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“उत्तिष्ठत जाग्रत प्राप्य वरान्निबोधत ।”

“Arise ! Awake ! And stop not till the Goal is reached.”

CONVERSATIONS OF SWAMI SIVANANDA

Belur Math 1931

One day Mahapurush Maharaj spoke as follows on the rule of the *sanyasin* :

A *sadhu* should rise very early from his bed. He must not sleep after 3 or 4 o'clock in the small hours of the morning. Why should a *sadhu* sleep after that hour? We never saw the Master sleep after 3 o'clock ; he used to repeat God's name then. A *sadhu* should bathe early, and then meditate or do other spiritual practices. He must not eat immediately after bath. To take food immediately after bath without doing spiritual practices is not right for a *sadhu*. Others may do so, but why should a *sadhu* do that? Everything of a *sadhu*, his appearance, speech, conduct etc. should be different—simple, charming and god-like. Why should a *sadhu* have money? He must have absolute reliance on God. The Master is there ; He will look after everything. A *sadhu* should be neat and clean, but must not for that reason be given to luxury. Luxury is not good for those who have chosen the path of renunciation. A *sadhu* must not eat much in the night. The Master used to say that

the night meal should be like a light repast. A *sadhu* must not be ignorant, but should study. He must keep good health. He should be sweet in his words, calm and steady, and polite in his manners. A *sadhu* should always keep away from women and money. He must have no dealings with them.

Friday, 4 March 1932

Mahapurushji is not always able, due to sickness, to read his letters. An attendant is reading them to him ; he is listening very attentively. A devotee has written to him a desolate letter expressing great agony of heart : ‘The heart is full of utter disquiet. I am carrying on my spiritual practices as much as I can but they don't bring me peace. Do kindly tell me what will bring peace to my heart, and how I can have His mercy and find Him. I firmly believe that if only I can have your grace I shall have the grace of God and that this human life of mine will be blessed’. . . . Listening to all this, Mahapurushji said, Ah ! Such men are *artas*, afflicted souls. They will have it. There is a way—faith.

If he can have enough faith that the Master is the Incarnation of the age and God Himself, and that a child of His and no other, has bestowed his grace on him, he will have everything. It is necessary to have full faith in His descent. It is He who, seated as the *guru* in my heart, is bestowing mercy on the devotees. Write to him, "Weep, weep much, my child. I know of no other way than weeping. Cry as much as you can saying, 'O Lord, have mercy on me and reveal yourself to me.' The more you cry for Him, the more He will be reflected in your heart. Cry with great love and yearning. We have heard from the Master the following song :

"O Lord, the day has drawn to its end, the twilight is come, ferry me across.

Having come to know that You are the Ferryman, I call on You.

I hear that You ferry him across who has no coins ;

I am a poor beggar without coins, so I call on You in desolation of heart," etc.

'He is the Ferryman. If He does not ferry one across this ocean of worldliness, is it ever possible for an individual to cross over to the other shore? O Master! You are so vast, so profound—who can understand You? None can put a limit to You. Have mercy. Do be merciful and reveal a little of Your nature to the understanding. That will destroy one's bondage of the world for ever.'

Another devotee has written expressing his desire to know about the piercing of the six centres (arranged along the spinal column and standing for the six levels of consciousness). Mahapurushji said, 'Write to him saying that it is not necessary to know all these. Only cry to Him and cry as much as possible. Cry like a simple child and pray, "O Mother, give me love and faith; O Mother, protect me. Liberate me from this Your noose of *maya*." I know only this. Cry repeatedly calling on the Mother. Resign yourself to Her with a simple faith and weep. She is sure to bestow Her mercy on you. I am also praying as much as I can. May you

quickly advance and go very far in your spiritual practices.' Then looking at the attendant he said, 'Were you saying that he had some lapses and troubles? I don't know all these. I don't care to know what one has or hasn't done in the past. What has gone is gone. Now he has managed to come here and has taken refuge in the Master. Everything will be all right, he will be saved. The master can reverse the decree of Fate (*karma*). He has taken refuge in the Incarnation of the age. Is it a slight thing? It could't have come about without his having done many good deeds. He will surely save him.'

Shortly after this a devotee saluted Mahapurush Maharaj offering the latter some money for his personal needs. Mahapurushji said to the devotee: 'Why did you offer money at the time of saluting? I have no need of money. We are *sadhus*, what shall I do with money? I have no want thanks to the grace the Master. I am the servant of the Master. He is giving 'two *rotis*' out of His mercy.' So saying he began to sing:

'O Lord, I am a servant, I am a servant, I am a servant of Yours.

You are the Master, You are the Master, You are the Master of mine.

I have got two *rotis* and a piece of loin cloth from You

Please give me love and devotion and make me sing Your name, I am a servant of Yours.

He is already giving two *rotis* out of His mercy, what shall I do with money and wealth? Take that away, my child. You are householders; it is you who need money.' But as the devotee insisted on its acceptance in earnest humility, Mahapurushji asked the attendant to give the money for the Master's worship.

Reading of letters began again. A devotee who was initiated had committed many reprehensible acts before initiation. He became very repentant for all these, and confessing many things of his past life he has written asking for His pardon. Listening to the

letter Mahapurushji became serious for some time. Later on he said : 'He is truly repentant at heart. It is these people who will have mercy. Write to him : 'You have no fear, the Master will save you. No sin whatever is great in His eye. The Master came exactly because He wanted to save you. He is the Inner Ruler ; He has bestowed His grace on you after full knowledge about your past, present, and future. Be resigned to Him in word, thought, and deed. He has taken hold of your hand from now on. He will not allow you to take any more wrong step. There is no fear, my child. Go on calling on Him yearningly. He will save you. And all your sins have been washed away by the fact that you have confessed all your evil deeds to me. You are from now on sinless, His devotee, who has taken refuge in, and has been sheltered, by Him. Pray for purity, devotion, and love alone from Him.'

