

Love Thy Motherland

True patriotism has become a thing of the past. We are so busy with ourselves that we have no time for such idealism. Sometimes we pay lip service, but the silence of our heart is deafening. Swami Vivekananda said, 'Close your lips and let your hearts open.' At our heart most of us seem to believe nationalism and patriotism are idle dreams of a bygone era. We enjoy the fruits of freedom and leave the hapless poor of India to suffer and die.

If the new generation of India wants to bring about a real change in feeling and outlook, they will have to rediscover Swami Vivekananda. He loved India as the mother. She was the 'queen of his adoration'. As a young man he approached the fundamental questions of life with a robust physique, sharp intellect, and immense purity of character and scaled the highest peak of spiritual realization. His vision was then turned by his beloved Master to mankind and its sufferings. He became love personified. He loved all mankind as 'divinities on earth'. Nevertheless, the place Mother India occupied in his heart was unique. Because it is her eternal message that can humanize the world: 'Ye divinities on earth! Sinners? It is a sin to call a man so.' Her message of divinity of man is also the message of oneness. So it enabled Indian society to accommodate all variety within a single scheme of human progress. It can transform human civilization with the light of wisdom and fearlessness, of love and selfless service.

Swami Vivekananda saw India – 'By the past, through the present, to the future!' – to use the words of Auguste Comte. The whole panorama of Indian life through ages was captured in his prophetic vision and the national mission discovered for the first time: 'I stand in awe before the unbroken procession of scores of shining centuries, with here and there a dim link in the chain, only to flare up with added brilliance in the next, and there she is walking with her own majestic steps – my motherland – to fulfil her glorious destiny, which no power on earth or in heaven can check – *the regeneration of man the brute into man the God.*'

Swamiji loved India not only for her strength, not only for her hoary past. He loved her children in spite of all their failings. His acquaintance with the motherland and her people was not from books and newspapers. He delved deep into the ocean of humanity called India and got it firsthand. He spent days and nights with the poorest and the outcaste, and again with the best scholars and kings. He felt the agony of the masses with all his heart. He wrote in a letter, 'I love the poor, the ignorant, the downtrodden, I feel for them – the Lord knows how much.' He preached love that had the power of rousing the whole nation. He said, 'I heard in Japan that it was the belief of the girls of that country that their dolls would be animated if they were loved with all their heart. The Japanese girl never breaks her doll.... I too believe that India will awake again if anyone could love with all his heart the people of the country....' After elaborating on Swamiji's love for the Indian people of all religious communities, Sister Nivedita wrote, 'He, our Master, incarnates for us in his own person, that great mutual love which is the Indian national ideal.'

He was pained to see the heartless upper classes, who cared little for the poor, the ignorant, the oppressed. 'Who thinks of raising these sunken downtrodden millions?' he lamented. 'A few thousand graduates do not make a nation, a few rich men do not make a nation.... Ninety per cent of our people are without education – who thinks of that? – these Babus, the so-called patriots?'

Even today, as the National Knowledge Commission has reported, ‘The proportion of our population, in the age group 18-24, that enters the world of higher education is around 7 per cent, which is one-half the average of Asia.’ This 7 per cent, of course, do not make the nation. Some Indians are now among the richest of the world, but what about the 75 per cent living in villages? ‘The 2001 census indicates that the literacy level in the country has gone up to 65.38%...’ – not educational level. But ‘who thinks of that? – these Babus, the so-called patriots?’

Who will then accomplish the task of raising the masses and make India once more vibrant with the ideal of *the regeneration of man the brute into man the God*? Listen to Swamiji once more: ‘On the one hand there is the conservative society, like a mass of inert matter; on the other, the restless, impatient, fire-darting reformer; the way to good lies between the two.’ ‘Therefore, I always say that some young men with burning patriotism and renunciation are needed.’

So, he set out to make ‘men’ first, and called the youth: ‘Let us all work hard, my brethren; this is no time for sleep. On our work depends the coming of the India of the future. She is there ready waiting. She is only sleeping. Arise and awake and see her seated here on her eternal throne, rejuvenated, more glorious than she ever was – this motherland of ours.’