

National Integration and Swami Vivekananda

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[Lecture delivered at the evening session on 28 December 2009 at the 43rd Annual All India Youth Training Camp of the Mahamandal]

It is a matter of great delight for me to be able to address this audience of young people who have come here, being inspired by the ideal of Swami Vivekananda. We are told that we have more than thirteen hundred people here from various States, all of whom have come here, because they have great love for Swami Vivekananda and his ideology. Almost every year I have the privilege of coming to this camp and addressing these young people. I am particularly privileged, because this year, I hear, we have the largest number of campers. So, it is very heartening that there is a great awakening taking place. On one side there is a depression, which is entering into the hearts of young people. Open the newspaper, television or radio, and you will always get the news of depression, corruption, immorality, which naturally makes you sad. Just now respected Nabaniharan-babu, who is the prime mover of this movement, Vivekananda Yuva Mahamandal, was telling me about a conversation he had with Swami Bhuteshananda, who was the 12th President of Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission. Swami Vivekananda said that the *Satya Yuga*, the golden age, began with the advent of Sri Ramakrishna. Swami Bhuteshanandaji Maharaj raised the topic and posed the question: Then why is it that we do not feel that *Satya Yuga* has approached? We don't see any definite sign by which we can say that the golden age has begun. At this point Nabani-babu interrupted him to say that the initial signs of a big change might not be noticed by the common man. Swami Bhuteshanandaji agreed, as he was just going to say exactly that, and added that the work of the Mahamandal was a sign of this awakening.

The youths of the country will arise and awake and respond to the call of Swami Vivekananda. Swamiji had great faith in the youths of the country. His birthday, the 12th of January, has been designated by the Government of India as the National Youth day, because he represented eternal youth, not only physically, but mentally and spiritually. Rabindranath Tagore said 'If you want to know India, study Vivekananda. In him everything is positive and nothing negative.' He was very positive, enthusiastic, energetic, vivacious, and full of youthful energy. And, therefore, whenever young men approached him, he was so happy. Wherever he went, he roused the youths to positive action for the good of humanity. 'Young men of Madras, my hope is in you', he said, when he was in Madras. 'Young men of Lahore, my hope is in you' – when he was in Lahore. 'Young men of Bengal, my hope is in you' – when he was in Bengal. All the time he was interested in rousing the youths, because the youths have tremendous power and the capacity for positive thinking.

Every child, Swami Vivekananda said, is a born optimist. He dreams, dreams, and dreams that all positive things will become a reality tomorrow. Swamiji was a powerful Vedantist. He believed after Shankara that, philosophically, this world is ultimately unreal, though relatively real. From that position he once wrote in a famous poem, *To The Awaken India*:

'Awake, arise, and dream no more!
..... Be bold, and face
The Truth! Be one with it! Let visions cease,
Or, if you cannot, dream but truer dreams,
Which are Eternal Love and Service Free.'

Don't hold and accumulate anything for yourself. Swamiji's fundamental message is: give away whatever you have. Give energy, give help, give service, and give everything away, but don't ask anything in return. Infinite energy is within you, infinite love and bliss are within you. You are the inheritors of infinite bliss and joy. If you ask for anything in return, this big ocean which is within you, the *Sindhu*, will become a *Bindu*, a mere drop. Swamiji said in a lecture, *Work And Its Secret*, 'Ask nothing; want nothing in return. Give what you have to give; it will come back to you – but do not think of that now, it will come back multiplied a thousandfold – but the attention must not be on that.' Unselfishness, purity, and truth – these are the three fundamental virtues he practised and preached. Be pure, be unselfish and truthful. Continuously keep on giving, and feel that you have become the source of all blessedness and joy. Whoever comes into your contact will spontaneously be charged with your holiness and purity, unselfishness and truthfulness.

He wanted every one of you become a dynamo of power. If Vivekananda represents anything, it is tremendous power. Be a dynamo of spiritual power. In the *Inspiring Talks*, the talks he gave in the Thousand Islands Park in the USA, he said, 'Do not spend your energy in talking, but meditate in silence; and do not let the rush of the outside world disturb you.... Accumulate power in silence and become a dynamo of spirituality. What can a beggar give? Only a king can give, and he only when he wants nothing himself.'

