Chapter VIII

INDIAN YOUTH: NATIONAL STRENGTH

To Madras Times in 1897, Swami Vivekananda expressed his faith in the young generation. He said that my faith is in the younger generation and out of them will evolve my workers. They will work out the whole problem, like lions.¹ Youth are by virtue of their age day dreamers. Such day dreamers get a positive and holistic dimension in holy company or holy places. Imagination properly employed in youth is the greatest friend; it goes beyond and is the only light that takes us everywhere. Like his master Sri Ramakrishna, Vivekananda’s love, faith and trust were all directed to the younger generation, the virgin forests of life, the unsmelt flowers and the fruits unstrung by the scorpions of sensate society. Vivekananda wished and sought youth with muscles of iron and nerves of steel, youth born with high altruistic dreams, youth inspired for God and self-sacrifice all along his life.²

It is during young age that youth should be imbued with the national and human ideals to develop in them character-energy which has an important role to play in nation building. There are money-energy, solar energy, nuclear energy, and so many other types of energies; but the vital one is character-energy. When youth combines with character the knowledge of what India is, what India was, and what India shall be, he is transformed from a static individual to a dynamic person, to an efficient soldier in the great war of human development in the nation. Our ancestors had built it; but some parts are now broken down; some parts are worn out and useless today. We have to cut off all these and add new dimensions to this building, commensurate with the knowledge and needs of the modem age.³

For the last thousand years, every thing was weakening the Indian race. It seems as if during the nineteenth century the national life had only one end in view, how to make it weaker and weaker, until people have

become real earthworms, crawling at the feet of everyone who dares to put his foot on them. Therefore, Vivekananda stressed that our nation wants strength and every time, strength. The Upanishads are the great mine of strength which can invigorate the whole world. The whole world can be unified and energized through them. Vivekananda said that they will call with trumpet voice upon the weak, the miserable and the downtrodden of all the races, all creeds and all sects, to stand on their feet and be free. Freedom, physical freedom, mental freedom and spiritual freedom are the watchwords of the *Upanishads*.4

Mankind should be grateful to the sensate materialistic culture for its wonderful achievements in the fields of science and technology. But when its product is poison gas rather than fresh air, terrific power over nature without providing with self-control, it is becoming increasingly dangerous to mankind itself and to all its values. The sensate culture did its best in the way of degrading man to the level of a mere reflex mechanism, a mere organ motivated by sex, a mere semi-mechanical, semi-physiological organism, devoid of any divine spark, of any absolute value, of anything noble and sacred.5 To inculcate the values of right thoughts and habits, so as to undo the effects of sensate culture, there are three ways. These are *Satsang*, which includes the study of good literature, holy company, etc.; Discipline, involving daily activities in an organized and scheduled manner; Meditation, which means process of gaining control over one’s emotions.6

No doubt, it is very difficult to inculcate the values among people. But it is the only method to develop faith among the citizens. This faith can lead the people towards their goal. Swami Vivekananda said, “It is a grand task, and we are so low. But we are the sons of Light and children of God.

---

6 Swami Amartyananda, *Effective Life Management*, Advaita Ashrama, Kolkata, 2009, p. 17. Emotion is the capacity of feeling. These are both attractive such as love, charity etc and repulsive such as fear, jealousy etc.
Hundreds will fall in the struggle; hundreds will be ready to take it up. I may die here unsuccessful; another will take up the task. You know the disease; you know the remedy, only have faith. Do not look up to the so-called rich and great; do not care for the heartless intellectual writers and their cold-blooded newspaper articles. Faith, sympathy—fiery faith and fiery sympathy! Life is nothing, death is nothing, hunger nothing, cold nothing. Do not look back to see who falls--forward--onward! Thus and thus, we shall go on.\(^7\)

In reply to an address at Madras, Swami Vivekananda thundered “I have told you what we have become, where are the men to lift us from this despondent and unhappy situation? Young men of Madras, my hope is in you. Do you respond to the call of your nation? Have the tremendous faith in yourselves as I had when I was child and I am working it out. Have that faith, each one, in yourself, that eternal power is lodged in every one of our souls. You will revise the whole of India. We will go to every country under the Sun and our ideas must be within the next ten years a component of the many forces that are working to make up every nation in the world. We must enter into the life of every race inside India and outside India; we will work. I want young men. This is the time to decide your future with this energy of youth, when you have not been worked out, have not become faded but are still in the freshness and vigour of youth.\(^8\)

After the Second World War, a humanistic philosophy by declaration of its exponents attracted the attention of the world. There are both atheists and theists among the existentialists. Both the schools, however, directed their attention towards solving the mystery of human existence. They were influenced by Nietzsche, and by Neo-Vedanta of Swami Vivekananda, which, as pointed out by Romain Rolland, had been imperceptibly ‘one of the most life-giving and fertilizing streams’ in the ‘burning soil of Europe and America in those days’.\(^9\) There being no God, there is at least one being whose existence comes before its essence, a being which exists before it can be defined by any conception of it’. That being to him is ‘man’. To Heidegger,

---

\(^7\) Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda, Volume V, p. 17.
\(^8\) Eknath Ranade, Swami Vivekananda’s Rousing Call to the Hindu Nation, p. 67.
another existentialist, it is ‘Human Realization’. Man is nothing else but what he proposes, he exists only in so far as he realizes himself, he is therefore nothing else but what life is.\footnote{Jean Paul Sartre, \textit{Existentialism}, Philosophical Library, New York, 1947. Morton Gabriel White, \textit{The Age of Analysis}, The New American Library of World Literature, New York, 1955, p.134.}

Man is what he makes of himself and man is responsible for what he is. Vivekananda says that the question was, “What is this universe? From what does it arise: Into what does it go”? And the answer was, “In freedom it arises, in freedom it rests, and into freedom it melts away.”\footnote{Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda, Volume II, p. 125.} All human life, all nature is struggling to attain to freedom’.\footnote{Ibid., p. 127.} He is an atheist who does not believe in himself. \textit{Katha Upanishad} narrates the story of Nachiketa that when \textit{shraddha} entered into his heart, he started saying that ‘I am superior to many, I am inferior to few, but nowhere am I the last, I can also do something’. His boldness increased, and he wanted to solve the problem which was in his mind, the problem of death, which he did waiting the horse of death for three days.\footnote{Santwana Dasgupta, \textit{Social Philosophy of Swami Vivekananda}, p. 26.} The \textit{shraddha} is faith in us. The nation was overpowered with the disease of lack of faith in ourselves. If the nation was to rise, the faith was must to come. So Vivekananda said, “Give up the awful disease that is creeping into our national blood, that idea of ridiculing everything, that less of seriousness. Be strong and have this \textit{shraddha}, and everything is bound to follow”.\footnote{Eknath Ranade, \textit{Swami Vivekananda’s Rousing Call to the Hindu Nation}, p. 68.}

Even though born in a land of such glory and heritage, young Indians in the nineteenth century were finding themselves drifting and directionless, forlorn and frustrated. The advancement of civilization, science and technology added to further confusion and chaos. It certainly contributed towards material comforts and glamorous life of physical pleasures. But it robbed the young Indians of the poetry of life, of the growth and inner beauty and bliss.\footnote{N. S. V. Rao, In \textit{Vivekananda- The Great Spiritual Teacher}, Advaita Ashrama, Calcutta, 2000, p. 487.} Vivekananda tried to clear the minds of Indians regarding the success and achievements of the western people. Whatever of material power
has been manifested by the western races is the outcome of this *shraddha* because they believe in their muscles, and if you believe in your spirit, how much more it will work. This faith in them was in the hearts of our ancestors, this faith in them was the motive power that pushed them forward and forward in the march of civilization. The degeneration started on the day our people lost this faith in them. Losing faith in one’s self means losing faith in God. We are the greatest God that ever was or ever will be. Christs and Buddhas are but waves on the boundless ocean which I am.\(^\text{16}\)

Though in the West, the Christian sects considered man a fallen and hopelessly fallen sinner. But inside the national hearts of both Europe and America resided the tremendous power of men’s faith in them. An English boy will tell you, “I am an Englishman, and I can do anything”. The America boy will tell you the same thing, and so will any European boy. Swami Vivekananda asked, Can Indian boy say the samething here? No, even the boy’s fathers have lost faith in themselves. There is not one system in India which does not hold the doctrine that God is within, that divinity resides within all things. Each of our *Vedantic* systems admits that all purity and perfection and strength are in the soul already. Our personalities are the outcome of our mind and its reactions to external stimuli. With perfect conformity between knowledge and actions one attains the integrated personality. It generates faith in oneself.\(^\text{17}\)

In whatever profession youth may enter, may be journalism, may be scientific research, may be hotel management, may be administration, and may be politics-wherever they enter, they carry something precious and inspiring with them. Something which was and even is now missed very much in our country, is faith in oneself and faith in one's nation, character-energy, and a true knowledge of India and how to rebuild her. That is needed to silently rebuild India. It is a huge task; we need a lot of courage, a lot of inner resources to undertake this.\(^\text{18}\) The ideal of faith in ourselves is of the greatest help to us. If faith in ourselves had been more extensively taught and

---

\(^\text{16}\) Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda, Volume VII, p. 78.
\(^\text{18}\) Swami Ranganathananda, *The Universal Symphony of Vivekananda*, p. 249.
practiced, a very large portion of the evils and miseries that we have would have vanished. Throughout the history of mankind, if any motive power has been more potent than another in the lives of all great men and women, it is that of faith in them. Born with consciousness that they were to be great, they became great. Let a man go down as low as possible; there must come a time when out of sheer desperation he will take on upward curve and will learn to have faith in himself. But it is better for us that we should know it from the very first. Vivekananda said that an English clerk came to India, and for want of funds and other reasons, he twice tried to blow his brains out; and when he failed, he believed in himself, he believed that he was born to do great things; and that man become Lord Clive, the founder of the Empire.  

