PREFACE

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA PATRIOT-PROPHET—The book is a study of Swami Vivekananda in relation to national problems. This study contains Swamiji’s views regarding national reconstruction of India and the part played by him in its great reawakening. The basis of this study is the dialectical analysis of the Indian society of the nineteenth century.

Here, it should be acknowledged that all the family incidents and the incidents of the early life of Swami Vivekananda, have been put down in the book after consultation with the writer’s elder brother, Sri Mahendranath Datta.

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FOREWORD

The influence of Swami Vivekananda in the mind of nationalist India is well-known. Five decades ago, his Indian lectures collected in book form entitled "From Colombo to Almora" became the source of inspiration to many a youth. His words "Heaven is nearer through football than through Gita. We want men of strong biceps" became the slogan of the ardent youthful nationalists of that time.

Indian Nationalism as understood by Swamiji is not the same as understood to-day. To him, a nation meant the people. He wanted the upliftment and freedom of the Indian people. He wanted the material and moral advancement of the same. By the word "people" he did not mean a political term, but the masses who constitute the major portion of humanity living in India. In reading the sayings of Swamiji quoted in this volume the reader will find that he has divided the Indians into two classes, the rich—the upper class, and the poor—the lower class. This latter class he has designated as the "masses". They form the toiling classes of India. Swamiji's efforts were directed in drawing the attention of the youth of the country towards the betterment of the condition of the masses. He has not only repeatedly asked them to take up this onerous task but he has laid down the principles of his program also. But how many have realized what he has said and how many have acted up to it?

It seems that the youth of the country did not realize the full import of his advice in this matter. To them Swamiji's plea for upliftment of the Indian masses meant only philanthropic and charitable works. Hence the country is dotted with Social Service Societies! But if any one reads his advice in the light of modern philosophy for the upliftment of the masses, he will find that Swamiji was not content in giving an ameliorative program only, he also wanted a radical cure
of the chronic condition. He was not for keeping up the *status quo* of the Indian Society, but wanted a complete overhaul of the whole thing!

A Marxist will be amazed in seeing his ideas anticipated in the sayings of Swamiji, and he will be more amazed when he reads that Swamiji has openly called himself a “socialist”. Therein lies the key to Swamiji’s advice to the youth of his country. One will be surprised in reading that Swamiji has not only used Marx’s phrase, that “the poor are getting poorer and the rich are getting richer” but he has also spoken about the “proletarian culture”, and has foretold that the “Proletocult” (Proletarian Culture) of the Indian masses will be the future culture of New India! In going through the pages of this book one cannot but admit that Swamiji was saturated with the ideas of the social-revolutionaries of the West. Indeed he gave evidence enough that he was well acquainted with their literature and ideals.

To many an admirer of Swamiji this will sound quite strange and unorthodox. Some will call it a blasphemy even. But truth is stranger than fiction. Some part of his life is not known to the Indian public. Very few people know that he had political revolutionary ideas in the beginning. He wanted to free the country from the foreign yoke. But he failed in his attempt, and seeing the cause of his failure, he tried a different remedy and deflected his attention to another channel. The key to the new venue of his work for India lay here.

The year before his death, when two of his foreign admirers (one of whom was his disciple) with the collaboration of some noted citizens of Calcutta started a nationalist group, which later on became the nucleus of the later revolutionary movement of Bengal, Swamiji desisted his disciple from joining it. On being asked by the Sister Christine as to why he requested the other one to keep aloof from Indian politics, he answered, “What does Nivedita know of Indian conditions and politics? I have done more politics in my life than she! I had the idea of forming a combination of Indian princes for the overthrow of the
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foreign yoke. For that reason, from the Himalayas to Cape Comorin I have tramped all over the country. For that reason I made friends with the gun-maker Sir Hiram Maxim. But I got no response from the country. The country is dead". And he narrated further attempt of his at this time in other direction; but he again said, "India is in putrifaction. What I want to-day is a band of selfless young workers who will educate and uplift the people." Swamiji narrated further of his doings to Sister Christine. But she refused to divulge it to the writer.