In a lecture he said, 'Power will come, glory will come, goodness will come, purity will come, and everything that is excellent will come when this sleeping soul is roused to self-conscious activity.' Very powerful words he spoke, and he wanted young men to have faith in their own selves. He said, 'The old religion said that he was an atheist who did not believe in God. The new religion says that he is the atheist who does not believe in himself.' And he wrote in a letter, 'Religions of the world have become lifeless mockeries. What the world wants is character. The world is in need of those whose life is one burning love, selfless.... Bold words and bolder deeds are what we want.' He wanted young men to be bold and face the truth. No compromise, no whitewashing. He did not like any secrecy in religion. 'No shilly-shally, no esoteric blackguardism, no secret humbug, nothing should be done in a corner.' Truth should be as broad as daylight.

When he spoke about India, many people thought that he loved India, because it was the land of his birth. Did he then have less love for the people born in other countries? In a mood of nostalgia once he wrote, 'Doubtless I do love India. But every day my sight grows clearer. What is India, or England, or America to us? We are the servants of that God who by the ignorant is called MAN.' Theologically we say that he was a *Nararishi*, whom Sri Ramakrishna brought to the earth for the welfare of mankind. The *Nararishi* has the main characteristic of loving man, *Nara*, and everything about man. Not only spirituality, but also every department in which man is functioning and moving and having its being, was so very important to Swamiji. Therefore, he was so enthusiastic about everything, be it philosophy or religion, be it literature, arts, painting, engineering, technology or the development of villages – be it anything. He was conversant with everything. There you have Vivekananda – intensely interested in the all round development of man. And, therefore, we should understand that Vivekananda's patriotism was rooted in something else, not merely in the fact that he was born and brought up in India. He analysed this patriotic impulse in his *Lectures from Colombo to Almora*. All of you know that, after his return from the West in 1897, he delivered a series of lectures, starting from Colombo on one end and ending at Almora in the Himalayas on the other. There he repeatedly emphasizes one single point, and that is: India is the storehouse of spirituality and religion. He had studied the civilizations of the world, their history, philosophy, the rise and fall of empires between the lines, and this convinced him that India had a special role to play in the comity of nations. Just as in the human body every limb has a special role to play. The brain does not play the part of the heart, the heart does not

play the part of the kidney, and the kidney does not play the part of liver. Every limb of the body has a special, specific role assigned to it by nature or by God. In the same way, macrocosmically, Swami Vivekananda said, in the huge comity of nations, every nation has a special role to play, which has been assigned to it by nature or by God. Political genius is the special characteristic of a particular country; business is the role of some other country. But, he said, a special role has been assigned to India, which is the cultivation of religion, spirituality, and inwardness. In one of his lectures in the *Lectures from Colombo to Almora*, he said, 'But there has been the other mission given to us, which is to conserve, to preserve, to accumulate, as it were, into a dynamo, all the spiritual energy of the race, and that concentrated energy is to pour forth in a deluge on the world whenever circumstances are propitious.'

It means, each one of us born and brought up in India has a special responsibility of knowing about the Indian cultural and spiritual heritage, imbibing them into our hearts, practising them in our lives, and propagating this message to the whole of humanity, which is hungry and thirsty for it. Swamiji travelled all over the globe and from his experience he said, 'The world is waiting for that treasure; little do you know how much of hunger and of thirst there is outside of India for these wonderful treasures of our forefathers.' Our forefathers in this land had thought about the human being in depth. All the mysteries of the inner life have been thoroughly contemplated, discussed, documented, and preserved in this holy land in the form of the scriptures called the *Vedas* and the *Upanishads*. So, said Swami Vivekananda, 'Go back to your Upanishads – the shining, the strengthening, the bright philosophy – and part from all these mysterious things, all these weakening things.' He spoke about the strength of the muscle, *bāhubala*, the strength of the intellect, *buddhibala*, and, lastly, the strength of the Spirit, *ātmabala*. Being strengthened by these three, Indians will awaken and conquer the world, not by the sword or the gun, but by the power of the Spirit. And in this area, Vivekananda said, India will be the Guru of the whole world. We cannot sit at the feet of the Westerns and learn about the Spirit and about God. There the Westerners have to sit at our feet and listen and learn. But, when it comes to science and technology, we will sit at the feet of Westerners and learn.