According to Vivekananda, the faith should not be for selfish interests. Selfishness makes us weak morally, and eats at the roots of the nation. When ever you wish to do something for you, extra power comes to you. Even the least work done for others awakens the power within; even thinking the least good of others gradually instils into the heart the strength of a lion. Without renunciation, none can pour out his whole heart in working for others. In fact Swami Vivekananda fixed renunciation and service as two national ideals of India, very clearly and every emphatically he links the service of others, not for selfishness but for others, with purity of mind and soul. Without renunciation, one can not work for others, whole heartedly. Liberation is only for those who test their brains day and night harping on “my solution”, “my solution”, “ponder about their true well being ruined, both present and prospective”. So purification of heart is required. The first of all worship is worship of all around us. There are all gods-men and animals; and the first gods we have to worship are our countrymen”.  

Vivekananda wished that man should take full responsibility of himself on his own shoulders. He laid down two practical maxim which form the quintessence of his philosophy of man making: 1. Get hold of yourself, 2. Get hold of the Self. From these two we come upon a few more valuable

19 Eknath Ranade, Swami Vivekananda’s Rousing Call to the Hindu Nation, p. 92.
maxim of great practical importance in man's life: Self-effort, Self-reliance and Self-mastery. Whenever a country faces problems, the present generation faces a question whether an end can be put to these problems, whether a new era can be started. Swami Vivekananda replied in affirmative. Again and again has our country fallen into a swoon, as it were, and again and again has India's Lord, by the manifestation of himself, revived her. On the other side, the affluent societies whether in the East or the West are trying to absorb today the shocks of a purely sensate culture. At midnight in Shinzuke, Japan, people in early eighties were accustomed to a sudden rush of a large number of motor cyclists rumbling through the streets.

Human essence is no abstraction inherent in each single individual reality. It is the ensemble of the social relations. In society, alienation is a condition where man's own act becomes to him an alien power, standing over and against him, instead of being ruled by him. According to Marx, the different types of alienations exist in the life of a working man, like alienation from the process of work, the production of work, himself or others. Alienation is rooted first in man's ignorance, and secondly, in economic exploitation. Hence the solution lies in spreading scientific knowledge and collective action against economic exploitation. In Marx's philosophical system, 'man is a social animal' and this self-regarding impulses work themselves out through channels determined by the social environment to which he is subject. In the opinion of the Austrian Marxist thinker Ernst Fisher, for example, a new alienation is created when power passes, by institutionalization, from revolutionary organs into the hands of central authority. Of that power, which at the very first impulse has reused

---

22 Eknath Ranade, *Swami Vivekananda's Rousing Call to the Hindu Nation*, p. 70.
distant echoes from all the four quarters of the globe, conceive the manifestation in its fullness; and discarding all idle misgivings, weaknesses, and the jealousies of enslaved peoples, come and help in the turn up of this mighty wheel of new dispensation”! Vivekananda not only provided hope and zeal to work but also inculcated the feelings to overcome passiveness among the youth, mainly responsible for the downfall of the country.

Vivekananda admitted that in spite of the greatness of the Upanishads, in spite of our boasted ancestry of sages, we are weak as compared to many other races. First of all is our physical weakness. That physical weakness is the cause of at least one third of our miseries. So our young men must be strong, religion will come afterwards. ‘Be strong my young friends; that is my advice to you. You will go to heaven through football and not through the study of the Gita. These are bold words; but I have to say them, for I love you’. ‘You can understand the Gita better with your biceps, your muscles, a little stronger. You will understand the mighty genius and mighty strength of Krishna better with a little strong blood in you. You will understand the Upanishads and the glory of great man better when your body stands firm upon your feet, and you feel yourselves as men. We speak of many things like parrot but never do them; speaking and not doing has become a habit with us. This sort of weak brain is not able to do anything; we must strengthen it. What we want is vigour in the blood, strength in the nerves, iron muscles and nerves of steel, not softening namby-pamby ideas’.

To awaken the youth of India and linking their affection towards their countrymen, it was very essential to create a feeling of love and affection towards the needed without any sense of credits. What to talk about worldly credits, Swami Vivekananda even exhorted the people who were already on the path of truth and service for their higher spiritual truths to set aside their solution and just help others. He knew that it is not an easy job. He knew it very well that for this one should be very strong mentally as well as morally, so he said, ‘what I want is muscles of iron and nerves of steel, inside which

---

27 Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda, Volume VI, p. 182.
28 Eknath Ranade, Swami Vivekananda’s Rousing Call to the Hindu Nation, p. 78.
dwells a mind of the same material as that of which the thunderbolt is made’.  

“If I can get some young men of heart and energy, I shall revolutionize the whole country. A child’s playing top is always resting on the ground, unless he takes efforts to spin it and then off it goes, swirling around and round on its axis, the velocity of its speed depending on the force used by the child in rotating it. In the hands of a strong man, fate is also a toy which he can change as he likes it. Destiny might be inscrutable. Fate might be pregnant with much impossibility, but it requires a strong man to outwit tricky fate. To say that man is the handmaid of fate is admitting defeat”.

Nasser was the poor son of a post office clerk; he died as President of the United Arab Republic. William Booth, the founder of the Salvation Army, was a London pawnbroker’s ordinary clerk. The Salvation Army is now known all over the world. M. S. Kannamwar was born in a poor family, worked as a newspaper hawker and even as a ticket collector, sleeping in the congress house with a few newspaper sheets as his bed. He became the chief minister of Maharashtra. Even in the late twentieth century India, we saw A.P.J Abdul Kalam who earned his livelihood as newspaper hawker, not only became one of the great scientists India has produced but also the President of India. H.G. Wells was working in a London store as a clerk for 14 hours every day. When he died he had written more than 75 books and made millions of rupees with the power of his pen. H. D. Devgowde born in a poor peasant’s family became the Prime Minister of India.

Born poor, they did not die poor. Expedition after expedition went up to reach the top of the Himalayas. Every expedition failed to reach Mount Everest. But expeditions continued to go there, failures were no problem. So long as Everest was there it must be reached and Tenzing Norkay and Edmand Hillary, one Indian and another New Zealander reached the top and stayed on the snow bound Everest. Failures of others did not dampen their ambition, colour of their

---

30 Eknath Ranade, *Swami Vivekananda’s Rousing Call to the Hindu Nation*, p. 78.
32 *Swami Vivekananda’s Call to the Youth*, Advaita Ashrama, Kolkata, 2003, p. 96.
lives, and foundation of their faith. They refused to choose the best but the best had to choose them.

Vivekananda was of the firm opinion that the failures that bring deeper self-scrutiny in the end, lead to greater success. Whenever failure comes, if we analyze it critically, in ninety nine percent of the cases we shall find that it was because we did not pay attention to the means. Strengthening of the means is what we need. The end must come. We forget that it is the cause that produces the effect.³⁴ Fight against the vicissitudes of life inspires a sincere soul more strongly to hold fast to the ideal. The Cobra raises its hood when it is wounded most and man’s maximum strength comes out when he faces death squarely. This is what Swami Vivekananda wrote, ‘Tell me how much you have suffered and I will feel how great you are’.

Kierkegaard, the leader of other school of existentialism, who 'exerted a great deal of influence on Christian theology in the last century lays stress on the individual man here and now. Awareness of one's own existence becomes most acute in the periods of extreme inner tension, when anxiety and dread, having passed beyond the stage of local concern for particular ends, now have become total or so to say, metaphysical. Like Vivekananda, he was interested in the inner transformation of man, that is, in the 'morphology of spiritual progress'.³⁵ Criticizing Kierkegaard, Morton Gabriel White remarked, ‘Christ's person is the existent outgrowth of God. By what is admittedly a mysterious process, the abstract God enters a concrete existence. We must accept this on faith and faith alone’.³⁶ Nietzsche’s message that ‘God is dead’ or that man needed a more joyous life than that promised in the New Testament could not bring joy or solace to man as his philosophy gave no indication with regard to the means of attaining it. Speaking about Marx and Nietzsche, Henry D. Aicken observed that none of these men was content merely to amend tradition; each, in his own way tried to destroy it. What they

---

³⁵ Ernst Fischer, The Art Against Ideology, p. 228.
³⁶ Morton Gabriel White, Age of Analysis, p. 120. Santwana Dasgupta, Social Philosophy of Swami Vivekananda, p. 27.
sought to accomplish as philosophers was not just a new way of ideas or a new critique of reason, but virtually the creation of a new kind of man’. 37

In Vivekananda’s vision life, is essentially positive, a playground for manifesting the God within despite all odds. To the young king of Khetri, Maharaja Ajit Singh, he defined life as a continuous struggle against opposing forces which are trying to suppress it down. Misery and pain come from ignorance. What we call sin is in its self-manifestation and is lower form of truth. Mistakes are the poetry of life. “Why don’t you speak about sin”, an old lady asked Vivekananda in the West? He replied, “Madame it is these sins that made me a saint”. 38 A cow never tells a lie, a wall never steals. Man tells lies, commits blunder, and the same man becomes a saint. That was his argument. He would say, “If there is any road to heaven, it is through hell. Through hell to heaven is always the way”. Again he says, “All the world has ever been preaching the God of virtue. I preach a God of virtue and a God of sin in one”. 39 To the youth who take pride in a faith in this god or that prophet, Vivekananda reminded that faith is not belief, it is a grasp on the ultimate, an illumination. In a fit of rage at fate, Sarojini Naidu hurled a challenge at it.

