

## INDIA, THE SPIRITUAL LAND (PUNYABHUMI BHARAT)

*By Swami Vivekananda*

If there is any land on this earth that can lay claim to be the blessed *punyabhumi*, ... the land where humanity has attained its highest towards gentleness, towards generosity, towards purity, towards calmness, above all, the land of introspection and of spirituality – it is India.

Political greatness or military power is never the mission of our race; it never was, and, ... it never will be.

But we find that the Indian race never stood for wealth. Although they acquired immense wealth, perhaps more than any other nation acquired, yet the nation did not stand for wealth. It was a powerful race for ages, yet we find that that nation never stood for power, never went out of the country to conquer. Quite content within their own boundaries they never fought anybody. The Indian nation never stood for imperial glory. Wealth and power, then, were not the ideals of the race.

Ay, a glorious destiny, my brethren, for as far back as the days of the Upanishads we have thrown the challenge to the world: 'Not by progeny, not by wealth, but by renunciation alone immortality is reached.' Race after race has taken the challenge up and tried their utmost to solve the world-riddle on the plane of desires. They have all failed in the past – the old ones have become extinct under the weight of wickedness and misery, which lust for power and gold brings in its train, and the new ones are tottering to their fall. The question has yet to be decided whether peace will survive or war; whether patience will survive or non-forbearance; whether goodness will survive or wickedness; whether muscle will survive or brain; whether worldliness will survive or spirituality. We have solved our problems ages ago and held on to it through good or evil fortune and mean to hold on to it till the end of time. Our solution is on worldliness – renunciation.

This is the theme of Indian life-work, the burden of her eternal songs, the backbone of her existence, the foundation of her being, the *raison d'être* of her very existence – the spiritualization of the human race. In this her life-course she has never deviated, whether the Tartar ruled over the Turk, whether the Mogul ruled or the English.

It is unfair to judge women in the East by the Western standard. In the West woman is the wife; in the East she is the mother. The Hindoos worship the idea of mother and even the monks are required to touch the earth with their foreheads before their mothers. Chastity is much esteemed.

In India the mother is the centre of the family and our highest ideal. She is to us the representative of God, as God is the mother of the universe. It was a female sage who first found the unity of God and laid down this doctrine in one of the first hymns of the Vedas.... He is of the 'Aryan' race, who is born through prayers, and he is a non-Aryan, who is born through sensuality.

... So deeply has this been recognized in India, that there we even speak of adultery in marriage, except when marriage is consummated in prayer. ... That is the secret of the race-chastity.