He had a great passion to combine the great elements of the East and the West. A new order, a new civilization, will rise, when the best elements of the East and the West are combined. The message of the East, the message of religion and inwardness, can be happily blended with the Western science, technology, work efficiency, honesty, truthfulness, business efficiency, and so on. When you have these two, he said, you will have a very powerful body, a very penetrating and powerful intellect, and a fully expanded spirit, which encompasses the whole universe. This was Swamiji's dream, and he wanted each one of you, the youth of India, to realize the dream. He charged each one of us to dream about it, think about it, and actualize it.

So his India was not a mere geographical entity in which he was born and brought up. Why is India great? Not because I was born in it, but because India has been preserving a great spiritual culture, this tremendous truths about the inner world in such a fine, subtle fashion, which no other country has been able to do. Just as Westerners are cultivating external science, in the East, in India, we have cultivated this inner science, the science of the inner world. The outer science and the inner science of the Spirit must now be combined to have a wonderful civilization of the world. So, this was Swami Vivekananda's patriotism.

When he talked about national integration, what was to him the glue, with which India would come together? Not language, dress or rituals. We cannot have uniformity of rituals – universal rituals. We cannot have uniformity of mythology or even of philosophy. But, what can unify us is spirituality, the science of the *Ātman*, called the *Ātmavidyā* or *Brahmavidyā*. The *Brahmavidyā* of the *Upanishads* talks about the infinite, cosmic being: *Satyam, Jnānam*,

Anantam Brahman. According to the *Taittiriya Upanishad*, *Brahman* is *satyam* (truth), *jnānam* (supreme knowledge or consciousness), *Anantam* (infinite). But this *Brahman* has to be realized in one's own Self as the *Ātman*. This is a very, very subtle and important point: the *Brahman* is not out there, but has to be realized as one's own inner Self in the cave of one's own heart. Unless this is done, Indians will remain in a state of stupor and ignorance, in a state in which they will not know their own, real, inner potentiality. Awakening the inner potentiality of every human being was the task Vivekananda addressed. He wrote in a letter, 'My ideal indeed can be put into a few words and that is: to preach unto mankind their divinity, and how to make it manifest in every movement of life.' In the same letter he writes, 'Awake, awake, great ones! The world is burning with misery. Can you sleep?'

When the entire country awakens as a nation, as a part of this awakening, you can realize your own inner potential, which is divine. In every movement of your life this divinity is to be awakened and manifested. India has been cultivating the science of spirituality for thousands of years. The best brains of our country have been engaged in this pursuit for thousands of years. So, Swamiji says, 'Do you want that the Ganga should go back to its icy bed and begin a new course? Even if that were possible, it would be impossible for this country to give up her characteristic course of religious life and take up for herself a new career of politics or something else.' So, his idea of integrating the whole nation is not just a geographical or political integration, not even an emotional or sentimental integration, not even an integration based upon the feeling that we are Indians, but it is a spiritual integration based upon the awakening of the inner Spirit, which was dormant in the ordinary human being. The touch of Swami Vivekananda will be the awakener of the potential divinity in each one of us. He felt that this has to be done, and once you do this, the entire Indian nation will be unified, integrated, not on the basis of science and technology, not on the basis of material advancement, but on the basis of spirituality, inwardness, contemplation.

Swami Vivekananda said: This grand truth was available to us since eternity, but we did not care to apply this truth in our daily life and to society. What happens to a person who realizes the Self, realizes the truth that the same *Ātman* is present everywhere? He gets supreme same-sightedness or *Sāmya-drishti*, *Samatva-buddhi*. The *Samatva-buddhi* has been expounded, explicated in our scriptures in a powerful way. But when it comes to society, we did not apply this. There is so much inequality in society, and so much equality is being spoken about in our scriptures! This caused great pain in Vivekananda's heart. So, he said, we have all the truths already, only we have to apply them to society at every level – at the physical level, at the mental level, at the intellectual level, and the spiritual level. Once we do this, India will be awakened.

