

What is Essential

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Any individual may do something for the good of others. Any organization may also take up some good items of work for the good of the people in general. These may be very beneficial works. Many may derive some benefit from such works. But there are also works that are less obvious – the benefit flowing from such works may not be very conspicuous, but, their effect may be far reaching and it may be that without such works other beneficial works will not ultimately yield any lasting result. Many do not care to know if there are such works. Even if known, many will not like to labour on them as their results do not follow immediately and are not recognized and applauded by all then and there.

But without caring for applause the Mahamandal has chosen to devote all its energy to try to do some such basic work which will ultimately give meaning to success in other socially good endeavours.

Man is the basic thing and man-making is the basic work. All social service – by state or voluntary organizations – is rendered through the agency of man. If these men do not have right understanding, attitude, motivation, selflessness, no service will deliver the goods properly. Therefore, cultivating these qualities is a basic work. These qualities belong really in the character of man. And character-building is another name for man-making.

An individual may of course attempt at man-making with himself or others. But to make a serious attempt everywhere and not to leave it as a casual endeavour of a few, an organized effort that will cover all parts of the country is essential. And that is the function of the Mahamandal.

Having discussed what is necessary Swami Vivekananda came to the essential point when he said : ‘ So make men first. When you have men who are ready to sacrifice their everything for their country, sincere to the backbone – when such men arise India will become great in every respect. Then only will India awake, when hundreds of large-hearted men and women giving up all desires of enjoying the luxuries of life, will long and exert themselves to their utmost, for the well-being of the millions of their countrymen who are gradually sinking lower and lower in the vortex of destitution and ignorance.’

So he exhorted : ‘ Work among those young men who can devote heart and soul to this one duty – the duty of raising the masses of India; it depends on the young people of India.’

It is good to collect funds and materials and distribute them to needy people or to set up some other projects for economic benefit of people. Many organizations can do and are doing that. But it is better and more important to build up the character of people who will unselfishly do everything for the well-being of the people. Such people should be there in all avocations of life, in society and in homes. That is most essential and forms

the guarantee for assured and sustained social well-being. The making of such men is thus the most essential social service. This should be kept in mind clearly. All activities should be directed to this one end.

This is being attempted through the Mahamandal. And, to be sure, the attempt is yielding result. There are well defined methods. All should understand the need, know the methods, and then apply the methods to see results flowing. Mere lectures or articles will not do. Come and see how individuals are improving. If we want a great change in India for the better, this is the way. Character-qualities should be imbibed, ideas should be assimilated. This is true education. The essential work is thus basically educational in the true sense of the term. This will naturally take time. Nothing great can be achieved overnight or without sustained labour. Some may question, Can all men be improved? If not, the alternative is *status quo*. Will that solve any of the problems? If the attempts are continued some at least will improve and the number will multiply and things are bound to change in fifty years if not in twenty five. Those who are lazy and pessimistic, let them go to sleep. Let those who are optimistic and diligent and have faith in themselves and in man come forward and put their shoulders under the wheel.

Rightly Vivekananda concluded : 'We have, therefore, to wait till the people are educated, till they understand their needs and are ready and able to solve their problems.' Here 'wait' does not mean – sit idle till God's grace makes everybody educated. It urges all to work hard to educate people and to be educated properly. 'Take man where he stands and from thence give him a lift', as Swami Vivekananda said.

'The education which does not help the common mass of people to equip themselves for the struggle for life, which does not bring out the strength of character, a spirit of philanthropy, and the courage of a lion – is it worth the name? The training by which the current and expression of will are brought under control and become *fruitful* is called education.' This education cannot be imparted by setting up schools and colleges under boards or universities. There are innumerable institutions established and lots are coming into existence. But 'the idea of the sacrifice for the common weal is not yet developed in our nation,' as Vivekananda said. This idea is to be burned into the hearts of the young generation. This education is to be brought to the door of every young man of the country. This is the real work of the Mahamandal. And you can do it, if you believe you can.