



Vivekananda Institute of Values (VIVA)

Practical Spirituality for All

Materialism and all its miseries can never be
conquered by materialism.

Swami Vivekananda



LOOKING INWARDS (Materialism and Spiritualism)

The pursuit of material well-being provides us with the comfort and security we need, or so we believe. Many do know that the pursuit of a spiritual life gives strength to deal with the ups and downs of life. We often wonder whether the two ideas of materialism and spiritualism can successfully coexist without a constant tug-of-war on the path best to take. Does spiritualism elevate our material life? Does an overly materialist perspective slow our spiritual growth? Swami Vivekananda has clearly favoured spirituality as a preferred path, without condemning those who need to satisfy their material needs. In our articles this month, our contributors have tried to present thoughtful ideas dealing with the pitfalls of materialism. Do read on and let us know your view.

The Editorial Team

How to Practice Spirituality in this Material World, by Devasis Mukherjee from Gurugram

The March-April page of the 2024 calendar published by Ramakrishna Mission, Hyderabad has the following saying of Swami Vivekananda: "The pleasure of the Self (Atman) is what the world calls religion."

The more our bliss is within, the more spiritual we are. Let us not depend upon the world for pleasure. All spiritual practice is essentially to discover and savour this "joy within".

This quest is extremely difficult for a vast majority of mankind because a long history of biological evolution has moulded us with too much body-consciousness and most of us are obsessed with only the finite and ephemeral pleasures of life. We want creature comforts, power, earthly riches, sensual enjoyment and a long life. In short, we are afraid of renunciation and death.

There is however a brighter side of human nature that leads man to inner fulfilment. These comprise of respect for a moral life, hunger for knowledge and willingness to serve others without any immediate reward. Attaining these noble qualities is the preliminary goal of spiritual practice. These qualities are obtained by consciously striving to reduce once desire for worldly pleasures.

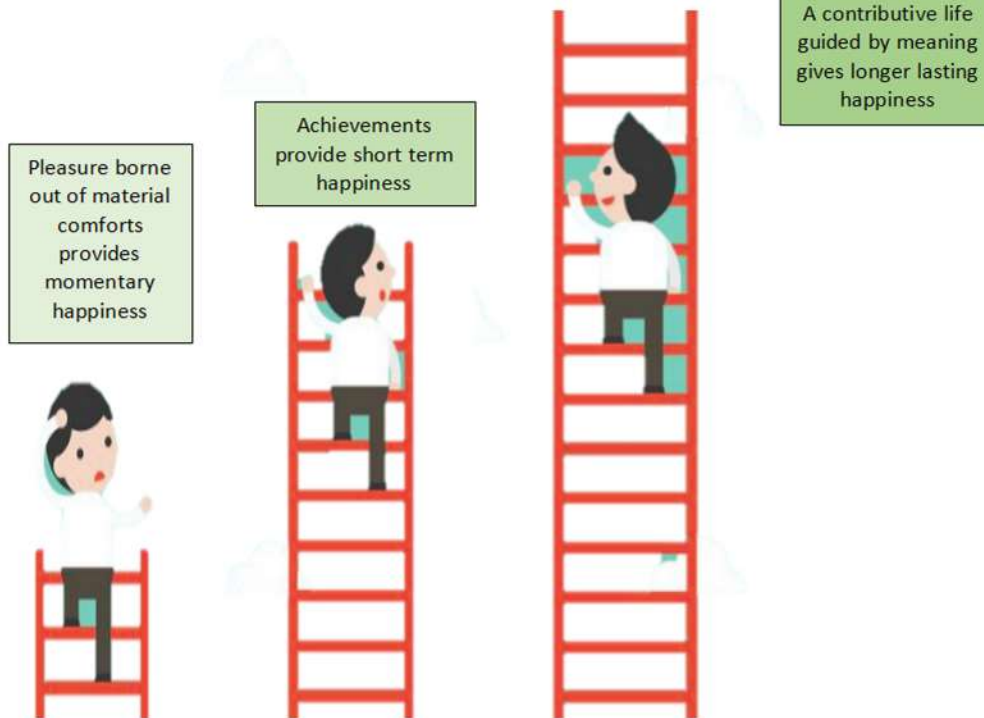
It is only after an individual has attained this noble character, that he is fit enough to directly seek the inner joys of his being through disciplines such as prayers, japa, meditation and selfless service. Through these practices one hopes to first overcome the passions of the mind such as lust, anger etc., and eventually get rid of one's ego. As this struggle progresses and the mind becomes purer, the inner joy reveals itself more and more.

Previous issues of VIVA newsletters (in both English and Hindi) can be accessed at <https://viva.rkmm.org/>



Materialism and meaning, by Nupur Mukherjee from Gurugram

Do you agree?



