

THE CENTRAL THEME OF VIVEKANANDA'S MESSAGE

SWAMI BUDHANANDA

(Continued from the previous issue)

VIVEKANANDA went deep into the problem of the submerged masses of mankind, for if this problem was not solved the foundational work of man-making would remain unaccomplished. So he faced this problem with all his spiritual insight and same-sightedness, his intellectual vigour, his marvellous social consciousness and above all his oceanic compassion. Socialistic ideas were already in the air of the west. Vivekananda knew what were helpful in those ideas and what were problematical. He clearly saw that on the basis of the doctrine of equality human problems were not going to be solved if grab-snatch-smother-make-equal was to be the method. Basically the doctrine of equality was an illusory doctrine, because in the created there was nowhere equality. But in what is uncreated in man, Atman, there is more than equality — there is identity, the very unity of existence. Yet he saw and appreciated the creative impulse of a great motive power in the doctrine of equality. He said :

So long as this world lasts, differentiation there will be and must be, and the millennium of perfect equality will come only when a cycle of creation comes to its end. Before that, equality cannot be. Yet this idea of realizing the millennium is a great motive power. Just as inequality is necessary for creation itself, so the struggle to limit it is also necessary. If there were no struggle to become free and get back to God, there would be no creation either. It is the difference between the two forces that determines the nature of the motives of men. There will always be these motives to work, some tending towards bondage and others towards freedom.¹⁸

On the foundation of unity of existence and creatively utilizing the great motive power of

spiritual identity Vivekananda built up his new social philosophy. Almost all his ideas came from the ancient Indian scriptures, particularly the Upanishads and the Gita. On the firm foundation of the Upanishadic doctrine of the unity of existence, Vivekananda gave a new orientation to Sri Krishna's great gospel of *loka-samgraha* (benefaction to the people) and in doing so he poured in all the divine light and inspiration he received from Sri Ramakrishna's utterance, 'Jiva is Shiva! not compassion to Jiva but service to him looking on him as God.'¹⁹

On the basis of this social philosophy, Vivekananda reintroduced the ancient sacramental cum sacrificial view of life. In this view of life in place of the imperative class struggle of the socialistic doctrine, Vivekananda inculcated the doctrine of mutuality of concern and help through practising the idealism of 'renunciation and service' for the salvation of oneself and the good of the world.

Those who have possessed, progressed and enjoyed the good things of life, in order to grow in man-hood — which is nothing but spirituality —, need share, renounce and serve those who are dispossessed, and have lagged behind and suffered the miseries of life. This was how one has to progress on one's way to liberation, for selfish possession is another name for being possessed. Every ego-centric progress is a step backward and every selfish enjoyment is misery in store. So the privileged person has a unique opportunity in his having around him those who needed his service. This opportunity has to be seized

¹⁸ *Complete Works*, Vol I (1962), pp. 114-15.

¹⁹ *Vide*. Swami Saradananda : *Sri Ramakrishna, the Great Master*, Sri Ramakrishna Math, Madras-4, 1956, p. 817 et seq.

with worshipful enthusiasm — the enthusiasm to help the sufferers to help themselves.

‘Renunciation and service’ are the two thundering words of Vivekananda and these two he called the national ideals of India.

He said :

I have experienced even in my insignificant life that good motives, sincerity and infinite love can conquer the world. One single soul possessed of those virtues can destroy the dark designs of millions of hypocrites and brutes.²⁰

He brought out the spiritual cum social implications of these concepts in a creative manner all his own. Together these two concepts hold in themselves the secret of the salvation of oneself while working for the salvation of others.

In Vivekananda’s interpretation ‘renunciation’ means the constant movement of an individual from the gross to the subtle, from the material to the mental, and from the mental to the spiritual, until the highest, the truest, the noblest in oneself — which is Atman in experience — is realized, and in doing so he sheds *on the way* what comes *in the way*.

And ‘service’ according to Vivekananda means pursuing renunciation in a manner which helps others to move towards their own highest self-fulfilment, which is nothing but the attainment of spiritual illumination.

