

The Only God That is Awake

After returning from the West in 1897 Swami Vivekananda gave a clarion call to his countrymen: 'For the next fifty years this alone shall be our keynote – this, our great Mother India. Let all other vain gods disappear for the time from our minds. This is the only god that is awake, our own race – “everywhere his hands, everywhere his feet, everywhere his ears, he covers everything.” All other gods are sleeping. What vain gods shall we go after and yet cannot worship the god that we see all round us, the *Virat*?’

Exactly fifty years after he uttered those words did India become free from the shackles of the British rule. And we have not been late to forsake the worship of our great Mother India. Fifty years are over, so all vain gods have come back – the greatest of them being pelf and power. If the *Virat*, the god we see all around us, the poor, ignorant, oppressed children of Mother India, get the light of right education, they will wake up, and that would not be very conducive to our selfish pursuits and illicit means. Therefore, we do not like the idea. We would better allow other gods, who are rather harmless, and arrange for their public worship in huge pandals with blaring microphones. If we worship them and ask for this or that in return – whether the *mantras* uttered are correct or incorrect, it doesn't matter – they would fulfill all our desires. The call of Vivekananda for the worship of Mother India is nothing of that sort: You have only to give and nothing you can ask in return! These are obsolete ideas which cannot gain currency in this modern age of competition. And there is no light amusement in it, only silent endeavour to build life and give it for others' good. No comfort, no compromise – only struggle and sacrifice. It can never be instrumental in diverting the young people's mind to worthless things. By its very touch they will surely wake up. No, we don't want it. But that is confidential. In public we shall celebrate Vivekananda's birth anniversary with much fanfare!!

Yet, 'she is awakening, this motherland of ours, from her deep long sleep. None can resist her any more; never is she going to sleep any more; no outward powers can hold her back any more; for the infinite giant is rising to her feet.' And the Voice of Vivekananda is gradually reaching the remotest corners of the country. Anonymous youths in thousands are responding to the Call. And they are making the offering of their own life ready for the worship of the Mother. For the only offering in this worship is: a strong brain and brawn and a heart too full of feelings to express them adequately. That is the ideal, the mould in which the youths should cast their life.

The ringing Voice of Vivekananda has an irresistible power that is acting on them, inspiring them to swim against the tide. And through them India is preparing itself for a glorious future. The call has not ceased to ring just because fifty, or over a hundred years, have passed. It has instead grown in strength, in spite of indifference of the chicken-hearted.

Young men and women of India, do not lose the rare opportunity, do not deprive yourselves from the greatest things human life can offer. Each one of us now has this

tremendous responsibility. Forget not that millions of your Indian sisters and brothers are still merged in despair, in severe poverty, ignorance, and deprivation of many kinds. We must work hard to raise them. That is the true worship of Mother India. Do not be swayed away by those who would like you to be concerned only about ensuring a good life for yourselves and to be among the few so called 'successful' people. Do not listen to them. Do not even think for a moment that you will be one of the dishonest, selfish opportunists. That should be beneath our dignity. Vivekananda loved us more than anybody else, and he lived and died for us. Let us listen to him with rapt attention: Manifest the glory of your real Manhood and you will be one with all.

It does not matter if you believe or not in God. 'Here is the world,' thundered Vivekananda, 'and it is full of misery. Go out into it as Buddha did, and struggle to lessen it or die in the attempt. Forget yourselves; this is the first lesson to be learnt, whether you are a theist or an atheist, whether you are an agnostic or a Vedantist, a Christian or a Mohammedan.'

And he said, 'Who will give the world light? Sacrifice in the past has been the Law, it will be, alas, for ages to come. The earth's bravest and best will have to sacrifice themselves for the good of many, for the welfare of all. Buddhas by the hundred are necessary with eternal love and pity.'

'India wants the sacrifice of at least a thousand of her young men – men, mind, and not brutes.'

'What the world wants is character. The world is in need of those whose life is one burning love, selfless. That love will make every word tell like thunderbolt.'

Therefore, come, leaving aside vain gods, to worship the only god that is awake.