

Vivekananda Lectures – Vedantism (Colomba. January 24, 1897)

The following address of welcome from the Hindus of Jaffna was presented to Swami Vivekananda:

SRIMAT VIVEKANANDA SWAMI

REVERED SIR,

We, the inhabitants of Jaffna professing the Hindu religion, desire to offer you a most hearty welcome to our land, the chief centre of Hinduism in Ceylon, and to express our thankfulness for your kind acceptance of our invitation to visit this part of Lanka. Our ancestors settled here from Southern India, more than two thousand years ago, and brought with them their religion, which was patronised by the Tamil kings of Jaffna; but when their government was displaced by that of the Portuguese and the Dutch, the observance of religious rites was interfered with, public religious worship was prohibited, and the Sacred Temples, including two of the most far-famed Shrines, were razed to the ground by the cruel hand of persecution. In spite of the persistent attempts of these nations to force upon our forefathers the Christian religion, they clung to their old faith firmly, and have transmitted it to us as the noblest of our heritages. Now under the rule of Great Britain, not only has there been a great and intelligent revival, but the sacred edifices have been, and are being, restored. We take this opportunity to express our deep-felt gratitude for your noble and disinterested labours in the cause of our religion in carrying the light of truth, as revealed in the Vedas, to the Parliament of Religions, in disseminating the truths of the Divine Philosophy of India in America and England, and in making the Western world acquainted with the truths of Hinduism and thereby bringing the West in closer touch with the East.

We also express our thankfulness to you for initiating a movement for the revival of our ancient religion in this materialistic age when there is a decadence of faith and a disregard for search after spiritual truth. We cannot adequately express our indebtedness to you for making the people of the West know the catholicity of our religion and for impressing upon the minds of the savants of the West the truth that there are more things in the Philosophy of the Hindus than are dreamt of in the Philosophy of the West. We need hardly assure you that we have been carefully watching the progress of your Mission in the West and always heartily rejoicing at your devotedness and successful labours in the field of religion. The appreciative references made by the press in the great centres of intellectual activity, moral growth, and religious inquiry in the West, to you and to your valuable contributions to our religious literature, bear eloquent testimony to your noble and magnificent efforts. We beg to express our heartfelt gratification at your visit to our land and to hope that we, who, in common with you, look to the Vedas as the foundation of all true spiritual knowledge, may have many more occasions of seeing you in our midst. May God, who has hitherto crowned your noble work with conspicuous success, spare you long, giving you vigour and strength to continue your noble Mission.

We remain, Revered Sir, Yours faithfully, . . . for and on behalf of the HINDUS OF JAFFNA.

An eloquent reply was given, and on the following evening the Swami lectured on Vedantism, a report of which is here appended: The subject is very large and the time is short; a full analysis of the religion of the Hindus is impossible in one lecture. I will, therefore, present before you the salient points of our religion in as simple language as I can. The word Hindu, by which it is the fashion nowadays to style ourselves, has lost all its meaning, for this word merely meant those who lived on the other side of the river Indus (in Sanskrit, Sindhu). This name was murdered into Hindu by the ancient Persians, and all people living on the other side of the river Sindhu were called by them Hindus. Thus this word has come down to us; and during the Mohammedan rule we took up the word ourselves. There may not be any harm in using the word of course; but, as I have said, it has lost its significance, for you may mark that all the people who live on this side of the Indus in modern times do not follow the same religion as they did in ancient times. The word, therefore, covers not only Hindus proper, but Mohammedans, Christians, Jains, and other people who live in India. I therefore, would not use the word Hindu.