“Why will you vex me with your futile conflict?
Why will you strive with me, o foolish fate?
You cannot break me with your poignant envy,
You cannot slay me with your subtle hate;
For all the cruel folly you pursue.
I will not cry with suppliant hands to you.....
O Fate, in vain you hanker to control
My freely serene, indomitable soul”! 40

Vivekananda hit against the baseless fears, and pleaded for a bold and defiant stand against illogical prejudices and untenable traits. He spread the message of fearlessness. He cleared the vagaries of the weather. He was at

40 *Swami Vivekananda’s Call to the Youth*, p. 97.
ease with nature when reached Kanyakumari, the lord’s end, and stood at the confluence of the three mighty rolls of water, the bay of Bengal, the Indian Ocean and the Arabian Sea…. A strange peace descended on him. He crawled up the peak, scaled the slippery slope and set down to meditate. When he woke up from meditation, after three days, he had conquered everything. He had destroyed the mortal fears which had been part of his earthly coils. He was free like the air, light like the smoke, agile like a wave, firm like the rock, even like a plateau. Every external manifestation on this earth inspired him with its forte of hope and godliness. He saw liberation as the absence of fears of any kind.41

Individual courage precedes national courage. When Swami Vivekananda zoomed on the horizon, India was walloping in poverty. It was the nadir of self-respect. In a candid outburst at a meeting at Madras, Swami Vivekananda thundered, “You have talked of reforms of ideals and all these things for the last hundred years, but when it comes to practice, you are not to be found anywhere…. you have no faith in yourselves! Centuries after centuries, a thousand years of crushing tyranny of kings and foreigners and your own people have taken out all your strength, my brethren. Your backbone is broken, you are like downtrodden worms. First make the people of the country stand on their feet by rousing their inner power, first let them learn to have good food and cloths and plenty of enjoyment….Laziness, length and breadth of the country…Madras, Bombay, Punjab, Bengal…whichever way I look, I see no sight of light”.42

Swami Vivekananda wanted to breathe life into a people. Nourished for too long by the stultifying air of slavery, the very fiber of the people had

41 B. S. Ahluwalia, *Swami Vivekananda and Indian Renaissance*, p. 170. In fact, fear is of many types. Fear of death makes cowards of us. Fear of losing material benefits turns us into locking of these who hold authority or are in a position to push us ahead in the rat race. Fear of being left alone to face the world changes us into meek followers if majority views, even if such views are contrary to the essence of humanism. Fear of ridicule silences us. Fear of ostracism keeps us within the fold, even if many of the rituals and defines feel to carry connection with us. Phobias of all kinds push us lower and lower, sap our will to overcome fears, deprive us of the glory that springs from daring action fears fetter us enclose us.

been attenuated. Slavery became the accepted way of life. The lifeless people who inhabited India acted and responded mechanically. The will to fight against injustice and inequality was absent. It needed to be charged once again with the dynamic which springs from fearlessness. Such a revival could come only by self-realization, by liberation of man from the threats which society holds out to those who violate its code of conduct.\footnote{B. S. Ahluwalia, \textit{Swami Vivekananda and Indian Renaissance}, p. 172.}

Swami Vivekananda argued that society naturally fears its own destruction if the least deviation be made from the boundary line of the path set by it. Swami Vivekananda exhorted men to understand the superiority of maneuver machine. Men have the capacity to acquire knowledge, to think independently, to rationalize, to analyze events and situations logically, to know the ideal ends, and to plan the ideal means to the desired ends. Swami Vivekananda riled at these who refused to put their trust in the sense and wisdom of the common man. The ground truths were buried under heaps of rubbish. One must be bold to speak out one’s convictions”.\footnote{Ibid., p. 173.}

Religion also means strength. Religion is not fundamentalism, it is being and becoming.\footnote{Swami Jitatmananda, \textit{Swami Vivekananda, Prophet and Pathfinder}, p. 270.} It is the realization of Christ and Buddha in us. Vivekananda said, “Religion is the manifestation of the natural strength that is in man”.\footnote{\textit{Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda}, Volume VIII, p. 185.}

During his visit to the United States, Vivekananda proclaimed it the homeland of freedom. But coming to know more intimately the order of things in that country, he well understood the real value of that “freedom” and his former illusions were swiftly dispelled. He was indignant at the power of money, the unlimited rule of the financial plutocracy and its uncurbed drive for riches. On returning from a tour of European countries, he wrote that Europe resembled a military camp.\footnote{\textit{Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda}, Volume V, p. 530.} Everywhere he felt the stench of war.

Vivekananda sometimes put the job of householder more difficult than that of \textit{Sannyasin}, but on some other occasion otherwise. The ancestors gave up the world for doing great things. They had everything only if they were
not slaughtered by the millions at the altar of this brutality they call marriage. Vivekananda could understand it well that if this nation is to be awakened, few such people will be required who don’t believe in hypocrisy. So he asked the people to be honest and not to pretend to give up when you don’t.48 If one gives up, stand justs, if a hundred fall in the fight, seize the flag and carry it on. God is true for all that, no matter who falls. Let him, who falls, hand on the flag to another to carry on; it can never fall. A hundred thousand men and women, fired with the zeal of holiness, fortified with eternal faith in the Lord, and nerved to lion's courage by their sympathy for the poor and the fallen and the downtrodden, will go over the length and breadth of the land, preaching the gospel of salvation, the gospel of help, the gospel of social raising up- the gospel of equality.49

Vivekananda exhorted the Indian youth to remember that you are the children of the Almighty. You are sparks, the infinite divine fire. You are everything and ready to do everything. They do not need to learn Advaitism, Dvaitism or any other ism because these are the common ism all through India. All sects commonly believe this marvelous doctrine of the perfection of the soul.50 He said that we quarrel with other brothers but kneel before the foreigners. The more you go on fighting and quarrelling about “Dravidian” and “Aryan”, and the question of Brahmins and non-Brahmins and all that, the further you are off from that accumulation of energy and power which is going to make the future India. For the future India depends entirely upon that. That is the secret, accumulation of will power co-ordination, bringing them all, as it were, into one focus”.51

Vivekananda sarcastically remarked that Indians were like women. If a woman comes to lead women they all begin immediately to criticize her, tear her to pieces and make her sit down. If a man comes and gives them a little harsh treatment, scolds them now and then, it is all right, they have been used to that sort of mesmerism. In the same way, if one of our countrymen stands up and tries to become great, we all try to hold him down, but if a foreigner

48 Eknath Ranade, *Swami Vivekananda’s Rousing Call to the Hindu Nation*, p. 70.
51 Eknath Ranade, *Swami Vivekananda’s Rousing Call to the Hindu Nation*, p. 78.
comes and tries to kick us, it is all right. We are always getting jealous of each other. Indian youth must give up that hateful malice, that dog like bickering and barking at one another and take stand on good purpose, right means, righteous courage and be brave. Let us wipe off first that mark which nature always puts on the forehead of a slave, the strain of jealousy. Be ready to lend a hand to every worker of good. Send a good thought for every being in the three worlds. Vivekananda asked, “Young men of India! Have you gone through the saga of shame your ancestors have been suffering since centuries”?  

Materialistic interpretation of ‘man’ reached perhaps its culmination in the writings of Ludwig Feuerbach, the German philosopher, whose later-day writings, led to the coining of the sentence, ‘Man is what he eats’. Why should the Hindu nation with all its intelligence and other things have gone to pieces? Vivekananda’s answer was jealousy. In his words, “Never were there people more wretchedly jealous of one another, more envious of one another’s name and fame than this wretched Hindus are. And if you ever come out in the West, the absence of this is the first feeling which you will see in the western nations. Here each one struggles for power and in the long run the whole organization comes to grief”. “Be then all of one mind, be then all of one thought, for in the days of yours, the gods being of one mind were enabled to receive oblations. The gods can be worshipped by men because they are of one mind”. Being of one mind is the secret of society.  