So we see how beautifully in the idealism of renunciation and service as interpreted by Vivekananda, the requirements of personal salvation and the salvation of humanity are attended to.

Vivekananda was not a cold theoretician, but a warm-hearted prophet. He not only gave us theories which were rationally sound, ethically just and spiritually inspiring, but he also charged the people with a noble emotion which could quicken the altruistic fervour among them and make them do their mighty best for those whom he called ‘my God the poor, the miserable and the wicked’.

VIVEKANANDA’S CONCEPT OF THE REAL MAN

In his general teachings about man-making and its methods Swami Vivekananda takes his firm stand on the teachings of the Upanishads, particularly on the identity of the soul with the Supreme Spirit. So he carefully distinguishes the real man from the apparent man and holds before the wondering eyes of every one the glorious image of the real man which is the fundamental truth about everybody. What is more, he infuses enthusiasm in everyone to search, strive and find the real man within himself. He teaches :

The Real Man is one and infinite, the omnipresent spirit. And the apparent man, however great he may be, is only a dim reflection of the Real Man, who is beyond. The Real Man, the Spirit, being beyond cause and effect, not bound by time and space, must therefore be free... The apparent man, the reflection, is limited by time, space and causation and is therefore bound. Or, in the language of some of our philosophers, he appears to be bound, but really is not.²¹

No books, no scriptures, no science, can ever imagine the glory of the Self that appears as man, the most glorious God that ever was, the only God that ever existed, exists and ever will exist.²²

You may invent an image through which to worship God, but a better image already exists, the living man. You may build a temple in which to worship God, and that may be good, but a better one, a much higher one, already exists, the human body.²³

First let us be Gods, and then help others to be Gods. *Be and Make* — let this be our motto. Say not man is a sinner. Tell him that he is a God. Even if there were a devil, it would be our duty to remember God always and not the devil.²⁴

When you think that you are a body, you are apart from the universe; when you think you are soul, you are a spark of the great Eternal Fire; when you think that you are the Atman, you are all.²⁵

Each man is infinite already, only these bars and bolts and different circumstances shut him in

²¹ *Ibid.*, Vol. II (1963), p. 78.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 250.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 313.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, Vol. IV (1962), p. 351.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, Vol V (1964), p. 409.

but as soon as these are removed, he rushes out and expresses himself.²⁶

Every man is a slave except the yogi. He is a slave to food, to air, to his wife, to his children, to a dollar, slave to a nation, slave to name and fame, and to a thousand things in the world. The man who is not controlled by any one of these bondages is alone a real man, a real yogi.²⁷

Each one of us has come out of one protoplasmic cell, and all the powers we possess are coiled up there. . . The energy was there, potentially no doubt, but still there . . . So is infinite power in the soul of man, whether he knows it or not. Its manifestation is only a question of being conscious of it. Slowly this infinite giant is, as it were, waking up, becoming conscious of his power and arousing himself; and with his growing consciousness, more and more of his bonds are breaking, chains are bursting asunder, and the day is sure to come when, with the full consciousness of his infinite power and wisdom, the giant will rise to his feet and stand erect. Let us all help to hasten that glorious consummation.²⁸

This was how Vivekananda held before man his own forgotten image and also indicated the task ahead every one of us — which is to hasten the consummation of making the real man manifest.

HIS METHOD AND MATERIAL FOR MAN-MAKING

And he gave us the clearest of ideas as to how we have to accomplish this task, this task of man-making.

In this task, he emphatically pointed out, education was the greatest help. But he had his own very special definition of education. He taught :

Education is the manifestation of the perfection already in man. I look upon religion as the innermost core of education. Mind, I do not mean my own or anyone else's opinion about religion. Religion is as the rice, and everything else like curries. Taking only curries causes indigestion.²⁹

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 298.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 305.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, Vol. II (1963), p. 340.

²⁹ *Vide* : *Swami Vivekananda on India and Her Problems*, Advaita Ashrama, Mayavati, Almora, Himalayas, 1946, p. 52.