Here it should be mentioned that the news about the attempt at revolution on the part of the Swamiji was not unknown to the leading revolutionaries of the first batch. It was narrated by the Swamiji himself in the course of a dialogue with Pandit Saktharam Ganesh Deuskar at Belur. Pandit Deuskar himself was an active member of the revolutionary party. On being interrogated by Deuskar regarding the future of the country Swamiji answered: "The Country has become a powder magazine. A little spark may ignite it, I will see the revolution in my life time." On being asked as to the nature of this revolution, whether the Indians will seek foreign help, he answered, "No, the Indians will not make mistake the fourth time. I know several princes who can successfully carry on the revolution." Later on, this conversation was divulged by Deuskar to the leading Bengal revolutionaries in about 1904 A.D. This news about Swamiji's attempt lent further strength to them.

Thus, the key-note of his attitude towards the Indian national question was to uplift the Indian masses by educating them, and by instilling the feeling of man-consciousness in them. What he wanted was to give a background to the process of nation-building. On this account he emphasised education for the masses and to help "to develop their lost individuality". He clearly discerned that without the uprise of the majority of the population of India who are lying in a debased condition, Indian regeneration is not possible. Swamiji was clear in his vision that our degradation is not due to political enslavement, but loss of all round
freedom of the man from time immemorial. That religious, social and economic slavery have dehumanized the Indians, was the burden of his theme for India's upliftment. For that reason he wanted the disturbance of the status quo of the Indian society as can be gleaned from his sayings when he depicted the same as "horrid, diabolical", and as a remedy he said, "No priestcraft, no social tyranny! More bread, more opportunity for everybody!"

Swamiji called himself a socialist, and so far it is known, he was the first Indian to designate himself as such. Yet his socialism is not of the same brand as of to-day. In making an analysis of his sayings a Marxist may say that his "Socialism" does not tally with that of Lenin, and may fall short of the socialist ideal of the West; his was more of the reformistic school. Yet one must not forget that during the time when Swamiji penned these epistles, Socialism did not take a revolutionary attitude. The only exception to it was in Russia, where in the milieu of that country it could not be otherwise. But the Bolshevists had not arisen as yet, and the world had not heard anything about the theory of "Dictatorship of the Proletariate". But strange as it is, in referring to his saying quoted from page 401 (IV) one will find that Swamiji did foretell about the dictatorship of the proletariat when he said, "Yet, a time will come when there will be the rising of the Sudra class......a time will come, when the Sudras of every country......will gain absolute supremacy in every society". It will sound still strange when one hears what is narrated to the author by Swamiji's American disciple Sister Christine, that "it was in New York during Swamiji's last visit to America he told us these things. Swamiji was walking up and down the floor and saying—first comes the rule of the Brahmans, then the rule of the Kshatriyas. At present the world is being ruled by the Vaishyas. Next comes the rule of the Sudras. I am wondering where the first Sudra State will be established. It must be either in Russia or in China. In both these countries the huge masses of peoples are oppressed and down-trodden".
To an Indian fed with the cud of antiquated English ideologies and antediluvian world-views of his own country this will sound strange, and to many an Occidental this will sound queer when he remembers that Karl Marx in his lifetime has said that the cause of freedom of the Russian people was a hopeless one. But more than half a century ago, Swamiji prophesied about the uprise of the Russian masses, and the possible establishment of the rule of the same! And the difference of opinion lay in the uphill work of the Russian Youth during the time that intervened between the sayings of these two great men. Marx knew Bakunin sometime as his colleague, sometime as his antagonist. At that time, the movement of freedom of the Russian people was in its infancy. It was confined to some sporadic terrorist attempts of the students. There was no mass movement in Russia at that time. Hence Marx was in despair. But when Swamiji was in the West, Peter Kropotkin was living as an exile in London (Swamiji met Kropotkin at the Paris International Exhibition) and Plekhanoff's party was very active in the field, though Lenin had not seceded from the latter as yet. Nobody knows what conversation took place between Swamiji and Kropotkin at Paris. They met only once at the same place. But some of Swamiji's Occidental disciples were ardent admirers and friends of Kropotkin. They always talked of the latter to the author. But it cannot be said that Swamiji was influenced by Kropotkin in his conversation. Yet one must realize that Swamiji had extensively travelled over the civilized world, and had met savants of different shades of ideals. Hence it was not a wonder that he was alive to the problems of modern world and would see the problems of his own country in that light.