Jealousy is the greatest hindrance in the building up of organized work. Three things are necessary to make everyman great, every nation great:

1. Conviction of the powers of goodness

2. Absence of jealousy and suspicion.

3. Helping all who are trying to be and do good.

---

54 Eknath Ranade, Swami Vivekananda’s Rousing Call to the Hindu Nation, p. 82.
Due to jealousy Indians have been continuously defeated by the foreigners for centuries. The Greeks, the Scythians, the Parthian, the Kushanas, the Hunas, and then the Muslim invaders ravaged our country. Along with this, from sixteen century onwards the Portuguese, the Dutch, the French and the English continued to defeat us. This is the synopsis of our slavery, a chronicle of our confused and muddled thinking of renouncing manliness. This was the result of our forgetting the lessons of our forefathers, Veerbhogy Vasundhere; the earth is for the valiant only. A nation must have guts and guns, men and material. The youth should apply heroism according to circumstances, the fourfold political maxim of conciliation, bribery, sowing dissensions, and open war, to win over the adversary and enjoy the world. Then India will be Dharmika (righteous). Otherwise, we will have to live a disgraceful life if we pocket insults when kicked and trodden down by anyone. This life will be a veritable hell here, and so the life hereafter.\(^{56}\)

Our young men must be strong, religions will come afterwards. Young men with stiff collars, necktie mentality, Petticoat views, drainpipe pants and hippy hair can not save the country. Discard the age old nauseating superstitions. Let the Himalayas be our source of inspiration. It has stood its ground since centuries, since the days of Shri Krishna. “Among mountains, I am the Himalayas” said Shri Krishna to Arjun. Why not say young man, “Among mountains in the world, I am the Himalaya myself”.\(^{57}\)

‘Let an earthquake occur, public prayer is our remedy’, said Veer Savarkar. Mrs. Hansbrough once said “On one occasion when Mrs. Leggett was there “Swami, who was walking up and down, said that actually the English did not come to India to conquer the Hindus but to teach them. The great misfortune, however, was that the English soldiers - even the officers- were of such low caste. And he told of a time when he was sitting on the lawn in a park close to a footpath. Two soldiers passed by and one of them kicked him. Surprised, Swami said, ‘Why did you do that’? ‘Because I like to, you dirty something - or – other’! ‘Oh, we go much further than that’, Swami had retorted, ‘we call you dirty mlechchhas’! Then he spoke of the raping of

\(^{56}\) Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda, Volume V, p. 448.

\(^{57}\) Swami Vivekananda’s Call to the Youth, p. 100.
lower caste Hindu women by the English soldiers. ‘If anyone should despoil the Englishman's home’, he said, ‘the Englishman would kill him, and rightly so. But the Hindu just sits and whines’! “At this, Mrs. Leggett, remarked in admiration of the gentle Hindu, ‘how very nice’! ‘Do you think’, Swami went on saying, ‘that a handful of Englishmen could rule India if we had a militant spirit? I teach meat eating throughout the length and breadth of India in the hope that we can build a militant spirit’!\textsuperscript{58}

To inculcate the strength among the youth, Vivekananda favoured meat eating. Grass eating goats might shout in holy honor all this abominable sin committed by the meat eating Hindus. But, when did the grass eating Hindus become soldiers to defend the country? Vivekananda declared that my Master was a vegetarian; but if he was given meat offered to the Goddess, he used to hold it up to his head. The taking of life is undoubtedly sinful; but so long as vegetable food is not made suitable to the human system through progress in chemistry, there is no other alternative but meat- eating. So long as man shall have to live a \textit{Rajasika} (active) life under circumstances like the present, there is no other way except through meat - eating. Taking the life of a few goats as against the inability to protect the honour of one’s wife and daughter and to save the morsels for one’s children from robbing hands, which of these is more sinful?’\textsuperscript{59}

The argument put forward by the vegetarians is as the food, so the mind. But the mass murderer of Jews, Hitler, was a vegetarian. Many dacoits in India not only worship their pet goddess but also hate the very sight of mutton; this, of course, does not prevent them from killing men in their mad orgy. Killing animals is bad; killing men is justified. This cannot be the logic. Swami Vivekananda stressed upon meat eating to cultivate the spirit of manliness among the dormant, supine and spineless Hindus. The real courage of a pioneer is always tested best when left by all, he still stands fighting a good fight, said Veer Savarkar.

\textsuperscript{58} Marie Louis Burke, \textit{Swami Vivekananda In The West, New Discoveries}, Volume V, p. 256.

\textsuperscript{59} Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda, Volume IV, p. 486.
Vivekananda exhorted the Indian masses to throw overboard the cramps set by the dictation of other people’s will. He wanted everyman to be master of his mind and of his body. Free thinking, aided by courage of conviction, alone would restore to the nation and the people manhood. Only men with the courage of their convictions could attain godliness and become fit to face the hazards of the future. The man of the future should grow in a state of harmony with his settings.\(^{60}\) This humanization can only come from fearlessness, which originates from the soul force. Mahatma Gandhi laid special stress on the soul force, which in his view, was the touch of godliness in man. Great men often talk of their continuous dialogue with a divine voice, the conscience, the soul force. Soul force is primordial, instinctive, laden with elemental courage. Swami Vivekananda considered soul force as an adjunct of a proper understanding of soul power, the divine streak latent in every living thing. Under its impact, all outward differences, conceived by the society vanish. Where it is at its best, courage burns brightest.\(^{61}\)

If one wants to draw the picture of Sri Krishna and Arjuna in the battle field of Kurukshetra, he must ponder deep, and understand every word of the Gita and then use brush and colour. Then it will turn out a most heroic picture of the Lord. No other spiritualist has applied the picture of Shri Krishna in the midst of this mass carnage as Swami Vivekananda did himself. For today’s restless youths hankering after success in a highly competitive world, Vivekananda brought the solution that excellence avoids competition. In the animal, the man was suppressed, but as soon as the door was opened, out rushed man. So in man, there is potential God kept in by the locks and bars of ignorance. When knowledge breaks these bars, the God becomes manifest. And there is nothing under the Sun, which an awakened soul cannot achieve. The need is to awaken the higher self, the God in man.\(^{62}\) He wanted the youth not to be beggars in the game of life and said, “Ask nothing, want nothing in return, give what you have to give; it will come back to you...Be not a beggar...Nature wants us to react, return blow for blow, cheating for

\(^{60}\) B. S. Ahluwalia, *Swami Vivekananda and Indian Renaissance*, p. 173  
\(^{61}\) Ibid., p. 175.  
cheating, lie for lie, to hit back with all your might. Then it requires a super
divine power not to hit back, to keep control, to be unattached”. 63

To modern youths tossed in problems both in internal and external life,
Vivekananda’s words were a beacon-light. Try to manifest the divinity within
and everything will be harmoniously arranged around it”. He exhorted the
disciples to meditate on the all-blissful and all powerful self within.
Vivekananda says that power and knowledge are already there, the soul
identifies itself with what is powerless matter and thus weeps. He, who has
known God, has become God; there is nothing impossible for such a free
soul. 64 India’s ideals are spiritual heroes like Shankara, Nanak, and Guru
Gobind Singh. To these ideals, he inspired the Indian youth, and made them
realize that even when a life with an ideal fails; it is a thousand times greater
than a life of so called success without an ideal. 65

His realism and fearlessness roused the country from its deep slumber.
He said that if there is a famine in the country, there is no point in going to
the temples to worship your God, for God is dead, when the poor are dying. A
hungry man does not need Yajna; he needs yeast, a starving man does not
require philosophy, he wants powered milk, no religion but rice; no culture
but clothes. He, therefore, wanted that old foggy ideas of religion should be
discarded, in conformity with the new needs of the situation. “Do something,”
he said, “Have some thought; it does not matter whether you are right or
wrong. But think something”. 66 You will recall that slave riders do not allow
the slaves to think. He wondered that our capitalists and industrialists are
building more and more temples now a days than vayamshalas, wrestling
clubs, and health clubs! 67

Vivekananda compressed the world in five words when he addressed
men and women as ‘Ye divinities on earth-sinners’? 68 The first four words
thundered into being the new gospel of joy, hope, virility, energy and

---

68 Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda, Volume I, p.11.
freedom for the races of men. And with the last word, embodying as it did a sarcastic question, he demolished the whole structure of soul degenerating, cowardice promoting, negative, pessimistic thoughts. On the astonished world, the five word formula fell like a bombshell.\textsuperscript{69} The first four words he brought from the East, and the last word he brought from the West. All these were off-repeated expressions, copy book phrases both in the East and the west. Yet never in the annals of human thought was the juxtaposition accomplished before Vivekananda did it in this dynamic manner and obtained instantaneous recognition as a world’s champion.\textsuperscript{70}