His conception of education is inextricably connected with his ideal of man-making, for he views the whole process of life as a journey toward the attainment of spiritual illumination through managing what comes on the way efficiently and creatively. So he said :

What is education ? Is it book-learning ? No. Is it diverse knowledge ? Not even that. The training by which the current and expression of will are brought under control and become fruitful, is called education. . . True education may be described as a development of faculty, not an accumulation of words, or, as a training of individuals to will rightly and efficiently. . .

We must have life-building, man-making, character-making assimilation of ideas. If you have assimilated five ideas and made them your life and character, you have more education than any man who has got by heart a whole library.

We want that education by which character is formed, strength of mind is increased, the intellect is expanded, and by which one can stand on one's feet. What we want are western science coupled with Vedanta, *Brahmacharya* as the guiding motto, and also *Shraddha* and faith in one's self.³⁰

Religion, according to Vivekananda, is the core of education. And, religion of his understanding is the manifestation of the divinity already in man. He gives a neat summary of his complete view of religion in the following words :

Each soul is potentially divine. The goal is to manifest this divinity within, by controlling nature, external and internal. Do this either by work or worship, or psychic control or philosophy — by one, or more or all of these—and be free. This is the whole of religion. Doctrines or dogmas, or rituals, or books or temples or forms, are but secondary details.³¹

A careful analysis will reveal that in depth there is hardly any difference between Vivekananda's concept of education and his concept of applied religion. So his methodology of imparting true education and true training in applied religion is about identical. Therefore, without trying to differentiate education from

³⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 50-51.

³¹ *Complete Works*, Vol. I (1962), p. 124.

religion in this context, we shall briefly touch upon his methodology which again is his way of man-making training.

The ideas and ideals powerfully cultivated in his methodology are: Faith, Strength, Fearlessness, Brahmacharya, Character, Concentration and Detachment.

On Faith, Vivekananda taught :

Faith, faith, faith in ourselves and faith in God — that is the secret of success.³²

If a man day and night thinks that he is miserable, low and nothing, nothing he becomes. We are the children of the Almighty, we are the sparks of the Infinite, divine Fire. How can we be nothing? We are everything, ready to do everything; we can do everything. This faith in themselves was in the hearts of our ancestors; this faith in themselves was the motive power that pushed them forward in the march of civilization. If there has been degeneration, there has been defeat, you will find that degeneration to have started on the day our people lost faith in themselves. Therefore teach this life-saving, great, ennobling, grand doctrine to your children, even from their very birth.³³

About strength and fearlessness, which are the two cardinal tenets of Swamiji's teachings, he says :

Infinite strength is religion and God. Avoid weaknesses and slavery.³⁴

The best guide in life is strength. In religion, as in all other matters, discard everything that weakens you, have nothing to do with it.³⁵

What makes a man stand up and work? Strength. Strength is goodness, weakness is sin. If there is one word that is coming out of the Upanishads like a bomb-shell upon masses of ignorance, it is the word *fearlessness*. And the only religion that ought to be taught is the religion of fearlessness. Either in this world or in the world of religion, it is true that fear is the sure cause of degradation and sin. It is fear that brings misery, fear that brings death, fear that breeds evil. And what causes fear? Ignorance of our own nature.³⁶

About the method of cultivating strength and fearlessness Swamiji taught :

This is the only way to reach the goal, to tell ourselves and tell everybody else, that we are divine. And as you go on repeating this, strength comes. He who falters at first will get stronger and stronger and the voice will increase in volume until the truth takes possession of our hearts, and courses through our veins and permeates our bodies.³⁷

Here we have one of the grandest ideas of Vivekananda about education and religion: we are truly educated and truly religious when truth takes possession of our hearts and courses through our veins and permeates our bodies.

