, and different standards estranged them from the standard of vedantic culture. Accordingly, Buddhism and Jainism started to decrease in India and, after the twelfth century AD, Buddhism stopped to have any immediate effect on the improvement of Indian culture.

(iii) **Modern Phase** : The third period of Vedanta was introduced by Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda in the nineteenth century. During this period Vedanta was changed from an ethnic strict way of thinking into a widespread way of thinking of life.

### INDIAN CULTURE AND VEDANTA

Vedanta, however, is not a mere view of Reality; it is also a way of life-not ordinary life, but spiritual life. Its aim is to enable human beings to solve the existential problems of life, transcend human limitations, go beyond suffering, and attain supreme fulfillment and peace. Although there are six darsanas, Vedanta alone has remained the philosophy of the Hindu religious tradition from very ancient times to the present day. Of the different schools of Vedanta, Advaita has for its domain the mainstream Hinduism, whereas the other schools of Vedanta are associated with the different sects of Hinduism.

Before taking up a study of the basic principles of Advaita Vedanta it is necessary to keep in mind two points. One is the distinction between Advaita as an experience and Advaita as a philosophy.

As a direct transcendental spiritual experience, Advaita marks the highest point of spiritual realization a human being can attain. In that climactic experience the distinction between the individual and the cosmic is lost, and the distinctions between the knower, the thing known, and knowledge disappear. It is 'Advaita as experience' that forms the main theme of the Upanishads.

'Advaita as a philosophy' is a conceptual framework that attempts to explain how the impersonal Absolute appears as the phenomenal world and individual selves. The twelfth-century Advaita writer Sriharsha says in the introduction to his famous work Khandana-Khanda-Khadya that the purpose of philosophy, *sastrartha*, is to determine the nature of truth, *tattva-nor aya*, and victory over the opponent, *vadi-vijaya*. Acharya Shankara himself devotes a considerable part of his commentaries to refuting the views of opponents. In the present article we confine our discussion to the philosophical aspect of Advaita.

The second point to be kept in mind is that, although Advaita Philosophy is built on the immutable and indestructible foundation of timeless truths and laws, its superstructure of concepts underwent several changes during different periods in the history of Hinduism. Four main phases may be seen in the development of Advaita philosophy.

- i) **Advaita of the Upanishads** . As stated earlier, this is the experiential aspect of Advaita.
- ii) **Advaita of Shankara** : It is well known that the edifice of Advaita philosophy, which towers over all other systems of philosophy, was built by Acharya Shankara in the eighth century. Shankara's main endeavour was to establish the non-dual nature of Brahman as the ultimate Reality. His most original contribution, however, was the introduction of the concept of a cosmic negative principle known as *maya* or *ajnana*, ignorance, in order to explain the origin of the universe and the existence of duality in the phenomenal world without affecting the non-dual nature of Brahman.
- iii) **Post-Shankara Advaita** This phase extends over a long period, from the ninth century to the sixteenth. The writers on Advaita Vedanta of this period include eminent thinkers like Padmapada, Sureshwara, Vachaspati, Prakashatman, Vimuktatman, Sarvajnatman, Sriharsha, Chitsukham Madhusudana, and others, who added several new concepts into the philosophical framework of Advaita Vedanta, During this period Advaita Vedanta split into three streams or schools. These are: (a) the Vartika School, based on the views of Sureshwara; (b) the Vivarana schools, based on the views of Padmapada and Prakashatman; and (c) the Bhamati school, based on the views of vachaspati Mishra. The philosophy of Advaita underwent great refinement and intellectual sophistry during the post-Shankara phase. However, the focus of discussions shifted from Brahman to *maya* or *ajnana*.

- iv) **The Modern Phase of Advaita** . The modern phase in the development of Advaita Vedanta was inaugurated by Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda. They introduced several important changes in the understanding of Advaita in order to make it more relevant to the needs and conditions of the modern world. Some of the changes brought about by them are briefly stated below.
- The experiential aspect of Vedanta has come to be stressed, as it was during the Vedic period, more than the philosophy aspect.
  - Harmony of the Advaitic view with the views of other schools of Vedanta has been established by accepting all views as representing different stages in the realization of Brahman. This has put an end to unnecessary polemical attacks and sectarian squabbles within the fold of Vedanta.
  - The older form of Advaita gave greater importance to the transcendent aspect of Brahman, whereas the new view on Advaita gives greater importance to the immanent aspect.
  - Swami Vivekananda found immense practical significance for Advaita Vedanta in solving the individual and collective problems of day-to-day life, Swamiji has shown how Advaitic knowledge can serve as the basis of morality, basis of inner strength and courage, and as the basis for social justice and equality as well. Above all, Advaita provides the basis for Sri Ramakrishna's message of 'Service to man as service to God', *sivajnane jiva-seva*, which swami Vivekananda popularized as the new gospel of social service. All the service activities of the Ramakrishna Math and mission are inspired by this gospel of service.
  - Swami Vivekananda has brought about the reconciliation of Advaita Vedanta with modern science. Furthermore, swamiji showed that Vedanta itself is a science- the science of consciousness.
  - Swamiji isolated the universal principles of Advaita Vedanta from the mythological, institutional, and cultic aspects of its parent matrix in Hinduism and converted the universal principles of Advaita into a universal religion-which in the modern idiom means universal spirituality – for all humanity.

### Swami Vivekananda on Hinduism

Swami Vivekananda was very proud of Indian heritage. In his words, "when a man has begun to hate himself, then the last blow has come. When a man has begun to be ashamed of his ancestors, the end has come. Here am I, one of the least of the Hindu race, yet proud to call myself a Hindu, I am proud that I am one of your unworthy servants. I am proud that I am a country man of yours; ..... You, the descendants of the most glorious Rishis the world ever saw. Therefore, have faith in yourself; be proud of your ancestors, instead of being ashamed of the,"

Swami Vivekananda's claim that Vedanta contained elements of a universal religion was based upon five propositions.

- It was perfectly impersonal. It was based upon principles and not upon persons.
- Other religions have one set of rules while Vedanta was suited to all levels of religious aspirations and progress.
- Ethical values of Vedanta could appeal to rational mind of the west. Not universal brotherhood but universal selfhood is our motto, said Vivekananda.
- Principles of Vedanta were in harmony with the conclusions of science.
- Vedanta created a sharp trichotomy between the three different aspects of religion, namely, philosophy, mythology and rituals. Hinduism is not just a name which covers a multitude of different faiths, but when we turn our attention to the spiritual life, devotion, and endeavour which lie behind the creeds, we realize the unity, the indefinable self-identity, which, however, is by no means static or absolute. These ideas of Hinduism run through all its stages, from the earliest to the latest, from the lowest to the highest. As life is present in every stages of a plant's growth and it is always the same life, though it is more fully expressed in the developed tree than in the first push of the tender blade. Therefore, in the Hindu religion there must be a common element, which makes every stage and every movement an expression of the religion.<sup>60</sup> However, the sources of Indian intellectuals were not exclusively western but traditional influences were also equally present. As a

result, the alternate modernity they advocated was a blend of traditional as well as western. Solution was found either in revivalism or in alternate modernity.

The most distinguishing feature of Hinduism was that religion permeated the social order. It was the dynamo of society, the ideology of everyday life. Its ordinances were social binding. Art and Literature were essentially religious. Institutions were accepted as divinely inspired. The whole structure of Hindu life- the joint family system, the village community, the caste system, had the sanction of the gods.

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