

Speaking to Ourselves

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The Mahamandal is not a religious organization in the ordinary sense. It is not a social service organization in the ordinary sense. It is not a social service organization in the ordinary sense. It is not an educational institution in the ordinary sense. But it works to bring real religion to every young man irrespective of his religion by birth or even if he claims to belong to no religion. One may say that he does not belong to any one sectarian religion. But we must tell him, 'Brother, what you need is another religion, the religion that makes man a real man.'

The Mahamandal is a social service organization in a deeper sense. But it does not believe in charity from a high pedestal, but it makes use of social service done in a humble way with a motive formed earlier through correct thinking, understanding, ratiocination. It is done to expand our heart. Religion actually turns a brute into a man and a man into a God and that is necessary in the development of man in all respects. And every man has three aspects – his body, his mind, and his heart.

It is somewhat easier to develop one's body through exercise, nourishment, etc. And it is also not very difficult to develop one's mind, intellect. That one can do. But one who is strong in body and mind only is not a full man. If somebody has a very strong body and a very well developed brain, or intellect, should he remain satisfied? Will he be a real man who will be an asset to any society? No. For he will not be able to make the proper use of the powers of his brawn and brain. Because, unless he has real sympathy and heart to feel for others, his energies, physical and mental, will not yield the best result, the highest benefit that they could yield. Therefore along with the development of body and mind we should try to expand our heart. But mind is only fine matter and body is gross matter. So it is easier to develop the body, but it is somewhat difficult to cultivate the mind. But still these can be developed with care, knowledge, and striving, because these are material things; with proper knowledge we can handle them.

But heart is something finer, and not material in any sense. We cannot reach the heart easily by any means. We know that mind is an instrument which can be used to tackle mind itself. But for handling heart there is no such instrument. Heart can only respond to heart from a distance. It is something like resonance. Radio waves are sent from one place. There is a receiving set at the other end and the set gives us the same speech or music, which comes from the transmitting centre. The heart acts like that. We know of this phenomenon of resonance from physics. Just tune one string of a stringed musical instrument to a particular frequency 240. Let another string be set to the same frequency 240. Just pluck one string. If you make this experiment, you will find that the other string automatically starts vibrating and produces the same note that comes out of the first string. You can activate heart only by this means. You can attune your heart to the heart beats or the feelings of others. That is the only method to work upon one's heart. And this we can do while doing social service with the right motive. That is why the

Mahamandal worker should go to society to help and serve others to expand their own heart. And he is the real *yogi*, as Sri Krishna says in the Gita, who can feel the woe of others and is equally sorry, one who can share others' joy equally. Swami Vivekananda was a great *yogi*, but we must be small *yogis* at least.

We must at least feel for the sufferings of others and make use of the situation to expand our heart. Don't just feel and stay there. Go and stretch your hand and serve him. Try to mitigate his sufferings and then what you learn will be permanent, will live with you, will stay on with you. So this is the place of social service in Mahamandal and this is the scheme of synthesizing the different modes and methods and ways and paths for development. As Swamiji says that religion makes a brute a man, so he says, try to develop your body, mind, and heart and if you can do that fully, you become a full man. And then he says, one who has conquered, mastered his inner nature, as also the outer nature, has true religion. But how to master these? Swamiji goes on to say, for this purpose you can make use of any one, two, or more or all the several paths, and he mentioned four traditional great paths for self-development. These traditional paths have a common name. That is Yoga. There are these *yogas*: *Jnana-yoga*, the path of knowledge; *Raja-yoga*, the path of mind-control; then *Bhakti-yoga*, the path of devotion, and *Karma-yoga*, the path of work. These are four traditional paths following which we can develop ourselves and become full men, men who have developed the body, developed the mind, and expanded the heart, so that we overcome the weaknesses, the beastly weaknesses we have and become men with the shining of divinity.

The path of knowledge or *Jnana-yoga* makes use of discrimination between right and wrong, the lasting and the transient, and always discards the transient things and sticks continuously to truth, to the right thing, to the everlasting thing, and gradually realizes the ultimate truth.

