

THE WORK WORTH DOING

In a letter to Miss Margaret Elizabeth Nobel, who was later christened as Sister Nivedita, Swami Vivekananda wrote on 7 June 1896 from London, 'Bold words and bolder deeds are what we want. Awake, awake, great ones! The world is burning with misery. Can you sleep? Let us call and call till the sleeping gods awake, till the god within answers to the call. What more is in life? What greater work? The details come to me as I go. I never make plans. Plans grow and work themselves. I only say, awake, awake!' The great one is hidden in every human being as the 'sleeping god'. Rousing this god to self-conscious activity was the mission of Swami Vivekananda, and not preaching this or that religion.

He further says in that 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.' This is religion in practice, the dynamic Religion. Not a particular religion or sect, that stands merely for ethnic identity, but the building of life and character. Obviously this must constitute the very core of education if we are to have real men to fill our society.

Swamiji wanted all round development for all mankind. That would, of course, require many changes in economic, administrative, and other areas also. But, for such changes, one can never chalk out a fixed and specific plan of action once for all, which will be applicable for all times and all societies. Because the huge and complex set of specific conditions prevailing in any society will continuously change. Nor is such a plan needed to be given, if we have faith in man. If man, the sleeping god, can be woken up, he will be always able to find out the solutions suitable for the problems around him. He will also execute such plans with fiery zeal. And without such men the optimal plans are also nothing.

The only plan that can be given for all humanity of all times with certainty is for dealing with the core problems and possibilities of man himself. Such a plan comes from the greatest souls in every age, for each age requires it afresh, to suit its special characteristics. That is a historical necessity. In our age, the modern era of the people, of science and technology, and of internationalism, Swamiji came to give it to the world. That is not an ordinary, worldly, detailed plan of 'doing' things, but a *master plan* of 'being and becoming' – being true men and becoming one with all. If that can be implemented with an appreciable degree of success, both the of external problems will get proportionately reduced, as they are mostly the outcome of the internal poverty of men. Good plans for 'doing' good things in relation to economic and other spheres too will be forthcoming along with changes in circumstances.

Take, for instance, the life of Netaji Subhas. He responded to the call of Vivekananda at the age of 15, and his life blossomed under his influence. Building the life – that is where he needed Swamiji. Then, the course of action to be taken to free India did not have to be defined and dictated to him in details. However, Swamiji himself gave a broad outline of what was to be done to free India and develop her in all ways. As a pioneer thinker who thought much ahead of his time, he dwelt upon every subject of concern and opened new vistas in each. But he shunned any fixed doctrine of change, that is, any 'ism', so as to accommodate all variety, complexity, and flux of the real world. He delved deep into the very basis of things, and dealt with the root of all problems. He championed the cause of equality and freedom more than anybody else. But all depended, he knew, on producing 'men equal to the system'. Before this first requirement is satisfied, it would be a useless frittering away of energy to build a new system on the foundation of sand.

Subhas Chandra explained, 'Many of us believe that propagation of social or political theories and ideas is essential for the rousing of the wider mass and the youth of a country. As regards the ideas of a State or a society there are innumerable "isms" in vogue these days The fanatic believers of each "ism" have the illusion that once they established their own faith amongst the people, all the suffering and misery of the world would be eradicated.... But with me it is a firm faith that unless at the beginning we have acquired strength of character, rare in its human quality, there is hardly any hope of redeeming mankind by means of any of these "isms". This was why Swami Vivekananda would say, "Man-making is my mission." Men, true in spirit, were indeed the basic need, for without men hopes of national reconstruction or the founding of "isms" on any firm ground would be idle dreams. Hence every youth movement should primarily aim at producing men of the truest type.'

After the passing away of Swamiji, Sister Nivedita wrote in an article appearing in The Hindu, 'Man-making was his own stern brief summary of the work that was worth doing. And laboriously, unflaggingly day after day, he set himself to man-making, playing the part of Guru, of father, even of school-master by turns.'

The Mahamandal is trying to carry this work forward, especially among the youth of India.