

ECOSPIRITUALITY AND SUSTAINABILITY: SWAMI VIVEKANANDA'S VISION IN THE POST-COVID ERA

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ABSTRACT

The concept of Ecospirituality blends ecological awareness with spiritual growth, emphasizing harmony between humans, nature, and the cosmos. Swami Vivekananda, one of the most influential spiritual leaders of modern India, offered profound insights into humanity's relationship with nature and the environment. His vision of sustainability was deeply rooted in the principles of Vedanta, where material progress is balanced by spiritual growth and ecological responsibility. This paper tried to explore Swami Vivekananda's thoughts on ecological harmony, sustainability, and human-nature interaction, and assesses their relevance in the post-COVID era. Given the global environmental crises and the disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, Swami Vivekananda's ecospiritual philosophy presents a holistic path for achieving long-term sustainability and spiritual growth.

Keywords: Ecospirituality, Swami Vivekanand, Post-COVID Era, Sustainability

INTRODUCTION

The 21st century is marked by unprecedented environmental degradation, social inequality, and a global health crisis—culminating in the COVID-19 pandemic. As societies worldwide scramble to recover, there is a growing realization that the solutions to these crises cannot lie solely in material or technological advancements but must also incorporate spiritual, philosophical, and ethical principles. One such framework is **ecospirituality**, which integrates ecological consciousness with spiritual wisdom to foster sustainable living.

Swami Vivekananda, a prominent figure of modern Hinduism, highlighted the fundamental interconnectedness of humanity, nature, and the universe. Deeply inspired by Vedantic philosophy his ecological insight advocated for a holistic approach to environment and social well-being. This paper examines Swami Vivekanand's ecospirituality and sustainability vision while exploring its relevance in confronting current global challenges, especially in the post-COVID era.

NEED

The COVID-19 pandemic was one of the most devastating disasters of the 21st century and has imposed a steep health and economic toll. During times of suffering caused by pandemic, religion/spirituality may prove to be a consistent and valuable coping resource. This pandemic not only carried a physical health threat to the public but has also been associated with negative outcomes of mental health. Beyond the materialistic frame of the conventional development paradigm, modern scientific knowledge and modern technology, spiritual education assumes a crucial role as a means of reducing self-centredness, desires and greed for material wealth and creating a loving, caring and compassionate society which is sensitive to the needs of others as well as the environment. There is an urgent need to identify the key strategic dimensions of spiritual economics and the conditions necessary to reconcile spirituality with economic development.

During COVID-19 people actually realised that there is a need for a holistic and sustainable approach to development, which balances material and non-material values with the conviction that humans want to search for happiness and well-being. The theoretical analysis of Swami Vivekananda's writing

and philosophical ideas are needed to emphasize the comparative insights to assess the contemporary relevance of Vivekananda's ecospiritual philosophy in Post-Covid era.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Singh (2021) in his research paper explained that the teachings of Swami Vivekananda in Indian philosophy reveal a deep connection between spirituality, nature, and sustainable living. Vivekananda believed that religion should actually inspire people to respect nature and live in harmony with it. For him, true religion was not about rituals but on inner spiritual awareness and compassion for all living beings. Singh believes this holistic vision has the potential to lead humanity toward global unity and sustainable development and remains relevant to modern environmental concerns.

Gupta and Acharya (2025) highlighted that India's economic vision has consistently been influenced by spiritual traditions including ancient texts, the Bhakti movement and Gandhi's call for self-reliance. They further pointed out that even today cooperatives like Amul and modern initiatives like Atmanirbhar Bharat reflect these values by blending ethical principles with modern innovation. Lastly they suggested that spiritual values such as fairness, self-reliance, and community cooperation can help to create a more inclusive and sustainable path of economic growth.

Objectives

- To explore the ecospirituality and sustainability vision of Swami Vivekanand's teaching.
- Relevance of the teachings of Swami Vivekanand in post-COVID era.

Research Methodology

This research paper is based on qualitative and exploratory approach, drawing on theoretical literature related to Swami Vivekananda's writings, speeches and its deep connection with ecospirituality and sustainability. To examine the relevance of his teachings in the contemporary world in Post-Covid era, various books, journals and reports were explored .

