

# THE PROBLEM OF THE YOUTH : ITS SOLUTION

**Sri Nabaniharan Mukhopadhyay**

The perennial task of man is to remake his world. But the world really belongs to the youth. The youth gives the hero and the followers who change the world from age to age. But it is an enigma that the youth does not remain young. He comes of age and is about to compromise with the world as it is. The youth of yesteryear engages himself in 'useful' works and forgets the 'noble deeds' which he did and dreamt of as a youth.

Time flows. History moves on. The 'gap' yawns as ever.

Today's youth is as restive, impatient with hypocrisy of the past and the dichotomy between precept and practice, and as stout a protagonist of recognition of his and others' identities, as was the youth of the time when Christ was not but Socrates was and commented on the youths. Because of the fleeting nature of youth, the young plunge into action before they could afford to plan something to achieve a well-chosen aim which would remove the incongruities which appeared intolerable to them.

## **The Problem**

They have great enthusiasm, vigour, and will to remove ills and injustice in society, love and respect for ideals and values not yet defined or identified; their hopeful disposition makes them think themselves equal to the great problems as they view them. In spite of all their qualities, enthusiasm, and will youths often fail in their mission and wait to see the same with youths of the future. What is the cause? As Aristotle put it: 'All their mistakes are in the direction of doing things excessively and vehemently. They overdo everything - they love too much, hate too much, and do the same with everything else.' This is inherent in the youth. This is their power and this again robs them of their real power. This is an enigma.

This may be called the style of the youth. This characteristic of the youth is Apparent in a small section which is active makes the style of the youth apparent and its existence felt. The characteristic of the young generation is the way they approach the world, the style of their action rather than ideologies or definite goals, to focus on the process rather than definite programmes, where 'flux is more obvious than fixed purpose.' The youths love to be 'psychologically open to a historically unpredictable future.' They abhor fixity, stability, and 'closedness' and prefer unfinishedness, flexibility, and openness. All this is good. But the trouble brews from the apparent idealization of such notions. It is good to start with flexibility and openness, but it is horrible to worship 'unfinishedness' all the

time. The inherent desire of the youth for recognition and undefined identity involves, without their recognizing and admitting this, some sort of fixity, stability, and closedness. Without a fixed purpose, a goal, a programme, the vision of personal and collective future will ever remained blurred and vague.

In most cases this openness, this flexibility, this deliberate lack of a fixed purpose and goal, this want of a clear-cut long-range plan of action spills over to adulthood with the result that as adults we become the unwilling target of the new young generation. As with our once-cherished 'unfinishedness' still lingering with us we remain unequal to the great task of moulding our world and are accused of captaining a rudderless ship of society which brings to relief 'poverty in the midst of affluence, hypocrisy in stating one set of values and following another, rhetoric instead of action, promises without fulfillment, empty words.'

The new young generation revolts against all these, hates these too much, loves too much openness, flexibility, and lack of purpose, goal, programme and acts excessively and vehemently for some time until they tell apart 'noble deeds' and 'useful work', and become tired and unnoticed, when they reach adulthood, wait for a newer generation to curse them. This is almost an eternal problem with youth and unless something is and can be done about it youth problem will ever remain as illusive as it seems now.

### **Secondary Problems**

All other problems of the youth are superficial and can be rather easily taken care of for solution till newer smaller problems pose for our attention. There are, however, some other problems of somewhat basic nature, which needs tackling for solution of the most vital problem of the youth discussed above. Basic problems pertaining to anything Superficial or secondary problems arise out of the reaction of the thing to actions of other things or environment. Such problems can be tackled by readjusting the actions of outer things or environments which is rather of an easier nature compared to dealing with basic problems coming from inner nature. Who does not know the secondary problems faced by the youth today? They don't have – many of them – proper nutrition, health care, amenities for proper development of their body and mind, scope for self-expression and cultural development, proper educational facilities, cheap text books, healthy reading materials, constructive mass-media, suitable accommodation for living, study, and recreation, employment opportunity, occupation suiting aptitudes, enough constructive work to keep them engaged in idle hours, etc. etc. These are more or less on the physical side and may be tackled externally if there is will. There are certain other secondary problems of the youth which are of mental or moral nature. Such as recognition of the youth, valuing their opinion, entrusting responsibility on them etc. These may also be tackled with understanding, sympathy, and will to use the youth potential.