Money, Position, Prestige and my Life, by Hariom from Lucknow

I try to live by the philosophy of 'simple living, high thinking'. Therefore, I teach myself to think like this:

- 1.Receiving a salary is not the goal of work, rather the manner I do my work is the goal.
- 2.Negotiating for money or what I deserve is not the goal because I believe that focusing on money, position etc weakens my faith in the work I do – to me work itself is a goal to bring out my best as a human being.
- 3.Achieving prestige is a result of work and not the goal.
- 4.Getting attracted to the idea of making some extra money on the side by unethical means is never the goal but sticking to my principles is.

I cannot say right now whether I will follow these principles to the very end, but if I do, only then will I say that materialism did not affect me. My opinion is that people get money, position and prestige in accordance with their 'karma'. Therefore, it is wiser, if we make our work our aim instead of running after money, position and prestige, which aren't within our control. My higher choices I believe, may make my life better and happier



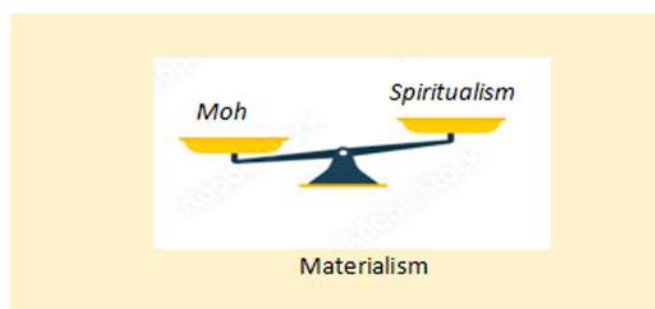


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Materialism and Moh, by Arpita Sud from Gurugram

Materialism has a bad reputation, perhaps rightly so. Enjoying my life amid necessities and luxuries, I shrink from being labelled a materialist! Yet, only a minor percentage of humanity is sincerely able to reject this world of matter with all its temptations. Most of us lose ourselves to the materialism trap, though we may pretend otherwise. Usually 'Moh' quietly steps in, infatuates us in its tight hold, and we are successfully waylaid. I imagine a materialism framework looking something like this.



I believe that the world of matter too is made by the same God who made me. All my endeavours on earth are as dictated by Him and a tribute to Him alone. Hence, I have come to terms with the life I lead. Swami Vivekananda lovingly comes to my rescue showing paths of Karma and Bhakti, Raja and Jnana – giving me choices for the most ordinary of my moments. Until I grow further away from Moh, I breathe easy singing Sant Kabir's words:

साई इतना दीजिए, जा मैं कुटुंब समाए
मैं भी भूखा न रहूँ, साधु न भूखा जाए

(Give me enough my Lord, that neither I go hungry nor the 'holy one')

Reader's Section

Two students of Devi Academy Sr. Sec. School, Chennai shared their thoughts on 'Materialism' with us. The following are their articles full of wisdom. May they continue to shine!

Materialism and well-being are two concepts that often intersect, yet they can also be at odds with each other. Materialism, the pursuit of wealth and possessions, has a complex relationship with well-being, which encompasses physical, mental, and emotional health and satisfaction. Material possessions and wealth can provide a sense of security and comfort, contributing to physical well-being by ensuring access to basic needs such as food, shelter, and healthcare. However, an excessive focus on materialism may lead to negative impacts on overall well-being. The relentless pursuit of wealth and possessions can result in stress, anxiety, and a lack of fulfilment, ultimately harming mental and emotional well-being.

Furthermore, materialism often promotes comparison with others based on possessions and wealth, leading to feelings of inadequacy and decreased self-worth, which can significantly impact overall well-being. Conversely, prioritizing experiences, relationships, and personal growth over material wealth has been linked to greater life satisfaction and overall well-being. Strong social connections, a sense of purpose, and personal fulfilment are key components of well-being that may not necessarily be fulfilled by material possessions alone.