Vivekananda’s gospel was that of energies, of mastery over the world, of the conditions surrounding life, of human freedom, of individual liberty, of courage, and trampling down cowardice. Those who are acquainted with the trends of world thought since the middle of the nineteenth century are aware that it was just along these lines that the West was grouping in the dark to find a solution. A most formidable exponent of these wants and shortcomings was the German man of letters and critic Nietzsche whose words had awakened mankind to the need of a more positive, humane and joyous philosophy of life. In India this joy of life which the religious, philosophical and social thought was anxiously waiting for came from Vivekananda who was acclaimed as the pioneer of a revolution, the positive and constructive counterpart to the destructive criticism of Nietzsche.\textsuperscript{71} There are very few men who have promulgated this doctrine of energism, moral freedom, individual liberty and men’s mastery over the circumstances of life. The key to Vivekananda’s entire life, his decade long preparations down to 1893, and his decade long work down to his death in 1902, is to be found in this ‘\textit{Shakti-Yoga’}, energism, the vigour, strength of freedom. All his thoughts and activities are experiments of this energism.\textsuperscript{72} Vivekananda may have preached religious reform, social reconstruction as well as crusade

\textsuperscript{69} Benoy Kumar Sarkar, \textit{Vivekananda as Embodiment of Energism, Individuality and Freedom}, Prabuddha Bharata, 1932, p. 29.
\textsuperscript{70} Benoy Kumar Sarkar, \textit{The Might of Man in the Social Philosophy of Ramakrishna-Vivekananda}, Sri Ramakrishna Math, Madras, 1936, p. 15.
\textsuperscript{71} Santwana Dasgupta, \textit{Social Philosophy of Swami Vivekananda}, p. 42.
\textsuperscript{72} Benoy Kumar Sarkar, \textit{The Might of Man in the Social Philosophy of Ramakrishna-Vivekananda}, p. 17.
against poverty; but it is the making of individuals, the training for manhood, the awakening of personality and individuality on which his whole soul was focused. He wanted men and women who were energetic, freedom loving, courageous and endowed with personality.

Though Swami Vivekananda drank from the streams of the English literature he stuck to his country’s spiritual moorings and sought to uplift his countrymen by application of modern methods and by appealing to their reason. He realized that renaissance was coming and India should be equipped to welcome it. All was not rosy when he started on his mission. The doubts and unbeliefs of the ignorant, the newspapers, the mean jealousy of some sectarian leaders in India and America, and the ridicule of the unthinking rebels were thorns on his way. By personal magnetism, and disarming logic he went over his opponents. His gentle perseverance led the audience into sympathetic understanding with this change of attitude a wonderful change indeed in these days. He laid emphasis on reason and patriotic instincts and by impassioned eloquence carried the youth of the day with him. He rested more on facts, reason, faith and work never depending on emotion alone which he said belonged to animals. We must get beyond emotionalism if we would be able to renounce. Emotion belongs to the animals. They are creatures of emotion entirely.\(^73\) Swami Vivekananda proclaimed, “If there is a sin in the world, it is weakness; avoid all weakness, weakness is a sin weakness is death. That had been the great lesson of the Upanishads. Fear breeds evil and weeping and wailing. There had been enough of that, enough of softness. What our country now wants are muscles of iron and nerves of steel, gigantic will which nothing can resist, which can penetrate into the mysteries and secrets of the universe, and will accomplish their purpose in any fashion, even if it meant going down to the bottom of the ocean and meeting death face to face”.\(^74\) He asked the youth to condemn occultism and mysticism…these creepy things: there may be great truth in them, but they have nearly destroyed us…. And here is the test of truth…anything that makes you weak physically, intellectually and

\(^{73}\) Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda, Volume IX, p. 282.
\(^{74}\) Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda, Volume IV, p. 486.
spiritually, reject as poison, there is no life in it. Truth is purity. Truth is all knowledge... These mysticisms, in spite of some grains of truth in them, are generally weakening. ... Give up these weakening mysticisms and be strong. Go back to your *Upanishads* -- the shining, the strengthening, and the bright philosophy -- and part with all these mysterious things, all these weakening things. Take up this philosophy; the greatest truths are the simplest things in the world, simple as your own existence. The truths of the *Upanishads* are before you. Take them up, live up to them, and the salvation of India will be at hand.75 Whenever he spoke he spoke with utmost sincerity as an Indian to India’s masses. He became one of them, he entered into their skin as it were, and he felt and wept with them and filled them with hope and ambition.

Vivekananda was above parochial patriotism and thus commanded universal respect and admiration. His eloquence worked miracles and his fine manly figure with abiding charm of expression and poise lent ineffable dignity to his fine utterances. He became a name to conjure with and his exposition of the *Upanishads* doctrine of liberty, equality and divinity in a simple and illustrative manner held the audience in rapture. All this was necessary to uplift a dying nation. Soon young India felt the pulsation of an awakened consciousness.

Another fundamental basis of nationalism in the eyes of Swami Vivekananda was the cultivation of knowledge of the outside world on the part of the Indians– a true group of the onward march of humanity. India must develop on international outlook. He said, “Even in politics and Sociology, problems that were only national twenty years ago can no longer be solved on national grounds only. They are assuming huge proportions, gigantic shapes. They can only be solved when looked at in the broader light of international grounds, international organization and international laws of the day. That shows solidarity. In science, everyday they are coming to a similar broad view of the matter76... And again, there cannot be any progress without the whole world following in the wake, and it is becoming everyday clearer that the solution of any problem can never be attained on racial or

76 Ibid., p. 241.
national or narrow grounds. Every idea is to become broad till it covers the whole of this world, every expression must go on increasing till it has engulfed the whole of humanity; may the whole of life, within its scope.\textsuperscript{77}

Through his letter from Japan, he gave an extraordinary call to his countrymen. He found the Japanese to have fully awakened themselves to the necessity of the present time. So a number of Indian young men must pay a visit to Japan and China every year, especially the Japan to whom India is still the dreamland of everything bright and good. Indians must come out of their narrow holes and have a look abroad to see how nations are on their march. How many men, unselfish and thorough going men, are ready now to struggle into life and death to bring about a new state of things-sympathy for the poor and bread to their hungry mouths-enlightenment to the people at large and struggle into death to make men of them who have been brought to the level of beasts by the tyranny of your forefathers?\textsuperscript{78}

Vivekananda said, “Remember always that there is not in the world, any other country where institutions are really better in their aims and objects than the institutions of this land”. But sentiments of national narrow mindedness were alien to him. He never sought isolation from the other outside influences and always urged his compatriots to assimilate the culture of all mankind. Vivekananda though did not visit Russia yet perhaps while abroad he met Russian revolutionaries who were in exile. However, no material has been preserved about Vivekananda’s conversation, for example, with the Russian revolutionary Kropotkin. It may be assumed that these meetings exerted a definite influence on Vivekananda. Assessing the development of events, he said that the future upheaval which should usher in new era would come either from Russia or China. Romain Rolland said that he could not tell exactly which, but it would be one of these two countries.\textsuperscript{79}

Vivekananda's concept of man is a concept of volcanic dynamism. A person is to realize his divine self and thereby attain mukti or liberation. This is the whole object of his life. Heaven and hell and all other such matters are,

\begin{footnotes}
\item[Ibid., p. 269.]
\item[Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda, Volume V, p. 10.]
\item[Romain Rolland, The Life of Swami Vivekananda and the Universal Gospel, p.135.]
\end{footnotes}
nothing but theological myths.\textsuperscript{80} As stated by Sister Nivedita-‘he preached *mukti* instead of heaven; enlightenment in stead of salvation, the realization of immanent unity, *Brahman*, instead of God.\textsuperscript{81}

Man-must struggle for liberation, must fight his way out, he cannot rest, cannot give up the fight, because this struggle is the nectar of his life. He has to move on and on without a moment's break. Vivekananda's philosophy is a song of this struggle, a virtual marching song of the soul: 'Sharp as the blade of a razor, long and difficult and hard to cross, is the way to freedom. ...Yet do not let these weaknesses and failures bind you. ...We will then certainly cross the path, sharp as it is like the razor and long and distant and difficult though it is. Man becomes the master of gods and demons.\textsuperscript{82}

According to Marx, the life of the individual is tyrannically determined by society. Vivekananda was dead against such social determinism. Instead of a life being determined by society, society is made, moulded and remoulded to serve his purpose-the purpose of his self-realization.\textsuperscript{83} Strength, fearlessness and freedom are the three cardinal qualities of man, according to Vivekananda. Physical freedom, mental freedom, and spiritual freedom are the watchwords of the Upanishads’. This respect for human individuality and its freedom is admirable. No other religion has possessed it to this degree, and with Vivekananda it was a part of the very essence of religion. His God was no less than all living beings and every living being, therefore, ought to be free to develop’.\textsuperscript{84}

To those who constantly become their lot or pine for confession, or suffer from inferiority complex, Swami Vivekananda said, “Don’t repent! Don’t be miserable! What is done is done....Be sensible. We make mistakes; what of that? Go on, he said, stop not onward to the goal. Don’t look back don’t cry and fume. Have a smile on your face and a determination in your

\begin{footnotes}
\item[80] Santwana Dasgupta, *Social Philosophy of Swami Vivekananda*, p. 29.
\item[83] Santwana Dasgupta, *Social Philosophy of Swami Vivekananda*, p. 35.
\item[84] Romain Rolland, *Life of Vivekananda and The Universal Gospel*, p. 75.
\end{footnotes}
heart”, “Heaven and hell, all nonsense”. But select an ideal, pursue it, struggle for it, and you come on top. Regarding this, Marie Louis Burke said, “This was a religion for heroes; no heavens, no hell, no worship, no doctrines, no churches, no external God, not even beating of the Chest”. This is the spirit of Soham-I am that I am the truth. This is the manifestation of the divinity already in man.