But basic problems need deeper probe and demand subtle tackling where external methods have very little to do except by way of suggestions. Here the individual has to act internally to tackle the inner cause of the problem.

## **The Roots of the Problem**

Before identifying other basic problems than the vital one already discussed, it is good to try to see the root cause, the genesis, of the basic problem. Three things together give rise to the basic problems of the youth: *Freedom, Vitality, and Ignorance*. Freedom is inherent in all. The aim of life is to recognize this freedom in its totality. Till it is done life does not rest. It struggles on and on to achieve this full freedom. Ignorance veils this freedom. And as we go ahead from lower to higher comprehension and realization of freedom, the veil of ignorance becomes thinner and thinner until it vanishes with the full recognition of freedom. Vitality of life is to achieve this dual aim – two in one, the two being inversely proportional. In youth vitality is much pronounced. It makes them ‘do things excessively and vehemently’, gives their emotions a free play leading to loving and hating too much, overdoing everything; it makes them imagine that they are equal to any task. Their ignorance, lack of a comprehensive view of life, keeps them satisfied with no definite purpose or a fixed goal of life. Ignorantly they believe they can make the best of their life without an aim. Due to ignorance they effervesce till vitality diminishes and do not chalk out a long range plan, do not lay down in advance a life pattern to be followed until it is too late. Due to ignorance they think that all the detestable things and injustices are due to failings of the elders, but they will never make the mistakes elder did even without preparing themselves suitably to ward off the crushing diseases. Of freedom their notion being too limited, they think, it is to ‘go as you like’. But the unrecognized inner urge to realize freedom makes vain attempts to release itself in their preferring flexibility, openness rather than fixity, stability, constancies of behaviour, which have their value on the way to adulthood from adolescence, though they may not be to their liking in the prime of their youth.

## **Who and Where to Find**

It is not the elder who should find out the problems of the youths, their causes, and act to solve them. That is unfortunately how the youth problem is looked at and discussed. It is the youths who should find out these things and try to solve their problems. But where are the youths running to find the cause of their basic problem and to fight it out? They must not try to find it externally. It is an internal problem. It arises from their internal nature. They must catch it there and exclaim : ‘It is the cause, my soul!’

If the present youths wish to become the first victorious young generation, which will not, like all its predecessors, fret and fume and be finished, they will have to understand their real problem, its genesis, and plan to solve it. This requires clear thinking in a comprehensive way, so that they may not meet with the same fate of discredit when emerging in adulthood. One generation with courage has to cry halt to the queer way of ignorance in manipulating and repeating its nefarious game with the youth.

## **Another Basic Problem**

Thus far with primary Problem of the youth which in a negative (by way of omission on the part of the youth) is a great disadvantage. But it causes other basic problems which are more of a positive nature (inducing commission by the youth) and harmful. As the misconstrued idea of freedom indulges the youths not to care for a goal or plan or fixed ideas or ideals and to prefer flexibility and openness, inclusiveness and personalism, non-academicism and participation, it stealthily offers support to the unmeditated indulgence for non-asceticism to which the youth fall an easy prey. True freedom is veiled by ignorance, which has the double efficiency of shrouding the truth and projecting a wrong conception. Youthful vitality casts a spell on the conscience of the youth who without accepting fixed moral norms believes in building a morality of his own according to his choice and youthful inclinations, ultimate effects of which on his character, personality, and destiny can hardly be assessed without sufficient experience of life. Asceticism, abstinence, self-discipline, refraining from indulgence in cheap pleasure are not impediments on way to freedom, but are primary essentials for freedom. These are the prerequisites which coupled with practice give one control of the mind which again is the only instrument to work for freedom. But unfortunately asceticism, abstinence, has no place in the mind of the youth as he has adored 'unfinishedness' and his philosophy expresses itself in the oozy words of Dryden :

Present joys are more to flesh and blood

Than a dull prospect of a distant good.

He takes no note of Lamb's warning :

'Tis man's worst deed

To let the 'things that have been' run to waste

And in the unmeaning present sink the past.

And in the end, when it is too late repeats

Foust's famous soliloquy in the wood :

Oh ! for the broken state of man : I know

Our unfulfilment now !