Ecospirituality

Ecospirituality is an evolving area of thought that connects ecological awareness with spiritual values. It is based on the understanding that the well-being of the earth is closely connected to the well-being of individuals and societies. This perspective of interconnectedness emphasises the need for a balance between material advancement and ethical living, suggesting that environmental sustainability is not merely a practical concern but also a moral and spiritual duty. The teachings of Swami Vivekananda resonate strongly with this understanding of ecospirituality. He believed that true human progress cannot be limited to physical or intellectual achievements alone. Instead, true progress must include moral and spiritual upliftment that recognise the sacredness of nature and promote respectful coexistence with nature.

Swami Vivekananda's vision of Ecospirituality can be understood through two central themes:

- **Interconnectedness of existence and environment:** Deeply inspired from vedantic philosophy, Swami Vivekananda emphasized that all forms of life are connected and originate from the same divine source. This perspective highlights the deep and inseparable relationship between human beings and nature and reflects a profound spiritual bond between the two.
- **Moral Responsibility towards the Environment:** Swami Vivekanand believed that spirituality carries ethical responsibility. He viewed human beings as guardians of the Earth, entrusted with its care rather than its exploitation. Such an approach rooted in moral values

with a great sense of care and protection for earth is essential for building a truly sustainable future.

SUSTAINABILITY VISION OF SWAMI VIVEKANANDA

Swami Vivekananda's understanding of sustainability was broad and inclusive, incorporating environmental, social, and spiritual aspects of life. He believed that real progress would emerge not from the exploitation of nature but from learning to live in harmony with it.

1. **Harmony between Materialism and Spiritualism:** Swami Vivekananda emphasised that material success should never take priority over spiritual and ethical growth. He recognised the importance of progress but cautioned that it should not come at the cost of environmental degradation or social disharmony. In his view, sustainable living depends on maintaining a balance between material needs and ethical principles while focusing on long-term collective well-being rather than short-term personal gain.
2. **Individual Responsibility in Promoting Sustainability:** In his teaching, Vivekananda stressed that each person has a role and responsibility in protecting nature. By finding inner peace and practicing self-discipline, individuals can become more aware of and respectful toward the environment. This perspective aligns with modern ideas of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which highlight the role of individual actions and shared responsibility in addressing global environmental challenges and creating a more healthier planet and society.
3. **The Importance of Social and Environmental Justice:** For Swami Vivekanand, real sustainability not only related with preserving and protecting nature but also meant tackling social inequality that causes environmental degradation. He believed we must uplift marginalized communities and ensure that everyone shares in the benefits of progress. This message is even more relevant after COVID, which has made social and economic divides more visible than ever.

RELEVANCE IN THE POST-COVID ERA

The COVID-19 pandemic has a profound impact on global society, exposing deep flaws in environmental and social systems. It has underscored the unsustainable exploitation of nature, the fragility of global supply chains, and the interconnectedness of human health and environmental health. In this context, the ecospiritual teachings of Swami Vivekananda offer a compelling path forward.

1. During the pandemic, when we are all forced to stay indoors to reduce pollution and allow nature to recover. Swami Vivekanand's vision of interconnectedness and emphasis on living in harmony with nature becomes more meaningful and relevant. Societies seek to recover from the damage caused by overusing natural resources for having sustainable living.
2. During the pandemic, it was the poorer and marginalized communities who suffered the most in terms of health and livelihood. Vivekananda's call for social and environmental justice can serve as a guiding light in the post-COVID era. Swami Vivekananda's message of fairness and justice reminds us to build a future where progress lifts everyone and protects the environment, making development truly balanced and compassionate.
3. Swami Vivekananda's philosophy taught us the importance of self-realisation, living with strong moral values, and staying spiritually strong. These qualities are vital for facing the challenges after COVID. As nations try to rebuild, they should not focus only on economic

recovery related to money and growth, but also on inner peace, mental health, and the well-being of all. His message of resilience and balance can guide people and communities to face future challenges with courage and wisdom.

CONCLUSION

As humanity grapples with the complexities of modern life, the insights offered by the spiritual teachings of Swami Vivekanand can guide us toward a more sustainable and harmonious existence. His vision of ecospirituality and sustainability based on the principles of interconnectedness and respect for all life forms are essential for the survival of our planet. The root cause of environmental and social crises often stems from a disconnection from humans and nature. The relevance of swami ji's teaching in post-COVID era can be regained through self-realisation and recognising that their well-being is intrinsically linked to the health of the planet. By embracing these teachings and integrating them into our daily lives, we can cultivate a culture of respect for nature and ensure a sustainable future for generations to come.

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