For thousands of years, millions and millions all over the world have been taught to worship the Lord of the world, the incarnations, the saviours, the prophets, he said. They have been taught to consider themselves helpless, miserable creatures and to depend upon the mercy of some person or persons for salvation. There are, no doubt, many marvelous things in such beliefs. But even at their best, they are but kindergartens of religion, and they have helped but little, men are still hypnotized into object degradation. Swami Vivekananda thundered, “Not one step back, that is the idea. No bending the knee. Always stiffen the backbone. Fight it out, whatever comes. Let the stars move from the spheres, the whole world stand against you. Death means only a change of garment. The masses of India cry to sixty million gods. Dying like dogs. Hell is here, there is no other place. This impotence does not befit thee, awake and arise. It does not befit thee, this weakness, this bending the knee to superstitions, this selling yourselves to your own minds?”

This exhortation reminds a revolutionary’s calling upon the people to rise up in revolt against the alien aggressor or Shri Krishna’s asking Arjuna to awake, arise and stop not till the Kauravas have been defeated.

Swami Vivekananda even dared to say that the Ochre robe of the Sannyasis was not for the indolent lazy smoking vagabonds. Chicken hearted people cannot become real Sannyasis. It is only the man of indomitable will who can become a soldier Sannyasis. Never forget that the real Sannyasis could shake the world. “Europe knows how to die,” said Rabindranath Tagore, “and that is why she knows how to live”. It is only when a man is

prepared to suffer and die for a cause that he will live. Those who don’t know how to live a heroic life die away unsung, unwept and unhonoured. Therefore, the word ‘fear’ has to be eliminated. Fear is the creation of cowards. There is no hell or heaven. Change the mental outlook, and hell becomes heaven. You can enter heaven after death, only if you have already entered it while living.

Swami Vivekananda did not whisper or crawl! He roared and walked majestically. A great voice is made to fill the day”.89 In England while walking with Miss Müller and an English friend, he saw a mad bull came tearing towards them. In the words of Sister Nivedita, The Englishman frankly ran. The woman ran as far as she could, and then sank to the ground. Seeing this Vivekananda took up his stand. He told afterwards how his mind was occupied with a mathematical calculation, as to how far the bull would be able to throw. But the animal suddenly stopped and then retreated silently. The English friend now came down the tree. Vivekananda said sarcastically, “Yes, John Bull of England! Where was your chivalry to protect the women in danger”? The Englishman was silent. Swami Vivekananda smiled and said, “Whenever I meet death, I feel as strong as blunt. Once when I was a boy, I quickly sprang over to hold the reins of a horse of a running carriage to save my companion from being trampled under the horse's feet in a street of Calcutta”. Similarly, he quietly stepped up to a runaway horse, and caught it, in the streets of Calcutta, thus saving the life of the woman who occupied the carriage behind.90

The most important quality that draws all sincere youths to Vivekananda is his absolute fearlessness. Early in life, he showed raw courage even in the face of sure death by saving his friends from the running wheels of a horse carriage. Later this fearlessness matured into spiritual transcendence. As a wandering monk, when he was approaching the Durga Temple at Varanasi one day, he felt frightened with the imminence of death from a large group of ferocious monkeys running after him to tear him apart.

89 Romain Rolland, *The Life of Vivekananda and The Universal Gospel*, p. 312.
90 *The Life of Swami Vivekananda by His Eastern and Western Disciples*, Volume II, pp. 96-97.
Seeing this, an old monk shouted out to him the gospel for life, “Face the brute. Suddenly he faced the entire host, and they were gone”! Thus, forward in Vivekananda’s life, heroism and courage became synonymous with virtue. In the nineteenth century and even today too most of the problems of the youth are due to their secret fear to face the unknown to face the complexities of life, to face misery, to face struggle, to face competition, and to face disease, insecurity, frustration or failure. To young monks at Belur Math he defined Sannyasa as a love of death, not suicide but a total sacrifice of life as Buddha did for bringing happiness to millions around.

You have to be soldiers in physique and mind, in spirit and intellect, in thought and deed. Be of good cheer and believe that we are selected by the Lord to do great things, and we will do them. What we should have is what we have not, perhaps what our forefathers even had not that, which the Yavanas had; that impelled by the life vibration which is issuing forth in rapid flow from the great dynamo of Europe, the electro flow of that tremendous power vilifying the whole world. We want that energy, that love of independence, that spirit of self-reliance, that immovable fortitude, that dexterity in action, that bond of unity of purpose, that thirst for improvement. Checking a little, the constant looking back to the past, we want that expansive vision infinitely projected forward; and we want that intense spirit of activity (Rajas) which will flow through our every vein from head to foot”. Be moral, be brave. Be a whole heart man. Don’t bother your head with religious theories. Cowards only sin, brave men never, no, not even in mind. Go and preach to all, Arise, awake and sleep no more; within each of you there is the power to remove all wants and miseries. Believe this and that power will be manifested.

Granted enough character, our strength will be more than our weakness, fortunes greater than misfortunes, woes less than weal, and our present and future more glorious then our past. Granted enough character, our friends will be more powerful than our enemies, peace more than war, heeling

more than killing. As students we will have the intelligence to see that the real issue on hand for us as students is to conserve our energy, study well, build up our physical mental and spiritual strength and freely equip ourselves for the struggle for existence. We will then easily see through the game of people trying to use us for their purpose at the cost of our life’s interest.\textsuperscript{93} The society that has achieved a harmonious understanding amongst its members progresses faster and is more stable. Such a situation calls for and depends on the character of each individual in that society.\textsuperscript{94} With character, young men and women will be full of grace, dignity and self-control, staying youthful to advanced age and old people will become things of beauty to see. Our culture will be sweetness and light, art revelation of God the beautiful, the literature of a high endeavors for self expression and transcendence. If we want to get all the above things to happen we will have to build our character. Man himself is the central theme. He is more valuable than any one in the Universe. He must be salvaged and liberated in his own being. The way is to build character.\textsuperscript{95}

Character is what a person truly is, and his reputation is what he is supposed to be. When character and reputation are same, that is the ideal state of being. History is made by character. Character is defined as qualities or features by which a person or a thing is distinguished from another; the aggregate of distinguishing mental and moral qualities of an individual or a race as a whole; the stamp of individuality impressed by nature, education or habit; that which a person as a thing really is. Swami Vivekananda says, “What you want is character, strengthening of the will, continue to exercise your will and it will take you higher. This will is Almighty. It is character that can pass through adamantine walls of difficulties”.\textsuperscript{96}

The character of any man is but the aggregate of his tendencies, the sum total of the bent of his mind. Vivekananda said that we are what our thoughts have made us. So take care of what you think. Every work that we

\textsuperscript{93} Swami Budhananda, \textit{How to Build Character}, Advaita Ashrama, Kolkata, 2004, p. 22.  
\textsuperscript{94} Swami Amartyananda, \textit{Effective Life Management}, p. 9.  
\textsuperscript{95} Swami Budhananda, \textit{How to Build Character}, p. 26.  
\textsuperscript{96} \textit{Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda}, Volume II, p. 357.
do and every thought that we think bears an impression on the mind. We are
every movement determined by the sum total of these impressions. If good
impression prevail, the character becomes good; if bad it becomes bad.\textsuperscript{97} Character is that ensemble of actualized qualities of head and heart of an
individual through the help of which he masters facts and forces of life in a
creative manner and gradually reaches to others as well. The man of character
develops upwards, the man without character slips downwards. The man of
color makes history; the man without it is marred by history. The man of
color is the hope, self, well being, peace and inspiration of mankind; the
man without character causes trouble, strife, worry and misery in society.

Character holds the key to any riddle of life. It can break each and
every vicious circle. There is no mystery character cannot unravel. There is
no wound it cannot heal, no want it cannot feel. Hence the most important
thing among all creative endeavours of life is to know how to build one's own
color and help build the character of others who are associates. As Hindu
psychology would bear it out, the character of child begins to get formed
even in its prenatal state. Thoughts of the parents some way impress the yet
unformed personality of the child. According to the ancient law giver Manu,
family is the most significant of social groups in which human beings are
nurtured. Marriage culminates in family and child is the symbol of their
attained state of being. The family is the fast training ground for building the
child’s character. Child catches passively, to begin with, all behavioral
contagion, good or bad, without being able to discriminate or resist. When the
child is able to watch consciously, it begins to build its own character by
seeing, watching and imitating its parents. In the family again, mother’s
influences in moulding the character of the child is invaluable. That is why
Manu says, “The teacher of the \textit{Vedas} is ten times more venerable than an
ordinary teacher, a father hundred times more than a teacher, but mother
thousands times more than a father”.\textsuperscript{98} In the character of \textit{Mahavira},
Vivekananda found one of the greatest embodiments of courage, intelligence
and sacrifice. He wanted India’s youths to follow this great life. “Make the

\textsuperscript{97} Swami Vivekananda, \textit{India and Her Problems}, Advaita Ashrama, Calcutta,
1976, pp. 55-56.