What word should we use then? The other words which alone we can use are either the Vaidikas, followers of the Vedas, or better still, the Vedantists, followers of the Vedanta. Most of the great religions of the world owe allegiance to certain books which they believe are the words of God or some other supernatural beings, and which are the basis of their religion. Now of all these books, according to the modern savants of the West, the oldest are the Vedas of the Hindus. A little understanding, therefore, is necessary about the Vedas. This mass of writing called the Vedas is not the utterance of persons. Its date has never been fixed, can never be fixed, and, according to us, the Vedas are eternal. There is one salient point which I want you to remember, that all the other religions of the world claim their authority as being delivered by a Personal God or a number of personal beings, angels, or special messengers of God, unto certain persons; while the claim of the Hindus is that the Vedas do not owe their authority to anybody, they are themselves the authority, being eternal — the knowledge of God. They were never written, never created, they have existed throughout time; just as creation is infinite and eternal, without beginning and without end, so is the knowledge of God without beginning and without end. And this knowledge is what is meant by the Vedas (Vid to know). The mass of knowledge called the Vedanta was discovered by personages called Rishis, and the Rishi is defined as a Mantra-drashtâ, a seer of thought; not that the thought was his own. Whenever you hear that a certain passage of the Vedas came from a certain Rishi never think that he wrote it or created it out of his mind; he was the seer of the thought which already existed; it existed in the universe eternally. This sage was the discoverer; the Rishis were spiritual discoverers.

This mass of writing, the Vedas, is divided principally into two parts, the Karma Kânda and the Jnâna Kânda — the work portion and the knowledge portion, the ceremonial and the spiritual. The work portion consists of various sacrifices; most of them of late have been given up as not practicable under present circumstances, but others remain to the present day in some shape or other. The main ideas of the Karma Kanda, which consists of the duties of man, the duties of the student, of the householder, of the recluse, and the various duties of the different stations of life, are followed more or less down to the present day. But the spiritual portion of our religion is in the second part, the Jnana Kanda, the Vedanta, the end of the Vedas, the gist, the goal of the Vedas. The essence of the knowledge of the Vedas was called by the name of Vedanta, which comprises the Upanishads; and all the sects of India — Dualists, Qualified-Monists, Monists, or the Shaivites, Vaishnavites, Shâktas, Sauras, Gânapatyas, each one that dares to come within the fold of Hinduism — must acknowledge the Upanishads of the Vedas. They can have their own interpretations and can interpret them in their own way, but they must obey the authority. That is why we want to use the word Vedantist instead of Hindu. All the philosophers of India who are orthodox have to acknowledge the authority of the Vedanta; and all our present-day religions, however crude some of them may appear to be, however inexplicable some of their purposes may seem, one who understands them and studies them can trace them back to the ideas of the Upanishads.

So deeply have these Upanishads sunk into our race that those of you who study the symbology of the crudest religion of the Hindus will be astonished to find sometimes figurative expressions of the Upanishads — the Upanishads become symbolised after a time into figures and so forth. Great spiritual and philosophical ideas in the Upanishads are today with us, converted into household worship in the form of symbols. Thus the various symbols now used by us, all come from the Vedanta, because in the Vedanta they are used as figures, and these ideas spread among the nation and permeated it throughout until they became part of their everyday life as symbols. Next to the Vedanta come the Smritis. These also are books written by sages, but the authority of the Smritis is subordinate to that of the Vedanta, because they stand in the same relation with us as the scriptures of the other religions stand with regard to them. We admit that the Smritis have been written by particular sages; in that sense they are the same as the scriptures of other religions, but these Smritis are not final authority. If there is any thing in a Smriti which contradicts the Vedanta, the Smriti is to be rejected — its authority is gone. These Smritis, we see again, have varied from time to time. We read that such and such Smriti should have authority in the Satya Yuga, such and such in the Tretâ Yuga, some in the Dwâpara Yuga, and some in the Kali Yuga, and so on. As essential conditions changed, as various circumstances came to

have their influence on the race, manners and customs had to be changed, and these Smritis, as mainly regulating the manners and customs of the nation, had also to be changed from time to time. This is a point I specially ask you to remember.

The principles of religion that are in the Vedanta are unchangeable. Why? Because they are all built upon the eternal principles that are in man and nature; they can never change. Ideas about the soul, going to heaven, and so on can never change; they were the same thousands of years ago, they are the same today, they will be the same millions of years hence. But those religious practices which are based entirely upon our social position and correlation must change with the changes in society. Such an order, therefore, would be good and true at a certain period and not at another. We find accordingly that a certain food is allowed at one time and not another, because the food was suitable for that time; but climate and other things changed various other circumstances required to be met, so the Smriti changed the food and other things. Thus it naturally follows that if in modern times our society requires changes to be made, they must be met, and sages will come and show us the way how to meet them; but not one jot of the principles of our religion will be changed; they will remain intact.