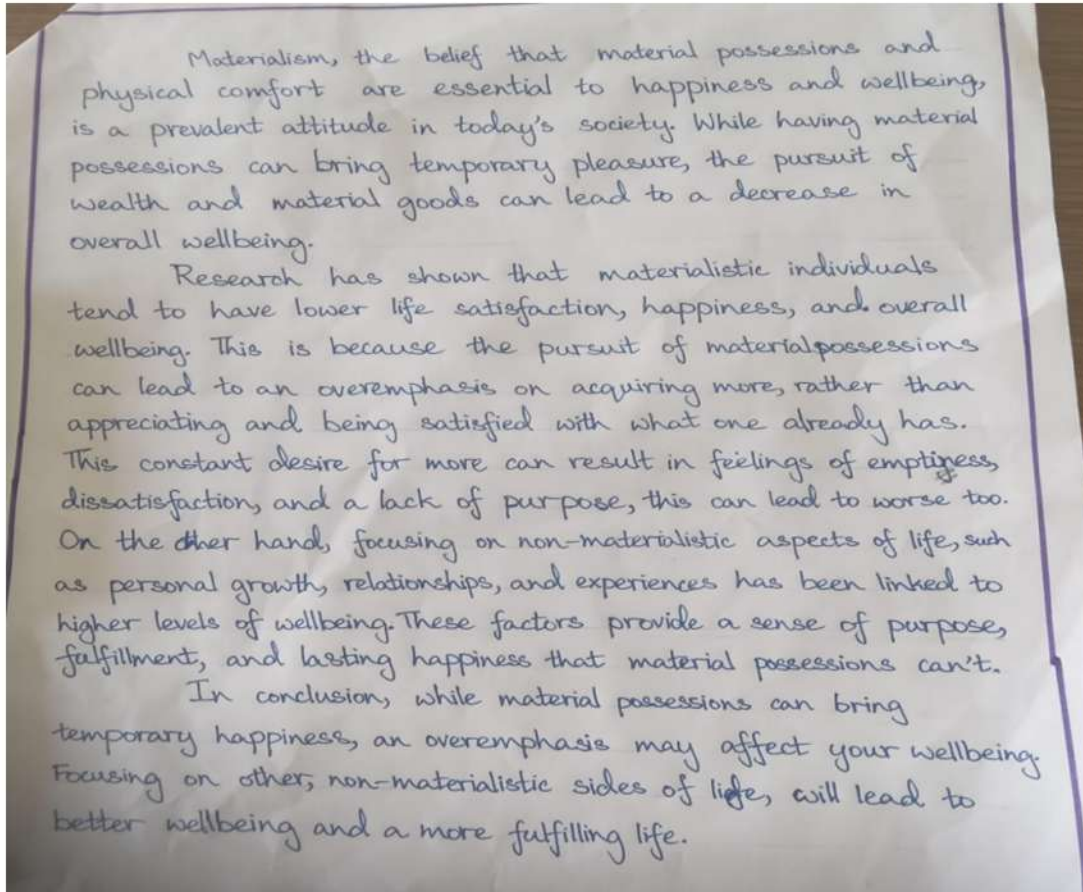
In conclusion, while material wealth and possessions can contribute to physical well-being, their pursuit should be balanced with other aspects of life to ensure overall well-being. Focusing on experiences, relationships, and personal growth may lead to a more fulfilling and content life, promoting holistic well-being beyond materialism.

By Lavanya K. (Class 8)



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By
Anaha
(Class 8)

ASK SWAMI SHANTATMANANDA

A reader writes:

Does the idea of loving this world and finding life beautiful hamper my spiritual growth?

Swami Shantatmananda replies:

Very honestly, yes; unless we understand the whole concept differently. One doesn't make any progress in one's spiritual life because of an extreme involvement with the world. More involvement with the world means moving away from the spiritual. This is because the world is at the level of the material and spiritual means at the level of the transcendental. So, unless you go beyond the material, you cannot go into the transcendental. In the initial stages, when you want to awaken your latent spirituality, you need to practice tremendous amount of vairagya, tyaga and tapasya. That means, moving away from the world; not being enamoured or subsumed by the apparent goodness, beauty and things of the world. Once you scale certain heights in your spiritual life; when you know that everything is a creation of God, manifestation of the same divinity or consciousness in various ways, then it is possible to love and admire everything from a higher standpoint. From such a standpoint, our spiritual growth is not hampered.

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MOVEMENT – VIVA Events and Updates

1. Parenting Workshops: VIVA had a spate parenting workshops in the month March.

* On 6th March 2024, Wednesday, an 'ARISE-Empowered Parenting' workshop was conducted at Global Public School, Karatagi, in North Karnataka. About 50 parents of primary school children attended this 2-hour workshop, which was delivered in Kannada and English. Three resource persons, Sharath Pujary, Suresh Raghunathan and Karthik Shankar, facilitated the program. It was well-received with one parent saying, "The workshop has helped parents reflect on how to balance love and discipline, and introspect on their own role."

* On 12th March 2024, a workshop on 'Effective Parenting' was conducted in the office of the Department of Land Resources. 40 staff members attended the workshop. The workshop was effectively facilitated by Senior Resource Person Dr. Nandini Seshadri. The workshop made the participants self-introspect and reflect, according to positive feedback received.

* On 16th March 2024, an 'ARISE – Empowered Parenting' workshop was held in the VIVA premises. The attendee parents reported to have found the ideas extremely beneficial.



ARISE workshop in Karnataka



Arise workshop at the Department of Land Resources



Arise workshop at VIVA



Svarat Series 2 – 1st workshop at VIVA

2. SVARAT – Living with Ananda – On popular demand, VIVA has started a 2nd series of workshops for senior citizens titled 'Svarat – Living with Ananda'. The workshops will be held each month and will deal with one specific topic. This time the topics have been selected by a group of senior citizens themselves on issues close to their heart and on which they would like interactive discussions. Accordingly, VIVA resource persons under the guidance of revered Swami Shantatmananda will be curating the workshops. On 15th March, 2024 the first session was held, titled 'Blame to Balm'. The participants expressed themselves openly during the group discussions and a lot of learning was shared amongst all.