\textsuperscript{98} Swami Budhananda, \textit{How to Build Character}, pp. 29-30.
character of Mahavira your ideal...He was the perfect master of the senses and wonderfully sagacious. Build your life on this great ideal of personal service. Through that ideal, all the other great ideas will manifest in life.\textsuperscript{99} He again said, “I donot know whether I shall succeed or not, but it is a great thing to hold on to a grand ideal and give one’s whole life to it. Otherwise what is the value of this little, vegetating, and low life of a man”\textsuperscript{100}

To the Indian youth of late nineteenth and early twentieth century, Vivekananda stood out as their teacher, leader, prophet, pathfinder, and the source of all inspiration. Mahatma Gandhi was barely thirty three when he came to meet Vivekananda. Netaji Subhash Chandar Bose and Aurobindo were conflagrared by Swamiji’s words when they were quite young. His great disciples like Nivedita, Swarupanande Virajananda, or Christine were barely in late twenties when they first met him, and each one reached great heights.

Addressing the youth in Delhi, Pandit Jawahar Lal Nehru said, “I donot know how many of the younger generation read the speeches and writings of Swami Vivekananda. But I can tell you that many of my generation were very powerfully influenced by him and I think it would do a great deal of good to present generation if they also went through Swami Vivekananda’s writings and speeches and they would learn much from them....He came as a tonic to the depressed and demoralized Hindu mind and gave it self reliance and same roots in the past”. He further wrote, “His message never grows old, because, what he wrote or spoke about India’s problems or the world’s problems are fresh even though you read them now”.\textsuperscript{101}

Swami Vivekananda inspired the young kings and rulers to emerge as Rajarishis, kingly without and sagely within. To a whole generation of denationalized youths who felt glorified by hating their own culture, Vivekananda’s words brought shocks of shame and a new life of confidence and glory through self purification, self sacrifice and service. His words had the radiance of the Sun that energized drooping youths of an enslaved nation

\textsuperscript{100} Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda, Volume III, p. 168.
\textsuperscript{101} Jawaharlal Nehru, The Discovery of India, p. 236. Also see, Swami Jitatmananda, Swami Vivekananda, Prophet and Pathfinder, p. 277.
with superhuman strength, bringing undreamt of manifestations of energy, dynamism, intellect, passion for human suffering, and all kinds of human excellence.

Saints are normally born of men and women of great character. There are several disciplines for building a character which can be knowingly cultivated; like self mastery, practice of the three austerities of body, speech and mind as taught by Sri Krishna in the Gita, practice as prescribed by Patanjali (Yama and Niyama), ethical conduct, developing the powers of discrimination and detachment or powers of true learner etc.\textsuperscript{102} Confucius says, “To find the central clue of our moral being which unites us to the Universal order (or to attain central harmony) that indeed is the highest attainment. That indeed is the attainment of perfection in character development”.\textsuperscript{103} Vivekananda said that even idiots may stand up to hear themselves praised and cowards assume the attitude of the brave when everything is sure to turn out well, but the true hero works in silence. How many Buddhas die before one finds expression!\textsuperscript{104} This is the first lesson to learn: be determined not to curse anything outside, not to lay the blame upon anyone outside, but be a man, stand up, lay the blame on yourself.\textsuperscript{105}

For some years, India has had an intimidating rule. English soldiers are slaying our countrymen, dishonoring our sisters. We are in darkness. Vivekananda told the youth they could afford to be optimist, but it was not possible for him to be one? “Suppose you only publish this letter-then under the pretext of law that has recently been ended in India, the British Government would forcibly take me away from India and would feel happy at this, because we are non-Christians. Can I also go to sleep and be an optimist? Nero was the most optimistic man. They do not want to publish all these fearful things in the form of news and if it is found necessary to publish something in the form of news then the Reuter correspondents concoct some false news. Even the murder of a non-Christian by a Christian is only legal

\begin{itemize}
\item[\textsuperscript{102}] Swami Budhananda, \textit{How to Build Character}, p. 32.
\item[\textsuperscript{103}] Lin Yutang, \textit{The Wisdom of China and India}, The Modern Library, New York, 1942, p. 831.
\item[\textsuperscript{104}] \textit{Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda}, Volume V, p. 142.
\end{itemize}
entertainment. Your missionaries go to convey the message of God, but do not dare to speak a word of truth due to the fear of the British because the British would do them away the next day.\(^{106}\)

The change that had been brought about on the national goal in the historical context was disclosed by him in detail to a disciple during the course of a discourse. He expressed the views that people could not be united until they had a common goal. Till then it was futile to hold meetings, form associations and give speeches. He sighted the example of Guru Gobind Singh who achieved this by making both the Hindus and Muslims realize that they were living under a rule of tyranny. He did not himself set some new goal for them, but only drew the attention of masses to the goal that was already before them. That is why he commended the confidence of both Hindus and Muslims. The following words of Guru Gobind Singh impressed Vivekananda.

*Deh Shiva Var Mohi Ehe, Shubh Karman Te Kabuhun Na Darun,\nNa Tarun, Are So Jab Jaye Larun, Nische Kar Apne Jeet Karun*\(^{107}\)

During his religious tour of East Bengal and Assam in 1901 his asthma and diabetes got aggravated. He was put under the treatment of a *Vaidya*. All were concerned about his condition but he always tried to cheer them up by his humorous talk. He never stopped talking to the visitors. He was especially pleased to meet the university students and the youth. In a forceful and cheerful voice he would preach to them to be strong. The disciples considered these discussions to be harmful for his health and would request him to desist from talking. But he would tell them to forget about such restrictions and that he would consider his labours to be successful even if one of them became an ideal man; that he was not worried about death if it came about for the welfare of others; that he could not disappoint people who came to listen to him from far off places, that he would not keep quiet whatever they might do.

Bhupendranath Dutta has related an incident in his book. “The patriots of Calcutta decided to hold a celebration in honour of Shivaji so as to

---


popularize patriotic leaders like him. But no one agreed to preside over the celebrations, due to the fear of government. At last they went to the Belur monastery and placed their problem before Vivekananda. His eyes were filled with tears on hearing them and he asked them to go to Narendra Nath Sen, the editor of *Indian Mirror*, and mentioned that if Sen did not agree, he would himself preside over the function. \(^{108}\)

The beginning of the twentieth century witnessed the new awakening, inspite of all repressive measures taken by the government. Although a struggle gained momentum on the issue of partition of Bengal, soon it became a countryside movement based on four point programme of Boycott of foreign goods, Swadeshi, Swarajaya and National education. There is no doubt that the message of Vivekananda spread all over the country and the events that he predicted not only started happening but assumed the form of a strong movement in the face of which the British Government had to bend and the partition of Bengal was annulled. This was the first Struggle after the war of independence in 1857, which became successful. It brought glory to the whole nation. Of course, there was a danger inherent in the message of Vivekananda, of its developing in the form of narrow nationalism. Vivekananda had woken up a sleeping lion, as it were, and created a feeling of self-confidence in the nation about its being still alive, inspite of continuous foreign invasions, while Greece, Rome and Egypt had been wiped out. It was because there was a perennial current of culture which formed the backbone of nation and kept it strong and alive. Vivekananda’s message inspired the poet Mohammad Iqbal to write,

_Sare Jahan Se Achha Hindustan Hamara,
Hum Bulble Hain Iske Ye Gulisatan Hamara,
Yunano, Misar, Rome Mit Gai Is Jahan Se,
Baki Hai Abi Tak Namo Nishan Hamara,
Koi Baat Hai Ki Hasti Mit Ti Nahin Hamari._

Dushman Raha Hai Dore Jaman Hamara.\textsuperscript{109}

Josephine wrote that she asked Vivekananda, “Shall I come to India?” And his answer was, “Yes, come, if you want filth and degradation and poverty and many loin clothed talking religion. Don’t come if you want criticism. Naturally I went over by the first ship”.\textsuperscript{110} His thought ranged over every phase of the future of India, and he gave all that was in him to his country and to the world. The world will rank him among the prophets and primes of peace, and his message has been heard in reverence in three continents. For his countrymen, he has left a priceless heritage of virility, abounding vitality stands on the threshold of the dawn of a new day for India, a heroic and dauntless figure, the herald and harbinger of the glorious hour when India shall once again sweep forward to the vanguard of the nations”\textsuperscript{111} Of Indian freedom, he said that India would be free within fifty years.\textsuperscript{112} There is a great future for India after her independence.

A group of American young men and women fled in late sixties from society after failing to cope with the exploding high speed complexities of life into a tiny sun drenched village in Crete”. Unable to find any meaning of life in a purely materialistic society, this young group swung back towards extreme subjectivism. The parade by the Russian youth during communist regime chanting ‘Hare Krishna’ on the roads of Moscow defying the ban by the authorities was another sign of the search for identity. When Soviet thinkers tried to find in these non-conformists rebellious youth a lack of higher values the youth began to question the meaning of higher values, in such a totalitarian society. When the authorities thought of clearing the courtyards of the groups of young people, hundreds of teenagers responded. One among them, “But what if I had not found myself? What if I don’t yet know my calling? There are many like me. We get together in groups in the


\textsuperscript{110} Josephine Mcleod, \textit{Reminiscences of Swami Vivekananda by His Eastern and Western Admirers}, Advaita Ashrama, Calcutta, 1961, p. 239.

