

Swami Vivekananda – Science and Vedic Spirituality

By: Disha Jain

“Certainly it is true that man cannot be simply an evolution. Every evolution presupposes an involution. This involution and evolution is on throughout the whole of nature,” said Swami Vivekananda at the Parliament of Religions in London, in September of 1893. Swami Vivekananda believed that there is no one common ancestor we are all descended from, as Darwin said, because the people of this planet are too diverse for Darwin’s theory to be completely correct. Swamiji taught about science, and about how similar the two actually are. Some of his teachings linked science with Vedic Spirituality: he believed that the goal of science is to find unity, and he also believed in the relativity of motion, teaching his disciples that it was evidence of the absolution of the universe. When Swamiji taught in the West, his teachings of the Samkhya theory struck his disciples as very similar to physics. His teachings are very significant, because, with his teachings, he was able to closely link science to Vedic Spirituality.

Swami Vivekananda was a disciple of the great Hindu guru, Sri Ramakrishna. During his life as a monk, Swami Vivekananda traveled all through India, learning as much about the people and the country as he possibly could. In 1893, he traveled to London to give a speech at the Parliament of Religions on Sri Ramakrishna’s teachings. He taught about the Upanishads, and various forms of social service (such as the running of hospitals, schools, etc); he also taught a lot about the different sciences and how they related to religion. He traveled and preached for nearly three and a half years after that speech, continuing his teachings on religion and science. Swamiji's teachings on science separated science into different categories – classical science (science following reason, logic, and instinct), and intuitive science (science based on intellect). His teachings of Samkhya and physics impressed scientists like Nikola Tesla, and his teachings of biological science challenged theories such as Darwin’s.

During his time traveling in the West, Vivekananda met American scientist Nikola Tesla. Tesla was very interested in Swamiji’s teachings, and was amazed by how closely the spiritual Samkhya theory mirrored modern day physics. In a letter Swamiji wrote to a friend, he said, "Mr. Tesla was charmed to hear about the Vedantic Prana and Akasha and the Kalpas, which according to him are the only theories modern science can entertain...Mr. Tesla thinks he can demonstrate that mathematically that force and

matter are reducible to potential energy... In that case, the Vedantic cosmology [would] be placed in the surest of foundations". Swami Vivekananda believed Prana and Akasha were the equivalent of energy and matter - and Tesla agreed. In some of Tesla's later writings, such as the unpublished *Man's Greatest Achievement*, he explained his ideas using Prana and Akasha. Tesla failed to prove Vivekananda's Samkhya mathematically; instead, the proof came 10 years later with Einstein's theory of relativity. By that time, however, Swamiji was gone, and there was no one to connect physics and Samkhya.

Vedic Spirituality teaches about the absolute unity of all religions and all gods. It says that God has a thousand names and a thousand faces, and just by knowing one of those names, or by seeing one of those faces, one reaches true enlightenment. One must accept that God has many faces and forms, and that even though God has so many names, there is still only one God, and that that one God is found in the unity of all these faces and forms. Therefore, it can be said that a goal Vedic Spirituality is the finding of perfect unity. As Swamiji said in his speech at the Parliament of Religions, "Science is nothing but the finding of perfect unity. As soon as science would reach perfect unity, it would stop from further progress, because it would reach the goal." He taught that the goal of science was achieving that unity; this would mean that the goals of science and Vedic Spirituality are the same.

It is said in Vedic Spirituality that God is everyone and everything. He is found everywhere, and so, He is the universe. Vedic Spirituality teaches that God – and through Him, the universe – is absolute. Now this is very closely linked to another one of Swami Vivekananda's teachings about science. Swami Vivekananda taught about the relativity of motion. In his talk on *Reason and Religion*, Swami Vivekananda said, "motion is a relative term. I move with regard to the chair, which does not move. There must be at least two to make motion. If this whole universe is taken as a unit there is no motion; with regard to what should it move? Thus the Absolute is unchangeable and immovable, and all the movements and changes are only in the phenomenal world, the limited." Swami Vivekananda believed that when something is in motion, it is only moving in regard to something that does not move. He thus taught that the universe is absolute, because there is no point of view that can make it seem like the

universe is in motion since the universe is everything. And since God is the universe, Swami Vivekananda's teaching is the same as the teaching of Vedic Spirituality.

A simple man, Swami Vivekananda used his time on Earth to spread the teachings of his guru, Sri Ramakrishna. He taught the world that religion and science really weren't so different by connecting science to Vedic Spirituality, a religious teaching that talks about the multiple faces and forms of the one God, who is everything. He also taught that science was the search for unity – and the search for unity is the essence of Vedic Spirituality, and that motion is relative, which means the universe is absolute – and the absolution of the universe is one of the most important teachings of Vedic Spirituality. His teachings showed his disciples the parallels between Samkhya and physics, and his theories have lived on through the ages, patiently waiting for someone else to make the connection.