In his teachings on man-making Swamiji laid great emphasis on character-building. He said :

What is wanted is character, strengthening of the will. Continue to exercise your will and it will take you higher. The will is almighty. It is character that can cleave through adamant walls of difficulties. The character of any man is but the aggregate of his tendencies, the sum-total of the bent of his mind. We are what our thoughts have made us. Thoughts live, they travel far. And so take care of what you think.³⁸

With his ideas on character-building are intimately related his teachings on *Brahmacharya*, or continence. Without the practice of *Brahmacharya* one cannot lay the foundation of a noble and great character. When Gandhiji realized this truth at the age of thirty-one he at once set himself to practise *Brahmacharya* though he was a married man.

On *Brahmacharya* Swamiji taught :

Every boy should be trained to practise absolute *Brahmacharya* (for there is nothing like qualified *Brahmacharya* or chastity) and then and then alone faith and shraddha will come. Chastity in thought, word and deed always and in all conditions is what is called *Brahmacharya*. It is owing to want of continence that everything is on the brink of ruin in our country. By obser-

³² *Ibid.*, Vol. III (1964), p. 190.

³³ *Ibid.*, Vol. III (1964), p. 376.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, Vol. VII (1964), p. 13.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, Vol. I (1962), p. 134.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, Vol. III (1964), p. 160.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, Vol. II (1963), p. 202.

³⁸ *Vide: Swami Vivekananda on India and Her Problems*, 1946, p. 55.

vance of strict *Brahmacharya* all learning can be mastered in a very short time ; one acquires an unflinching memory of what one hears or knows but once. The chaste brain has tremendous energy and gigantic will-power. Controlled desire leads to the highest results. Transform the sexual energy into the spiritual energy. The stronger the force is, the more can be done with it. Only a powerful current of water can do hydraulic mining.³⁹

The proper practice of *Brahmacharya* endows a man with the power through the application of which he can master all the secrets of the inner and the outer world. And this power is not a mysterious something. It is the power born of the attained capacity for concentrating the mind. Swamiji said :

How has all the knowledge in the world been gained but by the concentration of the powers of the mind ? The world is ready to give up its secrets if only we know how to knock, how to give it the necessary blow. The strength, the force of the blow comes through concentration. . . . The powers of the mind should be concentrated and turned back upon itself, and as the darkest places reveal their secrets before the penetrating rays of the sun, so will this concentrated mind penetrate its own innermost secrets⁴⁰

It is through the power of concentration that man has attained all his powers over the outer and inner world. The atom was not smashed with a big hammer, but by the power of the concentrated mind. So is the veil of Maya rent asunder in the inner world by the power of concentration and Atman is realized. Swamiji taught :

We have but one method of acquiring knowledge. From the lowest man to the highest yogin, all have to use the same method ; and that method is what is called concentration. . . . There is no limit to the power of the human mind. The more concentrated it is, the more power is brought to bear on one point, that is the secret.⁴¹

And the source of all these powers of man is *Brahmacharya*. Significantly enough Swamiji taught :

Along with the development of concentration we must develop the power of detachment. We must learn not only to attach the mind to one thing exclusively, but also to detach it at a moment's notice and place it upon something else. These two should be developed together to make it safe.

This is the systematic development of the mind. To me the very essence of education is concentration of mind, not the collection of facts. If I had to do my education again and had any voice in the matter, I would not study facts at all. I would develop the power of concentration and detachment, and then with a perfect instrument I could collect facts at will. Side by side, in the child, should be developed the power of concentration and detachment.⁴²

Be it noted that if this kind of training is given to the child it will be possible for him to become simultaneously scientific and spiritual, for the secret of both these becomings is concentration and detachment. In his teachings on man-making Swamiji laid great importance on man's becoming scientific and spiritual simultaneously. Life's challenges need men of today and tomorrow to become so.

On the same theme he further taught :

We claim that concentrating the powers of the mind is the only way to knowledge. In external science, concentration of mind is — putting it on something external ; and in internal science, it is — drawing towards one's self. We call this concentration of mind, Yoga.