## **The Solution**

Can he not turn his 'unfulfilment into fulfillment? Can he not stop the 'things that have been' from running to waste? Can he not make the 'dull prospect of a distant good' a realized object? He can. How? He should for the purpose suitably tackle the three root causes of his basic problem: Freedom, vitality, and ignorance. Unveil and realize freedom gradually, little by little. Simultaneously ignorance will gradually diminish. Control youthful vitality so that it is not wasted unnecessarily. In short he should control his nature. This will check his overdoing everything, loving or hating too much, doing things excessively and vehemently. He must learn to control his mind. This will give him the capacity to think properly, to have a view on life, to fix an aim, to plan to achieve it, the dexterity to execute the plan, the capacity to control, regulate, and use his vitality for the

purpose, in short a grip on his inner nature and a control over his outward behaviour. This will also purify his intellect (*buddhi*) which will gradually pierce through ignorance and he will have better comprehension of his freedom. A calm intellect will help him see the goal of his life, plan to achieve the same, and give him the will to work for the purpose. He will have had the required control over his vitality which will be channellized properly and he will see the prospect of a distant good realizable.

The control of his inner nature will equip him with the capacity to control outer nature. When he controls nature both inner and outer, he will dispel ignorance and know the real meaning of freedom, which is not unmeaning openness, flexibility, unfinishedness, non-asceticism, love of sense pleasure or material security. He will then be nearer his true identity and start recognizing his true nature and understanding the necessity of a fixed goal, a purpose. This meditated preparation for adulthood will ensure recognition. This preparation gives the youth a grip over his real problem.

### **Conclusion**

From Socrates to modern psychologists many have analysed the youth Problem in various ways. Few have suggested or expected a solution and have gone beyond condemning or half-heartedly defending the youth or at best holding either youth problem. Here is an analysis and a suggested solution of the youth problem in the light of the teachings of Swami Vivekananda. All of the present young generation will of course not care to try it. But if a sizable section of them makes an attempt to try it a new youth style may emerge. It may cause a breakthrough and the new style may be a dominating style and in spite of a large section remaining passive and non-participating the domination new style may, as in the past and the present, decide the future course of youth movement and bring them a new destiny, which will not be a mere repetition of transient effervescence and frustration and condemnation by posterity.

If all here is not palatable, youths should ponder if it is nourishing and beneficial. Vidura, the wise man, told Dhritarashtra, the king: Easily available are men, O King ! who always speak palatable words, but few are the speakers and listeners of the really nourishing words though they may not be so palatable.

Youths should do well to read as a supplementary study *The Mind and its Control* by Swami Budhananda ( Advaita Ashrama, Calcutta-14 ).

The problem is clear. A solution is possible. Take up the challenge and show the bewildered society that the youths are really capable of solving their real problem. This is the way some are tackling the problem in their own lives. This is the way for any youth – in his country or elsewhere, even in the West. You need not discard it as it sounds new. It is simple. Because it is simple you need not neglect it. Great truths are always simple. With your youthful vitality, if you think you can take up though this is simple in theory, this is very difficult to actualize and may be taken up only by youths with vitality, vigour, and a vision for the future.

### **THE NEED FOR AN IDEAL**

Hardly it needs restating that the future depends on the youth. How the youths view human life, how much they care about their own future and destiny of the nation, how far they are serious about moulding a future of their choice, how sincere they will be in their efforts-make all the difference. On the one hand there are youthful frivolities, immaturity, and hum frailties peculiar to their age and on the other there is the discouraging environmental influence on the young generation. They don't get the benefit of socially arranged education worth its name that could help them form a life-view and give them the essential requisites for building their manhood. Literature, cinema, music, etc. today perhaps more often than not do more harm to them than giving them ideological nourishment. Politics or rather political parties use them to their benefit without caring for their proper upbringing and real welfare and very often demoralize them in various ways. Between their own weak points and these weakening influences they find it hard to stand erect on their feet and prepare for the onward march towards building their life.

What is the way out of this predicament? The way is to seek an ideal. Only by taking up an ideal youths can form a life-view, fix a goal of life, chart a course, and remain steadfast while on their way to the goal. An ideal answers to one's highest conception, the conception of perfection. An ideal is a perfect type, an actual thing as standard for imitation. Normally we learn through imitation. If we look back we can easily see that from childhood we have learnt almost everything through imitation. We learnt speech, walking, our mother tongue through imitation. Our behaviour, our manners, our nature are very much what we have acquired through imitation. Therefore, it is very, very important that we should have something before us which or whom we can safely imitate to acquire good nature, good manners, good behaviour, good qualities that go to build a whole good character. We need such an ideal. We need to place it before us *first* to give us the right attitude to life, *secondly* providing something great which we can imitate, and *thirdly* providing an anchor which will keep us steady in our endeavour, undeflected from our path, and which will save us from dangers on the way. Dangers may be due to confusion created by contending ideals or lack of confidence, sincerity, and perseverance or one's own self-seeking pleasure-oriented instincts. The goal should be clear as the midday sun, the way should be charted with meticulous care, and the chosen ideal, a guiding star that sets not, should be stuck to.

