

THE MESSAGE OF SWAMI VIVEKANANDA *

POWERFUL exhortations are often conveyed in short utterances which though brief are charged with a rare potency. How effective and soul-saving, for all time indeed, has been that battle-ground instruction of Sri Krishna, *mamekam saranam vraja*, "surrender to Me alone"! And how consoling and reassuring has been that compassionate admonition of Jesus, 'Go, and sin no more', to every erring and repentant soul all down the ages! The fact is that words get their power not from their own structure, but from the personality of the speaker who spells them out. A great man's words are verily igniting sparks from the roaring fire of his genius. Swami Vivekananda was such a genius, a hero, a superman. It was not mere learning and erudition that made him what he was, a nation-builder, a world-mover, an epoch-maker, though in learning and erudition he stood head and shoulders above many among his contemporaries. It was something unique in his being, something that was of divine essence, something that was of super-mundane proportions and profundity that made him so irresistible, such an avalanche of blessedness, such a tidal wave of transforming soulfulness. None came across him in east or west who did not feel the shock of his vitalising touch. He was no doubt sweetly human, but there was in him something which belongs to the elements, to the very forces of Nature, as it were; he was like unto a lightning, a cyclone, a Niagara! In the unforgettable words of Romain Rolland he was Energy Personified. And naturally when he spoke, words came out of him like fiery shafts, which burnt their way into the hearers' hearts, illumined the dark corners, and touched up and roused the dormant springs of individuality.

His greatest message to mankind lies imbedded in these few words :

Arise! Awake! And stop not till the Goal is reached!

Swami Vivekananda was primarily a rouser and awakener. He found mankind asleep, buried in a slumber, unaware of its glory, unconscious of its mission, unappreciative of its destiny. And he set to sing a *suprabhatam*, a morning song, to the lotus-eaters in order to stir them out of their dreamy content and self-forgetfulness.

Awake, arise, and dream no more! sounded his clarion call, and as though in response to the Pied Piper, men and women shot up from their couch of ease and inaction, rubbed their eyes, felt the warmth of the sunshine of a new epoch and bestirred themselves to daring striving.

His call is not of the kind that is confined to the era of its physical come-out; it is a perennial call To Arms to the individual and to society of all times. The Swami wants us of the modern era, first to arise. For we have been too long abed. And we must be awake to realities. Today's India is a Prabuddha Bharata, an Awakened India. To the Swami's vision Mother India is the motherland of philosophy, of spirituality and of ethics, of sweetness, gentleness and love. Her life, he saw, is of the same nature as the Soul, without beginning and without end, immortal. Like the gentle dew, he said, that falls unseen and unheard and yet brings into blossom the fairest of roses has been the contribution of India to the thought of the world.

But he wanted Indians of today not to rest on the oars of past glory, but to march on to more glorious realms. He was a prophet and communicated to his compatriots the content of a vision he had. He said, 'Before the effulgence of this new awakening of India, the glory of all past revivals in her history will pale like stars before the rising sun, and compared with this mighty manifestation of

* This is a radio talk delivered by Swami Kailasanda, on 28-1-68, and is published here by the kind courtesy of the All-India Radio, Madras.

renewed strength, all the many past epochs of such restoration will be as child's play.' works. In them they will find the Elixir of Life.

And to the denizens of this resurgent Bharat he re-delivered the message of a non-stop march to Fulfilment. Stop not till the Goal is reached, he urged. And what according to him is the Goal?

Each soul, he declares, is potentially divine. The goal is to manifest this divine within.

What is the way? By controlling nature, external and internal, he points out.

What is the method? He exhorts us thus : Do this either by work, or worship, or psychic control, or philosophy, by one or more, or all of these and be free.

What is the significance of all this? He says : This is the whole of religion. Doctrines, or dogmas, or rituals, or books, or temples, or forms are but secondary details.

In these few sentences he has given us the quintessence of purposive, practical Vedanta.

Swamiji was the image of Strength and Endurance, of Power and Efficiency and those who flock under his banner cannot afford to be mushy and soft-hearted. He had no place for the feeble and the cowardly. He taught : The national ideals of India are renunciation and service. Intensify her in these channels and the rest will take care of itself.

His spoken words are available to us in eight large-sized volumes. About the bestirring contents of this his legacy to posterity, his great French biographer has remarked : 'His words are great music, phrases in the style of Beethoven, stirring rhythms like the march of Handel choruses. I cannot touch these sayings of his, scattered as they are through the pages of books, without receiving a thrill through my body like an electric shock. And what shocks, what transports must have been produced when in burning words they issued from the mouth of the hero !'

Our young men and women at the threshold of their life's mission can do no better than plunge into the fascinating pages of these

But the moving message of this mighty Messiah of modern India comes to us, more inspiringly than even through his speeches and writings, in the unparalleled sublimity of the life he lived and the inexhaustible richness of the labour he put in for the elevation of India and the regeneration of the world. He himself is his greatest message, and he has an especial and particular appeal to every segment of humanity.

Fascinating and soul-ravishing as a child, winsome and attractive as a boy, studious and curious as a pupil, fearless and flawless as a lad, intellectually alert and boldly enquiring as a youth, he came under the influence of Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa who led him to God and to Perfection, but brought him back and bound him to the service of the God in man. At the vernal impulse of the Master he blossomed out into abundant and varied fragrance. To India he was one of the latest of her Maharishis, one of the most recent of her Sukas and Sankaras. To the world he was a harmonizer of faiths, a reconciler of beliefs.

Ours is the distinction of being brothers and sisters of the Swami to whom the very dust of India was holy. He was, in his own words, a condensation of all India; and let us try to be worthy of him by being, each one of us, a true particle of this *Punya Bhumi* to whose service Swami Vivekananda dedicated all his talents.

'Be proud that thou art an Indian'—rings his message to everyone of us. 'I am sure it is coming'—he assures us, 'a greater India than ever was.'

And he asks us, 'Can you become an Occidental of Occidentals in your spirit of equality, freedom, and working energy, and at the same time a Hindu to the very backbone in religious culture and instincts?'

And he furnishes the answer too himself : 'This *is* to be done, and we *will* do it.'