In one of his lectures in Madras, Swamiji talks about patriotism. We say, Swami Vivekananda was a great patriot, a great lover of India. There he says, 'They talk of patriotism. I believe in patriotism, and I also have my own ideal of patriotism.' It is not easy to be a patriot. We bravely talk about love of India and our being patriots. A patriot does not mean a man with the Indian flag, marching up and down and shouting, '*Merā Bhārat mahān hai*'. So, there he explains his own ideas of patriotism:

'Three things are necessary for great achievements. First, feel from the heart.... Feel, therefore, my would-be reformers, my would-be patriots! Do you feel? Do you feel that millions and millions of the descendants of gods and of sages have become next-door neighbors to brutes? Do you feel that millions are starving today, and millions have been starving for ages? Do you feel that ignorance has come over the land as a dark cloud? Does it make you restless? Does it make you sleepless? Has it gone into your blood, coursing through your veins, becoming consonant with your heartbeats? Has it made you almost mad? Are you seized with that one idea of the misery of ruin, and have you forgotten all about your name,

your fame, your wives, your children, your property, even your own bodies? Have you done that? That is the first step to become a patriot, the very first step....

‘You may feel, then; but instead of spending your energies in frothy talk, have you found any way out, any practical solution, some help instead of condemnation, some sweet words to soothe their miseries, to bring them out of this living death?

‘Yet that is not all. Have you got the will to surmount mountain-high obstructions? If the whole world stands against you sword in hand, would you still dare to do what you think is right?... Have you got that steadfastness? If you have these three things, each one of you will work miracles.’

The first is a tremendous feeling heart, which is what we call *Bhakti* in the usual parlance. The second is a deeply contemplating mind, which analyses, debates over things, finds out a practical solution through the intellect, which is what we call *Jnāna*. And the third, the capacity to integrate the mind and the heart, intellect and feeling, thought and emotion, and make it produce practical actions with courage and determination, *Sātvitka Driti*, the purified, determined mind, is what we call *Karma*. Here we have *Jnāna*, *Bhakti* and *Karma* combined together and enveloped by the power of concentration, which is called *Yoga*. Through *Jnāna*, *Bhakti*, *Karma*, and *Yoga*, one or more or all of them, the vision of the *Paramātman* is obtained.

This is the ideal of India, and through this he wanted to integrate India. Integration of India means integrating Indian minds, Indian hearts, and Indian emotions. It cannot come by parochial and fanatical clinging to my religion, my caste, my language, and so on, which is happening in the country. That will only divide us. You integrate your emotions through *Bhakti* – not only love God, but also have a focus on whatever pursuit you have to take up; and integrate your intellect through *Jnāna*, and integrate the capacity for work, *Karma*, for the welfare of humanity. And there should be tremendous concentration to bear upon *Jnāna*, *Bhakti* and *Karma*.

Swamiji said that the nation can be integrated by upholding the national ideals. In his own words, ‘The national ideals of India are RENUNCIATION and SERVICE. Intensify her in those channels, and the rest will take care of itself.’ He refined the terms used in the *Vedas*, the *Upanishads*, and the *Gita*, interpreted them, and vivified them through his own life and the life of his great Guru, Sri Ramakrishna, whom he called the living Parliament of Religions, and transmitted them to all of us with a tremendous passion and power and the love and compassion which is unparalleled in the history of humanity. And he himself was the embodiment of this union of *Jnāna*, *Bhakti*, *Karma*, and *Yoga*. This, my friends, he has bequeathed to all of us.

He will be most happy, if each one of us tries to live this integrated *yoga* in the individual life, through which we can contribute to national integration in our small, simple, humble way. If we do this Vivekananda’s blessings will be upon us, and we will receive tremendous energy and enthusiasm – not to divide, but to unify. The last words which he spoke in the Parliament of Religions may be recalled in this context: ‘Upon the banner of every religion will soon be written, in spite of resistance: “Help and not Fight”, “Assimilation and not Destruction”, “Harmony and Peace and not Dissension”.’