The ideal should be one and not many. If we run after many ideals we will achieve none. One ideal should be taken up and the life should be dedicated to that one ideal and that *alone*. This is the secret of success. None has succeeded by taking up half-heartedly a little of many ideals. One may forget this only at the cost of succeeding to achieve any ideal in the whole life. Failures come to discover this truth only very late. It is good to know this truth from others in the very beginning, if one is keen to avoid the frustration of learning it through one's own experience of failure in life.

If we see all the above arguments on the necessity of an ideal and of one ideal alone and if we seek an ideal that may stand us in good stead for our purpose discussed, we may find such an ideal in Swami Vivekananda. Here is an ideal, which, if the youths take it up, will give them a vision of life, give them a goal, a way, and a hand that will never loosen its grip and take care of them when they are about to tumble, will give them confidence,

enthusiasm, and the joy of fulfillment of life. For his life is worth of emulation and he taught only man-making and that alone.

## OUR IDEAL

While discussing the need for an ideal we have seen that it is essential to have an ideal, if we want to succeed in our individual lives and if we want to succeed in any endeavour for social good. Can we remain satisfied without making conscious efforts to make the best of our individual life? Why are we born then? We cannot deny the fact that we have some freedom to make use of this life according to our choice? Can we deny, having gained some experience of life, that on our choice to use such freedom depends our future? If that is so, is it not mere foolishness not to use that freedom, the little that we can exercise, to achieve the best in our life? Can we think of remaining satisfied with my own good without caring for the good of the society I live in? Thus it is imperative that each one of us should strive for making the best use of our capabilities to achieve the greatest good in individual lives and the life of our society. If we don't do that we shall be living a vegetating life, not the life of human beings worth its name, without learning to understand the meaning of life, without any aim of life to be fulfilled – the life of ordinary animals, being born, searching for food, leaving a few offspring, and then dying an ignominious death, without caring to live a life worth its name and without giving out of that life to others that could be offered to them.

Here we have seen the necessity for an ideal.

What sort of a thing an ideal should be? It should first set me thinking. It should guide me think how I can use my life that I happen to possess, what this life means, what could be the goal of this life. It should be inspiring, it should make my actions proceed to fulfill what I understand my life to be. It should take care of me as I proceed. It should be constant, not capable of changing. It should be clear. It should be like a blazing fire, never to become dim. Ideals are there in books, ideals may often be found in utterances of persons who care not to live those ideals. They may at times stir our mind but are not inspiring enough to goad us to action. Abstract ideas away from actual life seldom have such power. Ideals are best placed before us through life in which ideals are lived. Because we need to actualize the ideals in our life, not merely to get by heart a few words standing for ideals. It is not always possible to have such lives before us But there have been lives in which ideals have been lived, lives that are before us as lives still living though the mortal frames associated with such lives have vanished. Lives that are like a blazing fire, lives that can inspire whole generations, lives that will never change again.

If we look to Swami Vivekananda we find in him such an ideal. Today's hero may change tomorrow. Tomorrow he may profess some other ideals than what is professed today. Tomorrow in the life of today's hero we may discover the reflections of some different ideals or lower ideals. But Vivekananda is the hero of all times, a veritable hero of the youth force, a hero of the submerged millions of all times and of all climes, a hero who unfurls the banner of the freedom of those in bondage of all sorts, in whose life have been lived the highest ideals, who professes the highest ideals of human life and the greatest good of the many. We need not dig him out of the buried past of forgotten lores.

He is like a blazing fire before us, a sun that 'knows not day from night,' a dynamo of living ideals capable of producing transports and shocks here and now electrifying us to the marrow. The Messiah of manliness, a thunderbolt to weaknesses, dejection, and despondency, a lion-roar of strength, courage and fearlessness, professing *shraddha*, faith, and self-confidence, extolling sacrifice and service. Such a hero is Swami Vivekananda who saw God in Man. He can be the ideal. He conforms to everything that a great ideal of life may stand for. He is not to change.