Then there are the Purânas. — which means, the Puranas are of five characteristics — that which treats of history, of cosmology, with various symbolical illustration of philosophical principles, and so forth. These were written to popularise the religion of the Vedas. The language in which the Vedas are written is very ancient, and even among scholars very few can trace the date of these books. The Puranas were written in the language of the people of that time, what we call modern Sanskrit. They were then meant not for scholars, but for the ordinary people; and ordinary people cannot understand philosophy. Such things were given unto them in concrete form, by means of the lives of saints and kinds and great men and historical events that happened to the race etc. The sages made use of these things to illustrate the eternal principles of religion. There are still other books, the Tantras. These are very much like Puranas in some respects, and in some of them there is an attempt to revive the old sacrificial ideas of the Karma Kanda. All these books constitute the scriptures of the Hindus. When there is such a mass of sacred books in a nation and a race which has devoted the greatest part of its energies to the thought of philosophy and spirituality (nobody knows for how many thousands of years), it is quite natural that there should be so many sects; indeed it is a wonder that there are not thousands more.

These sects differ very much from each other in certain points. We shall not have time to understand the differences between these sects and all the spiritual details about them; therefore I shall take up the common grounds, the essential principles of all these sects which every Hindu must believe. The first is the question of creation, that this nature, Prakriti, Mâyâ is infinite, without beginning. It is not that this world was created the other day, not that a God came and created the world and since that time has been sleeping; for that cannot be. The creative energy is still going on. God is eternally creating — is never at rest. Remember the passage in the Gita where Krishna says, "If I remain at rest for one moment, this universe will be destroyed." If that creative energy which is working all around us, day and night, stops for a second, the whole thing falls to the ground. There never was a time when that energy did not work throughout the universe, but there is the law of cycles, Pralaya. Our Sanskrit word for creation, properly translated, should be projection and not creation. For the word creation in the English language has unhappily got that fearful, that most crude idea of something coming out of nothing, creation out of nonentity, non-existence becoming existence, which, of course, I would not insult you by asking you to believe. Our word, therefore, is projection. The whole of this nature exists, it becomes finer, subsides; and then after a period of rest, as it were, the whole thing is again projected forward, and the same combination, the same evolution, the same manifestations appear and remain playing, as it were, for a certain time, only again to break into pieces, to become finer and finer, until the whole thing subsides, and again comes out. Thus it goes on backwards and forwards with a wave-like motion throughout eternity.

Time, space, and causation are all within this nature. To say, therefore, that it had a beginning is utter nonsense. No question can occur as to its beginning or its end. Therefore wherever in our scriptures the words beginning and end are used, you must remember that it means the beginning and the end of one particular cycle; no more than that. What makes this creation? God. What do I mean by the use of the English word God? Certainly not the word as ordinarily used in English — a good deal of difference. There is no other suitable word in English. I would rather confine myself to the Sanskrit word Brahman. He is the general cause of all these manifestations. What is this Brahman? He is eternal, eternally pure, eternally awake, the almighty, the all-knowing, the all-merciful, the omnipresent, the formless, the partless. He creates this universe. If he is always creating and holding up this universe, two difficulties arise. We see that there is partiality in the universe. One person is born happy, and another unhappy; one is rich, and another poor; this shows partiality. Then there is cruelty also, for here the very condition of life is death. One animal tears another to pieces, and every man tries to get the better of his own brother.

This competition, cruelty, horror, and sighs rending hearts day and night is the state of things in this world of ours. If this be the creation of a God, that God is worse than cruel, worse than any devil that man ever imagined. Ay! says the Vedanta, it is not the fault of God that this partiality exists, that this competition exists. Who makes it? We ourselves. There is a cloud shedding its rain on all fields alike. But it is only the field that is well cultivated, which gets the advantage of the shower; another field, which has not been tilled or taken care of cannot get that advantage. It is not the fault of the cloud. The mercy of God is eternal and unchangeable; it is we that make the differentiation. But how can this difference of some being born happy and some unhappy be explained? They do nothing to make out that differences! Not in this life, but they did in their last birth and the difference is explained by this action in the previous life. We now come to the second principle on which we all agree, not only all Hindus, but all Buddhists and all Jains. We all agree that life is eternal. It is not that it has sprung out of nothing, for that cannot be. Such a life would not be worth having. Everything that has a beginning in time must end in time. Of life began but yesterday, it must end tomorrow, and annihilation is the result. Life must have been existing. It does not now require much acumen to see that, for all the sciences of modern times have been coming round to our help, illustrating from the material world the principles embodied in our scriptures.