\textsuperscript{111} Nagendranath Gupta, \textit{Reminiscences of Swami Vivekananda by His Eastern and Western Admirers}, p. 20.

\textsuperscript{112} Manmoth Nath Ganguli, \textit{Reminiscences of Swami Vivekananda by His Eastern and Western Admirers}, p. 36. Also see, \textit{Prabuddha Bharata}, March- April, 1927.
evenings and argue. But then, you adults also get together in groups. You talk about the meaning of money, while we talk about the meaning of life.\textsuperscript{113}

Mr. Thomas Allan, a young Scotsman who went to hear Swami Vivekananda for the first time at the Unitarian church in California, 1900 wrote, “Here is a man who knows what he is talking about. He is not repeating what some other person told him, he is not relating what he thinks, he is a God...To me he was a wander and I followed him to every one of the Bay cities where he spoke”.\textsuperscript{114} It is the burning Universalism behind the words that makes Vivekananda the ideal for today’s youth bewildered by Sectarianism. Why should with all its wonderful intelligence and other things have gone to pieces? I would answer you, jealousy”. A few souls inspired by the ideal of total renunciation, for the welfare of others, will stand up. Through them the idea of wonderful liberality joined with eternal energy and progress must spread over India. They will electrify the nation inspite of the horrible ignorance, caste-feeling, old lobbyism and jealousy.\textsuperscript{115}

Youngsters are like certain plants that grow fruits first and then flowers. They must assimilate the best of what the West has to give us, and not what is cheap in that culture. What is cheap in it is even bad for them, and they are eager to get rid of it. Vivekananda said let us not therefore take from the West what is cheap and flashy. India has that responsibility and can we discharge it when we have not brought health to our own body-politic? Our nation must be stronger, more united, and free from all these dismal economic and social conditions.\textsuperscript{116} Thoughts that are positive and not negative, holistic and not individualistic elevate, strengthen, energize and ultimately glorify an individual with success. Vivekananda says, “Thought is a force, as is gravitation or repulsion. Force is supplied to us through food, and out of that food, the body obtains the power of motion etc. Other finer forces, it throws out as what we call thought. The greatest force is derived from the power of

\begin{thebibliography}{9}
\bibitem{114} Marie Louis Burke, \textit{Swami Vivekananda’s Second Visit To the West}, p. 311.
\bibitem{115} \textit{Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda}, Volume VIII, pp. 299-300.
\bibitem{116} Swami Ranganathananda, \textit{The Universal Symphony of Vivekananda}, p. 262.
\end{thebibliography}
thought….The silent power of thought influences people even at a distance because mind is one as well as many”.117

Today medical science has shown that with the least touch of highly rewarding and fulfilling news, even a sick person starts dancing and getting cured. Vice-versa, with the least touch of damaging and devastating news a strong young man or woman sinks into oblivion of despair and virtual death within a few hours.118 If you did not allow one to become a lion, he will become a fox. Vivekananda cautioned the leaders, teachers and guardians of youth. Teach yourselves; teach everyone his real nature. Call upon the sleeping soul and see how it awakes. Power will come, glory will come, purity will come, and everything that is excellent will come, when this sleeping soul is roused to self conscious activity”.

When you want to build a house, you feel the need for a plan. You approach an architect who knows all about the subject. So when you set about to rebuild India, as a youth you should certainly ask this question: what is the type of India we need? This is a very important question with respect to our country, according to Vivekananda, because we are not starting from a scratch, like some other modern countries. History is behind us and a large population of a heterogeneous nature. A long period of history, and much of it extraordinarily glorious, lies behind us. This long history of India has touched the life of almost all the contemporary civilizations during that long period. We have contributed our share to the common inheritance of all humanity—in the fields of the physical sciences, political and economic thought, arts, and above all, pure religion and philosophy. Youth must take into account this glorious work of our great ancestors, old and recent. They have to continue their work and build a greater and healthier India. Naturally, such a work cannot be just building a nation, but re-building a nation. And in that process, they may have to cut out some parts of that heritage which have become irrelevant, obsolete and obstacles to our progress but they will also

have to preserve and strengthen the fundamentals of our national culture and life.\(^{120}\)

Vivekananda cautioned the Indian youth not to go for a blind imitation of the West. We must learn from them science and technology and their art of organization, but always with a certain modification. Modernisation does not mean westernisation; neither does it require uprooting from the nation’s ancient culture. Imitation is not civilisation. He said, “I am one of the proudest men ever born but let me tell you frankly, it is because of my ancestry”.\(^{121}\) For the sincere and young souls, Vivekananda’s life is always charming. Young but aged with wisdom of the ages, he would sometimes soliloquize and said, “I feel three hundred years old”. Yet he never had those grey hair, that line his master’s Elysian smile. The world shaking dynamism never left him, neither the fun nor the immortal humour, which was a gift from his master.

Like a young Napoleon of Vedanta, Vivekananda stood on both sides of Atlantic. Like a young Shankara, he radiated the power and bliss of self-knowledge. With Mira’s devotion and Beethoven’s exuberance he sang paens of praise to all saints and sages, to all Gods and prophets. Like a young prince he charmed and elevated whoever came to him. Like a young Buddha, he could and did enter into the highest transcendence of Nirvana, the Nirvikalpa Samadhi-either at Camp Percy or London in the very presence of his listeners. Like a young Christ he lay stretched on the pyre that he lit for himself after of humanity. He entered his habitual realism of transcendence after drinking the poison of human suffering. This is the finale of Vivekananda’s life. He remains and will remain an eternal symbol of youth-youth in the fullness of divinity and perfection.\(^{122}\) Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan remarked, ‘Vivekananda fortitude in suffering, hope in distress, and gave us courage in despair. He told us not to be led away by appearances. Deep down there is Providential Will, there is a purpose in this universe. You must try to discover that purpose, which is the goal of human life, and try to achieve it’.

---

\(^{120}\) Swami Ranganathananda, *The Universal Symphony of Vivekananda*, p. 243.

\(^{121}\) *Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, Volume III, p. 368.

\(^{122}\) Swami Jitatmananda, *Swami Vivekananda, Prophet and Pathfinder*, p. 278.
Thus imbibing the spirit of Swami Vivekananda, Indian youth face the problems and challenges of today and work out solutions, not only by bringing leaders and intellectuals to the right path, but by becoming leaders themselves, leading the nation onward and evolving an integrated system of social and spiritual values.\textsuperscript{123}

India did not forget her prophet of the youth. On 17\textsuperscript{th} October, 1984 the Government of India declared (circular number D.O. No. F 6-1/841YY)\textsuperscript{124} Vivekananda’s birthday, 12\textsuperscript{th} January, as the National Youth Day. According to the circular, the philosophy of Vivekananda and the ideals for which he lived and worked could be a great source of inspiration for the Indian Youth. Vivekananda’s call has not lost its significance in present day India, when the Indian people still have to accomplish so much in constructive endeavour and progress in order to get rid for ever of the curse of colonial slavery, poverty, and ignorance. Vivekananda's philosophy is, thus, a gospel of hope, of optimism which urges man to recreate his being and venture upon to create a better future for him and for mankind as a whole.

The youth of today are facing an unknown future and are looking for a messiah to lead them from this darkness to light and life. India has faced such problems before in the midst of upheavals of the past and the challenge was always met by her noble sons and daughters. It was Vivekananda’s inspiration that roused up the revolutionaries and national leaders during the freedom struggle. Great objectives can be achieved only by hard work, dedication and intense involvement.\textsuperscript{125} Today this is what is most important. Do it by becoming a great scientist, a great humanist, a great statesman, a great administrator, an original thinker, a great citizen, a great religious genius. There are a thousand ways by which this re-creation of our history can be done. There are only some of the ways to do it. That is the way to go about to rebuild India. Let young people be creative first and banish the centuries-long national stagnation from their minds and lives, and grasp the truth that there are great possibilities for human development, individual and

\textsuperscript{123} N. S. V. Rao, \textit{In Vivekananda- The Great Spiritual Teacher}, p. 490.
\textsuperscript{124} Swami Jitatmananda, \textit{Swami Vivekananda, Prophet and Pathfinder}, p. 278.
\textsuperscript{125} N. S. V. Rao, \textit{In Vivekananda- The Great Spiritual Teacher}, p. 488.
collective, national and international, in this modern period of their nation's history. Then let them put themselves into that tremendous role of history-makers, creators of history, instead of remaining creatures of history.\textsuperscript{126}

Swami Vivekananda himself worked with such personal involvement and exhorted his countrymen to do likewise. By his dynamic personality and inspiring call, he raised the banner of our national and spiritual glory. Young people will certainly rise to meet the challenges of modern times as well. Youth power is tremendous. With discipline, faith, courage and character they can achieve the highest and the noblest. It is far better to die in the field in achieving a worthy ideal than to live and die like worms.

\footnote{Swami Ranganathananda, \textit{The Universal Symphony of Vivekananda}, p. 263.}