He is for Hindus and Muslims and all others. He is for men and women alike. He is for the rich and the poor. He is for the educated and the illiterate. He is for Indians and non-Indians. He is for the present and the future. He is for all who crave for manhood. Though he exhorts us to make the poor and the illiterate our gods, though he calls him a *mahatman* whose heart bleeds for the poor, he hates to teach metaphysics to people who clamour for food. He denies that he is a metaphysician or even a saint. He claims to be poor and to have loved the poor. He belonged as much to India as to the wide world. Yet he passed sleepless nights and shed tears for the agony of the miserable of his country. He lamented for the children of his Motherland the descendants of the great *rishis*, who have turned next door neighbours to brutes. He moaned for the unfulfilment and the broken state of Man. His behest is: 'Let each one of us pray day and night for the downtrodden millions in India who are held fast by poverty, priestcraft and tyranny – pray day and night for them. O Thou Mother of Strength, take away my weakness, take away my unmanliness, and make me a Man.'

O young men and women of India of today! We place before you this Vivekananda as your ideal. Feel for your own unfulfilment, feel for the unfulfilment of your brothers. Shake off your slumber and lethargy and complacency. Up and be bold. Resolve and act. Move on and struggle. Be men and make man. That is the task for which the hero's mantle has fallen on you.

If you take him as the ideal, he will give you the heart to feel, the head to understand, and the hand to work – to work for the millions of your own brothers, to develop and unfold your potentialities even under circumstances tending to press your life down. He will make the vision of your life clear, show the way to attain it, take care of you if you are in danger. Distractions and obstacles will come from within and without. Your confusion, blurred vision, lack of clear thought, your weaknesses of senses and passions from within and name, fame money, and other allurements and harder hindrances from without will often come to sweep you off your feet. If you make Vivekananda your friend, philosopher, and guide no foe will remain formidable and invincible. You will remain unshaken, see the way, and reach the goal.

There is no better ideal than this today, no better ideal for the youths who feel for the country, who want to dedicate their lives for the building up of a new India, who prefer to wear out than to rust out, who are selfless, who want to find a meaning in their life, who abhor the idea of living and dying like a beast of burden, a slave of his recalcitrant mind and an inimical environment.

Arise, awake! Take up the ideal and reach the goal. Fear not. Mists will melt. The bright sun will shine!



## SWAMI VIVEKANANDA

We have identified the problem of the youths. We have analysed and found the roots of their basic problem. We have searched in the Vedantic thoughts of Vivekananda the clues to a solution. We have understood the necessity for an ideal. We have seen what an ideal is and how it can help us in solving the problem and goad us to action and guide us on along the way to our goal. Now we shall try to acquaint ourselves a little more with this ideal that is Swami Vivekananda.

Swami Vivekananda was the Eagle who soared high up with open wings in company with the kingly Swan to snatch from the heavens the bits of the touchstone that would transform the lives and bring deliverance to the crawling and groveling little gods stuck up in the quagmire of *samsara* deluded by the mirage of *maya* down here. Coming out of the woods of dead society, as it were, the lion jumped from shore to shore, from summit of the vast range of mountains made up of clusters and heaps of dead bones of divinities with a heart, bleeding profusely for their illusory suffering. His yells rent the air of the mother earth;

‘Arise, awake! And stop not till the goal is reached.’

The hero of the era waged a total war against bondage and commanded all to tear asunder the fetters and to be free. Freedom, freedom, freedom is the song of the soul – reared the lion. The colossus took the globe in his hand, as it were, and gave it a good shaking. Frightening bad dreams vanished and the long dark night melted into a smiling morn. This was new dawn in the history of mankind. This is the meaning of the birth of Vivekananda. He was not born on the 12<sup>th</sup> of January 1863 at a particular moment. He is still being born each day each moment in the hearts of hundreds of men and women.

Did not the prophet-poet sing? :

Move on, O Lord, in the resistless path!  
Till thy high noon o’erspreads the world,  
Till every land reflects thy light,  
Till men and women, with uplifted head,  
Behold their shackles broken, and  
Know, in springing joy, their life renewed

Close come his assuring words:

‘It may be that I shall find it good to get outside of my body – to cast it off like a disused garment. But I shall not cease to work. I shall inspire men everywhere until the world shall know that it is one with God.’