You know it already that each one of us is the effect of the infinite past; the child is ushered into the world not as something flashing from the hands of nature, as poets delight so much to depict, but he has the burden of an infinite past; for good or evil he comes to work out his own past deeds. That makes the differentiation. This is the law of Karma. Each one of us is the maker of his own fate. This law knocks on the head at once all doctrines of predestination and fate and gives us the only means of reconciliation between God and man. We, we, and none else, are responsible for what we suffer. We are the effects, and we are the causes. We are free therefore. If I am unhappy, it has been of my own making, and that very thing shows that I can be happy if I will. If I am impure, that is also of my own making, and that very thing shows that I can be pure if I will. The human will stands beyond all circumstance. Before it — the strong, gigantic, infinite will and freedom in man — all the powers, even of nature, must bow down, succumb, and become its servants. This is the result of the law of Karma. The next question, of course, naturally would be: What is the soul? We cannot understand God in our scriptures without knowing the soul. There have been attempts in India, and outside of India too, to catch a glimpse of the beyond by studying external nature, and we all know what an awful failure has been the result. Instead of giving us a glimpse of the beyond, the more we study the material world, the more we tend to become materialised.

The more we handle the material world, even the little spirituality which we possessed before vanishes. Therefore that is not the way to spirituality, to knowledge of the Highest; but it must come through the heart, the human soul. The external workings do not teach us anything about the beyond, about the Infinite, it is only the internal that can do so. Through soul, therefore, the analysis of the human soul alone, can we understand God. There are differences of opinion as to the nature of the human soul among the various sects in India, but

there are certain points of agreement. We all agree that souls are without beginning and without end, and immortal by their very nature; also that all powers, blessing, purity, omnipresence, omniscience are buried in each soul. That is a grand idea we ought to remember. In every man and in every animal, however weak or wicked, great or small, resides the same omnipresent, omniscient soul. The difference is not in the soul, but in the manifestation. Between me and the smallest animal, the difference is only in manifestation, but as a principle he is the same as I am, he is my brother, he has the same soul as I have.

This is the greatest principle that India has preached. The talk of the brotherhood of man becomes in India the brotherhood of universal life, of animals, and of all life down to the little ants — all these are our bodies. Even as our scripture says, "Thus the sage, knowing that the same Lord inhabits all bodies, will worship every body as such." That is why in India there have been such merciful ideas about the poor, about animals, about everybody, and everything else. This is one of the common grounds about our ideas of the soul. Naturally, we come to the idea of God. One thing more about the soul. Those who study the English language are often deluded by the words, soul and mind. Our Âtman and soul are entirely different things. What we call Manas, the mind, the Western people call soul. The West never had the idea of soul until they got it through Sanskrit philosophy, some twenty years ago. The body is here, beyond that is the mind, yet the mind is not the Atman; it is the fine body, the Sukshma Sharira, made of fine particles, which goes from birth to death, and so on; but behind the mind is the Atman, the soul, the Self of man. It cannot be translated by the word soul or mind, so we have to use the word Atman, or, as Western philosophers have designated it, by the word Self. Whatever word you use, you must keep it clear in your mind that the Atman is separate from the mind, as well as from the body, and that this Atman goes through birth and death, accompanied by the mind, the Sukshma Sharira. And when the time comes that it has attained to all knowledge and manifested itself to perfection, then this going from birth to death ceases for it.

