

Discovery of True India

Where groups of people live together for centuries, they develop similarities and bonds to form a community. Many communities, living in a large geographic area and struggling under similar conditions, also become united through economic and political ties. Through generations they share a common history. Gradually they develop common likes and dislikes, common fears and common interests. Their languages, ideas, and practices move closer to each other through exchange.

The creations of their men and women in the realms of ideas and beliefs, art and literature, and so on are passed on from one generation to another through social training and association. Some of these creations stand the test of time and form their cultural heritage. This way they may develop *a common culture with certain distinctive characteristics*, which finally transforms a population into a *nation*.

So, to become a nation, a population must have acquired some special characteristics, which are, as it were, the life of the nation. Since each nation develops its *nationality* in different historical settings, its special characteristics are different. Thus each nation has a unique role, a unique tune to play in the great symphony of the world. The major contribution of one nation may be in political ideas, that of another in military conquest, and so on.

These special characteristics also indicate the national line of growth. Since the future grows out of the past, each individual has to grow in his own way, even while learning from others. So must every nation.

How do we identify these national characteristics? Are the common men of all nations not very similar? They eat, drink, sleep; they learn, work, beget. They do not create history, but history creates roads they tread. So, they do not represent the special characteristics or the type very prominently. We have to find the type, the life of a nation, with its unambiguous expression, mainly in the best men and women and in their best creations. For instance, if I want to know the exact type of a mango tree, I have to look for its best fruits. All the fruits cannot equally bring out the special qualities nature has bestowed on the tree.

In India, we find that her best have been in the area of *spirituality*. Spirituality is what makes ‘men’ of us – principled men who can make some sacrifice for the common good – and then gradually raises us to the lofty ideal of purity, selflessness, and burning love for all. In philosophy and literature, in art and sculpture, India’s loftiest creations bear the footprints of her spiritual giants, before whom the world still stands in awe.

Notwithstanding the defects of her society, which all other nations also have in abundance in this or that form, our ancient Motherland never faltered in her mission of ‘assimilation and spiritualization of human races’. She embraced all races who came, assimilated them into her body, and gave them a spiritual touch to civilize them. Her contributions in the natural sciences have also been great. The decimal number system including ‘0’ and so many others were discovered here in ancient times. Again in our age India is progressing well in scientific research. Her economic prowess drew hoards of foreign armies and businessmen through centuries. Yet, it is her spiritual genius that set her apart in the comity of nations.

Never in the known history of mankind did any nation live in complete isolation. All over the world nations exchanged goods as well as ideas. India has always welcomed whatever positive contributions other nations brought to her. Many nations went to others

sword in hand, but India went everywhere with the message of peace and benediction and influenced their civilizations since the dawn of history.

Yet, India was never conscious of her own greatness, her mission, her nationality. She did her part spontaneously, as it has always been so natural for her to do so. The sun does not know that it enlightens the world. But, in the present context of strong Western influence, which began to flood India with the British conquest, she runs the risk of losing her own self. So, she needs to become a *self-conscious nation*. As a modern, sovereign republic, as an Independent Nation-State, now she also has better opportunities to awaken and assert her true nationality. And that is possible only through the universal spread of education on *national* lines. All her children must have the light she emanates and be proud to call her 'Mother' with great affection. Thus India must discover her true self.

Vivekananda struggled for this, because the spiritual treasures of India would do immense good to humanity and save it from rank materialism and consequent ruin.