He had seen a meaning in the world which may be expressed in the words of Tennyson:

‘Yet, I doubt not throughout ages,  
One increasing purpose runs,  
And the minds of men are widened,  
With the process of the Suns.’

This is what we get in the famous *gayatri* with *vyahriti* as in the *Shukla Yajurveda*. This is the backdrop provided against which we have to look at Swami Vivekananda.

In January 1904 Swamiji's birthday celebration was going on. On the 10<sup>th</sup> in a public meeting at Belur Math Sister Nivedita rose to speak. She said:

'We have not assembled here to get lost momentarily in the exhilaration and exuberance of the celebrations. The celebration is arranged in order that we may acquire the power through which we may put our heart and soul to translate the teachings of Swamiji into action. What did he teach? Did he want that men should sing in his praise? No', replied Nivedita. 'We know that he hated name and fame from the bottom of his heart. Did he want that the name of his master Sri Ramakrishna be spread by all far and wide? No, he did not want that. Did he want that his special advices and methods of work be followed by all? No, he did not want that even. What did he want then?' Nivedita posed the question and said, 'he wanted all to stand upon their own feet and to be men.'

Vivekananda, the prophet-philosopher, looked at the world phenomenon and make a brief summary in the words: 'After all, this world is a series of pictures and man-making is the great interest running through. We were all watching the making of men and that alone.'

None can express the whole phenomenon in a shorter and clearer comprehensive expression. God, men, and the world – their nature and relation – form the core of all true philosophy – a comprehensive vision of all that exists. A similar pithy expression covering all this alluded often to Shankara says :

'In half of a verse I will put what has been elucidated in a crore of books and that is only Brahman is true and the world is false and *jiva* is none other than Brahman.' This has very often been misunderstood and misinterpreted, but it gives an account, and a true account, of all that exists in its static state. Whereas Vivekananda's observation catches a glimpse of the whole in its dynamic state, giving a meaning to all these meaningless flux, the airy nothing. The froth and foam of the flux had a meaning to Swami Vivekananda.

This meaning gives the dynamism to Neo-Vedanta or Practical Vedanta preached by Swami Vivekananda. Thus his slogan was, 'Move on, *charaiveti charaiveti*.' It was he who rose like the sun as the messenger of the gospel of light of the Lord of this age, Sri Ramakrishna, to scatter it in all directions. To use the lines of a poet of his own century:

'And not by the eastern windows only,  
When the daylight comes, comes in the light,  
In front, the sun climbs slow, how slowly.  
But westward, look! The land is bright.'

And he said: 'Bring all light into the world. Bring light to the poor, land more light to the rich, for they require it more. Bring light to the ignorant, and more light to the educated, for the vanities of the education of our time are tremendous. Thus bring light to all and leave the rest unto the Lord.'

He had seen God face to face. He had touched the feet of the God incarnate. He knew, God is everywhere. He knew, everything is Brahman. He knew, to acquire the knowledge, 'I am Brahman,' is the *summum bonum* of human life. But when he entreated Sri Ramakrishna to let him stay immerse in *nirvikalpa Samadhi*, he was rebuked. Vivekananda was born anew. He became a *dwija*. This Vivekananda understood the Vedic utterance which says: 'Some courted death for the sake of God-realization. Some rejected *amrita* for the good of the people.' This is a higher ideal – the very highest.

The master wrote a charter saying: 'Narendra will teach others.' And declared that Narendra was an incarnation of Narayana born on earth to remove the miseries of mankind.

So came to us a saint the like of which is rare on earth as eulogized by the philosopher-poet-prince Bhartrihari in a verse of which Swami Vivekananda was so fond:

'In his mind, word, and deed the holy nectar always flows. He pleases the three worlds with a series of benevolent works. He makes a hill out of an atom of goodness discovered in anyone and that enlarges his own heart. Rare is such a saint.'

The ice had broken and flowed down like the Ganga the vivifying message of Vivekananda – the call of the age to man:

'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. What more is in life? What greater work? *Be and make* – let this be your motto. If you seek your own salvation, you will go to hell. It is the salvation of other that you must seek and even if you have to go to hell in working for other s that is worth more than to gain heaven by seeking your own salvation. Sacrifice in the past has been the Law, it will be, alas, for ages to come. Ye, divinities on earth, Sinners! It is a sin to call a man so. It is a standing libel on human nature. Come up, O lions, and shake off the delusion that you are sheep. You are souls immortal, spirits free, blest and eternal. Ye are not matter, ye are not bodies. Matter is your servant, not you are servant of matter.'