Then it is at liberty either to keep that mind, the Sukshma Sharira, or to let it go for ever, and remain independent and free throughout all eternity. The goal of the soul is freedom. That is one peculiarity of our religion. We also have heavens and hells too; but these are not infinite, for in the very nature of things they cannot be. If there were any heavens, they would be only repetitions of this world of ours on a bigger scale, with a little more happiness and a little more enjoyment, but that is all the worse for the soul. There are many of these heavens. Persons who do good works here with the thought of reward, when they die, are born again as gods in one of these heavens, as Indra and others. These gods are the names of certain states. They also had been men, and by good work they have become gods; and those different names that you read of, such as Indra and so on, are not the names of the same person. There will be thousands of Indras. Nahusha was a great king, and when he died, he became Indra. It is a position; one soul becomes high and takes the Indra position and remains in it only a certain time; he then dies and is born again as man. But the human body is the highest of all.

Some of the gods may try to go higher and give up all ideas of enjoyment in heavens; but, as in this world, wealth and position and enjoyment delude the vast majority, so do most of the gods become deluded also, and after working out their good Karma, they fall down and become human beings again. This earth, therefore, is the Karma Bhumi; it is this earth from which we attain to liberation. So even these heavens are not worth attaining to. What is then worth having? Mukti, freedom. Even in the highest of heavens, says our scripture, you are a slave; what matters it if you are a king for twenty thousand years? So long as you have a body, so long as you are a slave to happiness, so long as time works on you, space works on you, you are a slave. The idea, therefore, is to be free of external and internal nature. Nature must fall at your feet, and you must trample on it and be free and glorious by going beyond. No more is there life; therefore more is there death. No more enjoyment; therefore no more misery. It is bliss unspeakable, in destructible, beyond everything. What we call happiness and good here are but particles of that eternal Bliss. And this eternal Bliss is our goal. The soul is also sexless; we cannot say of the Atman that it is a man or a woman.

Sex belongs to the body alone. All such ideas, therefore, as man or woman, are a delusion when spoken with regard to the Self, and are only proper when spoken of the body. So are the ideas of age. It never ages; the ancient One is always the same. How did It come down to earth? There is but one answer to that in our scriptures. Ignorance is the cause of all this bondage. It is through ignorance that we have become bound; knowledge will cure it by taking us to the other side. How will that knowledge come? Through love, Bhakti; by the worship of God, by loving all beings as the temples of God. He resides within them. Thus, with that intense love will come knowledge, and ignorance will disappear, the bonds will break, and the soul will be free. There are two ideas of God in our scriptures — the one, the personal; and the other, the impersonal. The idea of the Personal God is that He is the omnipresent creator, preserver, and destroyer of everything, the eternal Father and Mother of the universe, but One who is eternally separate from us and from all souls; and liberation consists in coming near to Him and living in Him.

Then there is the other idea of the Impersonal, where all those adjectives are taken away as superfluous, as illogical and there remains an impersonal, omnipresent Being who cannot be called a knowing being, because knowledge only belongs to the human mind. He cannot be called a thinking being, because that is a process of the weak only. He cannot be called a reasoning being, because reasoning is a sign of weakness. He cannot be called a creating being, because none creates except in bondage. What bondage has He? None works except for the fulfilment of desires; what desires has He? None works except it be to supply some wants; what wants has He? In the Vedas it is not the word "He" that is used, but "It", for "He" would make an invidious distinction, as if God were a man. "It", the impersonal, is used, and this impersonal "It" is preached. This system is called the Advaita. And what are our relations with this Impersonal Being? — that we are He. We and He are one. Every one is but a manifestation of that Impersonal, the basis of all being, and misery consists in thinking of ourselves as different from this Infinite, Impersonal Being; and liberation consists in knowing our unity with this wonderful Impersonality. These, in short, are the two ideas of God that we find in our scriptures. Some remarks ought to be made here. It is only through the idea of the Impersonal God that you can have any system of ethics. In every nation the truth has been preached from the most ancient times — love your fellow-beings as yourselves — I mean, love human beings as yourselves. In India it has been preached, "love all beings as yourselves"; we make no distinction between men and animals. But no reason was forthcoming, no one knew why it would be good to love other beings as ourselves.