The *Raja-yogi* says that the only thing we have got to do to have fulfillment of life, to develop fully, to realize all our potentiality, is to have full control over our mind. You can do this with the help of the eight-fold ways, *astanga yoga* – *sama, dama, asana, pranayama, pratyahara, dharana, dhyana, and samadhi*. So we have a little of this also here.

Mahamandal wants to make use of a little of all these four paths. And Swamiji has said that almost every man in society takes at least one of these paths as a way to personal development. Swamiji said, My ideal man is he who in his character has all the true qualities equally present in full. He is my ideal man who can combine in his pursuit these four methods, practice them in life, and fully develop himself. He is a real full man and this full man is what we want to be.

The *Bhakti-yogi*, the man who takes to the path of devotion, says, 'I find love in me and it seems, it is something expanding. It is an expanding universe, as though. It tries to expand all the time. It is not content if it is there alone. It wants to touch others, gradually grow and engulf the whole world. This love that I feel in my heart suggests that there is something in this universe or beyond this universe which is of the nature of love pure and I somehow have a hankering that this small love will mingle with that ocean of love.' And he strives that way. He sheds tears. He feels. He goes to the temple, applies sandal wood paste to the images, feels that love. He finds love in that hard stone, that

hard wood. It is there he feels, behind hardness, the softest thing, love – that way he feels; he tries to find that.

Good, very good. It is necessary. This feeling needs first to have sympathy for others. From this only we can expand our heart. But we can see that even if we can make use of all knowledge, make use of our control of mind, and at the same time have this feeling, sympathy for others – what happens? Nothing. I know what is right, I know how to feel for others, I know how to control my mind, but if I stay there, what I do is nothing. I must go forward and work being goaded by the feeling, with sympathy, having that mental capacity to concentrate on any work for success, and having made use of that knowledge, the power of discrimination to do, to know what to do to ameliorate the suffering of other. I must plunge into work. And if you work in that way, with that motivation you will find great joy through this work.

Such work leads to the same truth where you can go through discrimination, through control of mind, or by loving God. So, if you somehow synthesize these paths in the attempt to develop yourself to a full man you will be the ideal man.

The Mahamandal places this ideal of man given by Swami Vivekananda to the youths of the country and suggests a method to synthesize in a way these four great paths. It says, we cannot use discrimination like a Vedantist. It is very very difficult. Even Totapuri, who initiated Sri Ramakrishna in the Vedantic practice, did he see this sameness in everything? Did he not become angry when somebody touched his fire? And Sri Ramakrishna started laughing and rolling on the ground. Totapuri became angry. He said, 'What is this, why do you laugh?' Sri Ramakrishna said, 'I am amused at your Vedantic knowledge of non-difference. This man, a lowly man, came and touched the holy fire and you went afire!' So we are not going to be Vedantists like that. We are not going to discriminate that way, but we want to increase our power of discrimination by a simple method – by studying the writings of Swami Vivekananda. Discussing these things to increase the capacity to discriminate between things of permanent nature and things of transient nature, between good and bad, between right and wrong. This is *Janana-yoga*, the of knowledge, for us.

Likewise practicing concentration, everyday we shall learn how to have control over the mind. And we shall practise devotion and love for God not in temples, churches, and mosques only, but we shall go to the open field, to the streets, to the huts of the poor people and try to feel the presence in them all of our Beloved, whom we will no longer ignorantly call man but try to recognize as God.

Swamiji asked us the see God in man. He said, I found God nowhere. I have tried and moved all my life in search of God, but I found God only in man. We shall go there and place all our devotion at the feet of the suffering millions of the society. That is how we shall practice devotion and we shall work only to serve people to expand our heart.

That is how we will combine these four great methods for realizing our highest potentiality, to grow in body and mind and to expand our heart and overcome all the beastly qualities that we have now and become really divinities upon earth.