He taught life, he taught expansion of heart, he taught universal love, he taught renunciation and service. He taught manliness and fearlessness.

He knew divine is divine, man is divine, world is also divine. Thus his call was not for divinization of the world, but he called for the whole world to be humanized. This was the *raison d'tere* of his transcendental pragmatism. His call was the same as the call of the Vedas: Aryanize (civilize) the whole world. He took each man where he stood and gave him a lift and his plan found an expression in the lines of Browning:

Progress, man's distinctive mark alone,  
Not God's and not beast',  
God is, they are,  
Man partly is and wholly hopes to be.'

To him religion was being and becoming – the hole soul becoming changed into what it believes – not talk, nor doctrine, nor theories. What was unselfish was moral, what was selfish was immoral. *Pravritti and nivritti* were not action and inactivity. To him *pravritti* and *nivritti were both activity – were both activity – one selfish and the other selfish and the other selfless*. To him life is constant struggle. Struggle for what? Struggle to break all limitations.

A world renowned scientist had once said: If God were an intelligent being he must be a mathematical brain. Swamiji gave two mathematical definitions of man and God. These definitions give a cryptic expression of his philosophy and suggest the line of action to be followed too. For he warned again and again that philosophy without action is meaningless. An ounce of practice is worth twenty tons of big talks, he said.

Man, according to Swami Vivekananda, is an infinite circle whose circumference is nowhere, but the centre is located in one spot; and God is an infinite circle whose circumference is nowhere, but whose centre is everywhere.

This confirms the observation of Max Muller that in India the distance between deity and humanity is very small. Both are an infinite circle whose circumference is nowhere. The difference between man and God is just this, that in the case of man the centre of the circle is located in one spot, and in the case of God the centre is everywhere. This gives a clear idea of the work we have to do. First, to become men, we have to break our limitations, break our small circumferences and become infinite circles whose circumference is nowhere. This is becoming men. What is the motive force to be so? Love, sacrifice, unselfishness, sympathy. What are the hindrances? Selfishness, all narrowness of mind, hatred, jealousy, and so on. When I become a true man then will flow through my thought, word, and action the holy nectar. I will please the three worlds with service abounding, and expand my heart infinitely.

The next phase is to become God. When I become an infinite circle with universal love and compassion. I must not remain fixed at the centre in one spot – this human ego, this body, this name and form. The onrush of all-consuming love emanating from the centre will uproot the fixed centre and all such centres in other man, other beings, other objects will be identified as my centre. *Then I shall have become God.*

All the rest are mere details. Each one may have a set of details for himself and he may work it out.

Thus Swami Vivekananda does not give us some fixed ideas, fixed creeds, fixed rites and rituals. What he gives is a general plan – a master plan for the future to suit the needs of every sort of individuals of all climes and clans, belonging to all religions and philosophies.

Vivekananda stands between the sacred and the secular, *sannyasa* and *samsara*, the individual and society, depth and diffusion, the East and the West, past and future, faith and reason, religion and science, knowledge and action – and synthesizes them in his magnificent personality.

He called particularly the young, the energetic, the intelligent to put their shoulders under the wheel of future construction, to come forward with brain and brawn, and a heart soft as the tender flower and as strong as the thunderbolt.

He exhorts the young to combine *kshatra virya* and *brahma teja* and usher in a new era in the world, of which the *Yajurveda* declared: ‘Where *brahma* and *kshatra* move on simultaneously, there and there alone all the *devas* with the sacred fire dwell and it is called the blessed *loka*.’

He said: ‘I have given you advice enough; now put at least something in practice. Let the world see that your listening to me has been a success.’

‘Who are to stem the tide of degeneration at the sacrifice of name and fame, wealth and enjoyment – nay, of every hope of this or other worlds? A few men have jumped into the breach, have sacrificed themselves. They are a few, we want a few thousands of such as they, and *they will come*.’

If his call does not reach our hearts it is useless to call him great. It is high time that his teachings are taken by heart and thousands of young men of India come forward to prove

to the world that they have listened to Swami Vivekananda and do their best to build a new India and, for that matter, a new world for the posterity of mankind.