And the reason, why, is there in the idea of the Impersonal God; you understand it when you learn that the whole world is one — the oneness of the universe — the solidarity of all life — that in hurting any one I am hurting myself, in loving any one I am loving myself. Hence we understand why it is that we ought not to hurt others. The reason for ethics, therefore, can only be had from this ideal of the Impersonal God. Then there is the question of the position of the Personal God in it. I understand the wonderful flow of love that comes from the idea of a Personal God, I thoroughly appreciate the power and potency of Bhakti on men to suit the needs of different times. What we now want in our country, however, is not so much of weeping, but a little strength. What a mine of strength is in this Impersonal God, when all superstitions have been thrown overboard, and man stands on his feet with the knowledge — I am the Impersonal Being of the world! What can make me afraid? I care not even for nature's laws. Death is a joke to me. Man stands on the glory of his own soul, the infinite, the eternal, the deathless — that soul which no instruments can pierce, which no air can dry, nor fire burn, no water melt, the infinite, the birthless, the deathless, without beginning and without end, before whose magnitude the suns and moons and all their systems appear like drops in the ocean, before whose glory space melts away into nothingness and time vanishes into non-existence. This glorious soul we must believe in. Out of that will come power.

Whatever you think, that you will be. If you think yourselves weak, weak you will be; if you think yourselves strong, strong you will be; if you think yourselves impure, impure you will be; if you think yourselves pure, pure

you will be. This teaches us not to think ourselves as weak, but as strong, omnipotent, omniscient. No matter that I have not expressed it yet, it is in me. All knowledge is in me, all power, all purity, and all freedom. Why cannot I express this knowledge? Because I do not believe in it. Let me believe in it, and it must and will come out. This is what the idea of the Impersonal teaches. Make your children strong from their very childhood; teach them not weakness, nor forms, but make them strong; let them stand on their feet — bold, all-conquering, all-suffering; and first of all, let them learn of the glory of the soul. That you get alone in the Vedanta — and there alone. It has ideas of love and worship and other things which we have in other religions, and more besides; but this idea of the soul is the life-giving thought, the most wonderful. There and there alone is the great thought that is going to revolutionise the world and reconcile the knowledge of the material world with religion. Thus I have tried to bring before you the salient points of our religion — the principles. I have only to say a few words about the practice and the application. As we have seen, under the circumstances existing in India, naturally many sects must appear. As a fact, we find that there are so many sects in India, and at the same time we know this mysterious fact that these sects do not quarrel with each other. The Shaivite does not say that every Vaishnavite is going to be damned, nor the Vaishnavite that every Shaivite will be damned. The Shaivite says, this is my path, and you have yours; at the end we must come together. They all know that in India.

This is the theory of *Ishta*. It has been recognised in the most ancient times that there are various forms of worshipping God. It is also recognised that different natures require different methods. Your method of coming to God may not be my method, possibly it might hurt me. Such an idea as that there is but one way for everybody is injurious, meaningless, and entirely to be avoided. Woe unto the world when everyone is of the same religious opinion and takes to the same path. Then all religions and all thought will be destroyed. Variety is the very soul of life. When it dies out entirely, creation will die. When this variation in thought is kept up, we must exist; and we need not quarrel because of that variety. Your way is very good for you, but not for me. My way is good for me, but not for you. My way is called in Sanskrit, my "*Ishta*". Mind you, we have no quarrel with any religion in the world.

We have each our *Ishta*. But when we see men coming and saying, "This is the only way", and trying to force it on us in India, we have a word to say; we laugh at them. For such people who want to destroy their brothers because they seem to follow a different path towards God — for them to talk of love is absurd. Their love does not count for much. How can they preach of love who cannot bear another man to follow a different path from their own? If that is love, what is hatred? We have no quarrel with any religion in the world, whether it teaches men to worship Christ, Buddha, or Mohammed, or any other prophet. "Welcome, my brother," the Hindu says, "I am going to help you; but you must allow me to follow my way too. That is my *Ishta*. Your way is very good, no doubt; but it may be dangerous for me. My own experience tells me what food is good for me, and no army of doctors can tell me that. So I know from my own experience what path is the best for me." That is the goal, the *Ishta*, and, therefore, we say that if a temple, or a symbol, or an image helps you to realise the Divinity within, you are welcome to it. Have two hundred images if you like.

