

The Role of the Mahamandal

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There is the old saying : You cannot dip into the same river twice. This directly contradicts the other very common adage : History repeats itself. The world is said to be in a flux; it flows along time like a river. And as no river retraces its course, there is no dipping into the same river twice; it has already flown a long way along time in the meantime. How does history then repeat itself? The question is quite pertinent.

But if we look back into time, which we correctly or incorrectly call history, we find so many similar occurrences down the flow of time, though in quite different environments. We seem to find a law of history and declare : History repeats itself, ignoring the other equally correct observation that along the flow to time, the repetitions though very similar are not just repetitions.

The solution lies in the fact that neither of the statements is absolutely wrong or absolutely correct. When an incident seems to repeat itself, the whole *milieu* has completely changed and truly there is no dipping into the exactly same river. But if we do not concern ourselves so much about the exact particles of the flowing river, we find that the river is much the same with its bed, the banks, and other things and the incident we are observing has many things about it which were common with an earlier incident. It is on a crest or on a particular point in an ebb, its nature being very much like the other one we observed at an early date.

This has been the case with many of the big historical strides; and we may learn much out of them, if we care to. Man has lost and regained faith in himself many a time in the course of history and consequently the history of the world has taken different shapes. And even in the same epoch according to the strength of faith in man different nations have left different marks upon history. To quote Swami Vivekananda : ‘The history of the world is the history of a few men who had faith in themselves. As soon as a man or a nation loses faith in himself or itself, death comes.’ We are now passing through a time when we have almost lost all faith in ourselves. There is a total bankruptcy of ideology and action. Our long servitude has made us a nation without a backbone. When the yoke of servitude is lifted from our shoulders, we cannot raise our head; we still stay bent and wait for another yoke or commands to follow like slaves but cannot think of becoming masters of our own future. Why? We have not yet taken the lesson to have faith in ourselves. Swami Vivekananda wanted us to have this lesson first before anything else. He said : ‘If you have faith in all the three hundred and thirty millions of your mythological gods and in all the gods which foreigners have introduced into your midst, and still have no faith in yourselves, there is no salvation for you. Have faith in yourselves and stand up on that faith.’

This we have got to learn individually, as well as, as a nation. Till then, so long as we go on looking to others for help, go abegging all the while, we cannot have salvation either as individuals or as a nation. We have forgotten to take the position of the giver in

any field – this too in the case of individuals and likewise as a nation. We never think – we are never taught to think that way even that we can also, every one of us, take the position of the giver in some field or other. Similarly as a nation also we have something to give. Swamiji says : ‘ In the world always take the position of the giver. Give everything and look for no return.’

These are the simple things we have to teach ourselves if we are to live as a nation, if we want to regain faith in ourselves to stall off national death. Through small and simple items of social work with the right perspective in view we can learn how to take the position of the giver without barter, at the same time gaining faith in ourselves. In this attempt the Akhil Bharat Vivekananda Yuva Mahamandal inspires all its friends. It does not have a big manifesto. In fact it does not know the role it will have to play in larger contexts. It is growing in a small way, gradually captivating the idea of young men specially in villages, in building themselves into stronger fortresses, where petty selfishness cannot make any inroads, where service is not overshadowed by self. Swamiji himself said : ‘I never make plans. Plans grow and work themselves. I only say : Awake, awake.’ The Akhil Bharat Vivekananda Yuva Mahamandal asks all young men to harken to that call of Swami Vivekananda, to awake and to rise to the occasion when India, our ever glorious motherland, seems to pass through a critical stage, when we do not believe anybody, not even ourselves. We must know that our creed should be building up, building up of a future India according to our genius, and building up is possible only through giving and not by begging. Suspicion cannot be the motive force, but only faith. If the Akhil Bharat Vivekananda Yuva Mahamandal has any role to play, it is this recovery of faith of the young men of the country in themselves.