The yogis claim a good deal. They claim that by concentrating the mind every truth in the universe becomes evident to the mind, both external and internal truth.⁴³

Swamiji clarified the systems of yoga as instruments for actualizing the liberation of the spirit. Though each one of the yogas in itself is capable of making a man perfect, Vivekananda taught, being fully aware of the demands of the times, that the ideal for this age is the Integral Yoga, in which Karma, Bhakti, Raja and Jnana yogas are integrated in the personal practice of spiritual discipline.

And he fully believed and taught that the sublime truths of Vedanta which were realized

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 54

⁴⁰ *Complete Works*, Vol. I (1962), pp. 130-31.

⁴¹ *Swami Vivekananda on India and Her Problems*, 1946, p. 53.

⁴² *Ibid.*, pp. 53-54.

⁴³ *Complete Works*, Vol. V (1964), p. 299.

in the forests and caves, can be, and urgently need to be, practised by men in all possible situations of life.

When Vedanta and Yoga are thus practised through the process of man-making, man attains not only illumination and self-fulfilment but also to that extent transforms the world.

VIVEKANANDA'S IDEAL MAN OF THE FUTURE

This man-making is the central theme of Swami Vivekananda's message, which is unique in its comprehensiveness, depth, loftiness and fulness. His hope is entirely in you. His demand is particularly on you. His challenge is specifically to you. He calls upon you to your highest destiny, sets you on the high road and sees to it that you reach the goal. And with you moves the world onward and forward and Godward.

About his ideal man of the future Vivekananda holds before us this portrait, unique in its comprehensiveness :

What we want is to see the man who is harmoniously developed . . . great in heart, great in

mind (great in deed) . . . We want the man whose heart feels intensely the miseries and sorrows of the world . . . And (we want) the man who not only can feel but can find the meaning of things, who delves deeply into the heart of nature and understanding. (We want) the man who will not even stop there, (but) who wants to work out (the feeling and the meaning by actual deeds). Such a combination of head, heart and hand is what we want. There are many teachers in this world, but you will find that most of them are one-sided. (One) sees the glorious mid-day sun of the intellect (and) sees nothing else. Another hears the beautiful music of love and can hear nothing else, another is (immersed) in activity and has neither time to feel, nor time to think. Why not (have) the giant who is equally active, equally knowing, and equally loving? Is it impossible? Certainly not. This is the man of the future. Of such men there are (only a) few at present. (The number of such will increase) until the whole world is humanized.⁴⁴

Toward this great goal of 'humanization' of the world, Vivekananda will ever remain the unfailing inspirer of mankind, for in himself we find the fulfilment of his own dream.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, Vol. VI (1965), pp. 49-50.

TOWARDS THE RESTORATION OF PHILOSOPHY

SWAMI PARAHITANANDA

(Continued from the previous issue)

(The argument so far, in brief : (a) For more than 2000 years of its history in the West, philosophy was thought to be supremely worth-while because it could provide fundamental knowledge about the universe. Nearly all modern philosophers are agreed that it cannot provide that knowledge. Do we therefore have to fall in with the recent trend and admit that philosophy has only a relatively subordinate role? (b) In the light of Advaita we can agree that philosophy cannot give us knowledge, and yet agree also that philosophy can be an important pursuit, provided that in its aims and methods it is rightly conceived, which, in the modern era conspicuously, has not been the case. Philosophy tries to understand the whole of experience by means of principles formulated on the basis of a part of experience. Its conclusions, therefore, can never be

more than opinion. Again, that philosophy should have no end beyond that of understanding, as western philosophers insisted, is not consistent with the idea that philosophy should provide knowledge. (c) Indeed, at bottom 'knowledge' is a self-contradictory concept, and when it comes to so-called metaphysical knowledge this self-contradictoriness leads to meaninglessness. 'Metaphysical knowledge' is not a valid concept — but this is not to say the term is useless. (d) If philosophy is understanding experience as a whole, a first condition of its reform is that the whole of experience must be taken in at the value it claims for itself. It must be taken both as basis and as experience to be explained. Modern philosophy typically excludes experience 'contained' in alleged revelation, though this purports to speak on just those matters in which the philosopher is