If certain forms and formularies help you to realise the Divine, God speed you; have, by all means, whatever forms, and whatever temples, and whatever ceremonies you want to bring you nearer to God. But do not quarrel about them; the moment you quarrel, you are not going Godward, you are going backward, towards the brutes. These are a few ideas in our religion. It is one of inclusion of every one, exclusion of none. Though our castes and our institutions are apparently linked with our religion, they are not so. These institutions have been necessary to protect us as a nation, and when this necessity for self-preservation will no more exist, they will die a natural death. But the older I grow, the better I seem to think of these time-honoured institutions of India. There was a time when I used to think that many of them were useless and worthless; but the older I grew, the more I seem to feel a diffidence in cursing any one of them, for each one of them is the embodiment of the experience of centuries. A child of but yesterday, destined to die the day after tomorrow, comes to me and asks me to change all my plans; and if I hear the advice of that baby and change all my surroundings

according to his ideas, I myself should be a fool, and no one else. Much of the advice that is coming to us from different countries is similar to this. Tell these wiseacres: "I will hear you when you have made a stable society yourselves. You cannot hold on to one idea for two days, you quarrel and fail; you are born like moths in the spring and die like them in five minutes. You come up like bubbles and burst like bubbles too. First form a stable society like ours.

First make laws and institutions that remain undiminished in their power through scores of centuries. Then will be the time to talk on the subject with you, but till then, my friend, you are only a giddy child." I have finished what I had to say about our religion. I will end by reminding you of the one pressing necessity of the day. Praise be to Vyâsa, the great author of the Mahâbhârata, that in this Kali Yuga there is one great work. The Tapas and the other hard Yogas that were practiced in other Yugas do not work now. What is needed in this Yuga is giving, helping others. What is meant by Dana? The highest of gifts is the giving of spiritual knowledge, the next is the giving of secular knowledge, and the next is the saving of life, the last is giving food and drink. He who gives spiritual knowledge, saves the soul from many end many a birth. He who gives secular knowledge opens the eyes of human beings to wards spiritual knowledge, and far below these rank all other gifts, even the saving of life. Therefore it is necessary that you learn this and note that all other kinds of work are of much less value than that of imparting spiritual knowledge.

The highest and greatest help is that given in the dissemination of spiritual knowledge. There is an eternal fountain of spirituality in our scriptures, and nowhere on earth, except in this land of renunciation, do we find such noble examples of practical spirituality. I have had a little experience of the world. Believe me, there is much talking in other lands; but the practical man of religion, who has carried it into his life, is here and here alone. Talking is not religion; parrots may talk, machines may talk nowadays. But show me the life of renunciation, of spirituality, of all-suffering, of love infinite. This kind of life indicates a spiritual man. With such ideas and such noble practical examples in our country, it would be a great pity if the treasures in the brains and hearts of all these great Yogis were not brought out to become the common property of every one, rich and poor, high and low; not only in India, but they must be thrown broadcast all over the world. This is one of our greatest duties, and you will find that the more you work to help others, the more you help yourselves.

The one vital duty incumbent on you, if you really love your religion, if you really love your country, is that you must struggle hard to be up and doing, with this one great idea of bringing out the treasures from your closed books and delivering them over to their rightful heirs. And above all, one thing is necessary. Ay, for ages we have been saturated with awful jealousy; we are always getting jealous of each other. Why has this man a little precedence, and not I? Even in the worship of God we want precedence, to such a state of slavery have we come. This is to be avoided. If there is any crying sin in India at this time it is this slavery. Every one wants to command, and no one wants to obey; and this is owing to the absence of that wonderful Brahmacharya system of yore. First, learn to obey. The command will come by itself. Always first learn to be a servant, and then you will be fit to be a master. Avoid this jealousy and you will do great works that have yet to be done. Our ancestors did most wonderful works, and we look back upon their work with veneration and pride. But we also are going to do great deeds, and let others look back with blessings and pride upon us as their ancestors. With the blessing of the Lord every one here will yet do such deeds that will eclipse those of our ancestors, great and glorious as they may have been.

More at www.LakshmiNarayanLenasia.com

<http://lakshminarayanlenasia.com/downloads-2/articles/>