Those of our fellow-countrymen who have been so long chewing the cud of mid-Victorian ideologies and have been importing the class-patriotism of British capitalist class known as "Nationalism" as the cure-all of India's woes, might have taken a lesson of what he had said regarding the Indian situation. To them his sayings are pregnant with meanings because his name is
being exploited in many fields of Indian activities. Those of the Indian nationalists who exploit Swamiji's name for "Indian Nationalism" must take a heed of what he has said regarding India's problems. Swamiji has denounced the exploitation of the Indian masses by the aristocrats and he has called the arguments of those who believe in keeping the masses down, as "demoniacal and brutal." He said that "the first step to become a patriot" is to feel for the starving millions. Again he emphasized that there should be "no privilege for anyone, equal chance for all. The youngmen should preach the gospel of social raising up, the gospel of Equality". But to those who shout for freedom, yet deny it to others, he has said, "Our young folks make meetings to get more power from the English. None deserves liberty who is not ready to give liberty." The class-character of our patriotism was unmasked by Swamiji long ago!

That Indian nationalist movement has been a class movement, cannot be gainsaid. It has been the movement of the Indian Bourgeoisie to get the political control of the country. But Swamiji was explicit in his opinion that thereby the condition of the Indian people will not be bettered. Without the raising up of the masses on the basis of equality, the majority of the Indian people will remain where they are from time immemorial as "hewers of wood and drawers of water" to use Swamiji's own expression. Up to the time of independence, the nationalist movement had been a reactionary one—it demanded political freedom only. It had been reactionary in other aspects of life; so long it did not say anything about social, religious and economic freedom of man's life. But Swamiji, demanded an all-round freedom of man. He wanted liberty in all aspects of man's life.

Those nationalists who in their hatred of British rule have hated everything that is foreign, and have thought that the institutions of their own country are the best in the world and have exploited Swamiji's name in this field, take a heed of what he has said: "Modern India admits spiritual equality of all souls—but strictly keeps the social difference". "A country where millions of people live on flowers of the malva plant, and a
million or two of Sadhus and a hundred million or so of Brahmins suck the blood out of these poor people,......is that a country or hell? Is that a religion, or the devil's dance?"

Again, those who think that Swamiji has talked of spirituality and spiritual civilisation of India only, take a lesson of what he has said in this matter. He said, "we talk foolishly against material civilization.... Material civilization, nay even luxury, is necessary to create work for the poor." Swamiji was not dead to the fact that without satisfaction of material wants, higher thought and ideal cannot develop, therefore he said, "I do not believe in a God who cannot give me bread here, giving me eternal bliss in heaven!"

In gleanings over his sayings one will clearly grasp that Swamiji was opposed to exploitations of all kinds. He was the first Indian to discern that our so-called religiosity and patriotism has taken the shape of exploitation! He has denounced the class-character of our civilization, and as a remedy wanted to educate, and uplift the masses on the basis of equality, because in them he saw, lies the hope of India. Farther, as the means of building up a New India, he has preached that "Proletocult" will create a new Indian Nation. That future India will not be a sectarian one, but it will rise on the basis of a new culture evolving out of the psychology of the masses was predicted by him long ago. Therein lies our hope for the future. The only practical way to unite the masses of divergent sects and communities in a homogeneous body, is through a new culture which will not bear any class or communal character, but will evolve out of the psychology of the masses as the solution to the complex communal and sectarian questions that have been tearing asunder India of modern time.

Finally, Swamiji has expected much from the Youth of India! and in addressing the young men of his own province he has said, "You, young men of Bengal,......come up, you can do everything and you must do everything."

The youth of India are awakening, and are getting alive to the national questions. Different forms of ideologies are
being put in the melting pot. India is passing through a period of intellectual transition. It is high time that the youth of the country should awake to the new consciousness of having a new world-view, and see Indian problems from new angles of vision. If the Indian youth wants liberty for himself, he must give it to others. If he aspires for freedom, he must want it in all spheres of his life. If he wants to serve his country, he must serve the chronic poverty-stricken teeming millions of beings who constitute the majority of his fellow-countrymen as Swamiji has said, "The only hope of India is from the masses." Swamiji's sayings once inspired the patriotic-minded youth of India. May his sayings about their duty inspire them to do further service to that one-fifth of humanity which so long lay enfeebled and exploited in India! May the new line of work for the masses as advised by Swamiji further the cause of his country so that his prophecy about the Russian and Chinese masses may be fulfilled in India too in the course of time.