Afterwards on the subject of love and the lover of God Mahapurushji said, 'The Master used to say, "It is an extremely rare thing. Ordinary persons do not usually have pure love." The Master used to sing with great feeling :

"I do not grudge granting Liberation, but
I grudge giving pure devotion

He who achieves devotion to Me—he conquers the universe and receives service from all.

Listen O Chandravali, I shall speak to you about *bhakti*, devotion ;

Pure devotion is to be found only at Brindavan ; it is not known to anybody else except the cowherds and milkmaids.

It is due to devotion that I am in the house of Nanda and carry his burden on My head, like a son unto him."

'Aha ! with what feeling the Master used to sing this song.' So saying he began to sing the song himself. Afterwards remaining quiet for a while he began to say as it were to himself : 'The Master came for the redemption of the sinful and the afflicted. If one takes refuge in Him in all sincerity, He wipes

away all sins by gently passing His hand of mercy over him. At His divine touch man immediately becomes sinless. What is necessary is sincere longing for Him, and self-dedication at His feet. Girish Babu had committed so many follies. But noticing his devotion the Master bestowed His mercy on Him and took him up into His bosom. So Girish Babu used to say at the end of his life : "If I only knew of the existence of such a deep pit into which I could throw all my sins, I would have committed many more." He is Mercy incarnate, an ocean of mercy.'

A certain woman devotee, recently bereaved of her husband, has written a desolate letter lamenting like one gone crazy. Listening to the letter in deep silence, Mahapurushji now and then exclaimed, 'Ah ! I can't hear it anymore.' After the letter had been read, he kept his eyes shut for a while and said, 'The Mother plays, while men and women suffer bereavement and misery. Who will understand all this ? If man gives a little thought to all this and reflects on the impermanence of the world, then alone can he be saved. Men are immersed in *maya* day and night. It is good to think of death now and then. There is no end to the way in which the transitoriness of the world presents itself before all eyes. Still man does not awaken to the truth. This is *maya*. The Master used to sing this song often before the devotees.' So saying he began to sing in a trembling voice, in desolation of heart as it were :

'Such is the *maya* of the Great Mother, what a spell She has cast over all !

Brahma and Vishnu are unaware of it, can mere man know ?

Digging a hollow the fisherman places a trap into which fish enter,

The way into and out of it is always open, still the fish can never get out.

The larva forms a cocoon round it though it can escape if it chooses.

The cocoon of Mahamaya binds the larva, which dies in the snare of its own making !

Man is exactly like the larva. Himself creating a world of illusion he has become bound by it and dies of the agony of bereavement and suffering. He will never realize that no one of those he is ever thinking as his own is really his. For one thing, it is such a dreadful experience to be bound by a body; and on top of this there is the creation of this *maya*. But what can man do? He suffers being deluded by the concealing power of Mahamaya. It is the play of her destructive power. Therefore the Master used to say, 'Mother, who can understand Your play? I don't want to know. Be merciful, and give me pure love for Your lotus feet and pure

knowledge—This is my prayer.' The Master used to say this many a time. I am just repeating his words. When the Master fell down and broke his arm, his condition was like that of a child. One day He was walking slowly like a small child and saying to the Mother, "O Mother, You never had to be born in a body. You have never felt the pain of embodiment!"

Mahapurushji kept quiet for a while and said, 'Ah! Freshly bereaved of husband!' As he said these he burst into tears. Afterwards he closed his eyes and sat absorbed in meditation.

THE WESTERN QUESTION (V)

BY THE EDITOR

India's contact with the outside world was close, even long before the birth of Buddhism. It was established by means of the great ancient trade-routes (one very well-known of these ran from the prosperous cities on the lower Ganges via Taxila and the north-west to the marts of central Asia and beyond) and later by the expansion of the Persian political power. Ideas travelled along these routes and the imperial means of communication to the distant areas of civilization. Civilized communities, even at their early dawn, particularly those which lay along the fringes of the great land mass situated centrally to the old world of Asia, Europe, and Africa, were not so isolated then as we are apt to assume today. A constant stream of people, some times a trickle and not unoften a tide, moved across this land mass of Central Asia, Iran, Mesopotamia, and Asia Minor from all points around it. Brisk maritime trade also connected India with Babylon, Assyria, and the Mediterranean countries. Apart from

trade there were other impulses and factors, pressure of population, search for fresh lands and pasture, the desire for adventure and knowledge and so on, which led to these constant and wide movements. Knowledge and ideas spread along these tracks from one corner to another. This vast area, the hub of the ancient world and alive with movement, presented a field where ideas and ways of life met and clashed and were tested out. A process of natural selection in the realm of ideas weeded out what fell short of worth for the further progress of mankind.

Long before Alexander Indians had been to Greece and the Greeks to India. Indian traders and philosophers walked in the streets of Athens in the days of Socrates and Plato. Indian soldiers fought in the ranks of Darius, probably, and of Xerxes certainly, against Greece. Records point to still earlier contacts. Persia, in antiquity, served as the middle term between India and Greece. Enough material is now available to connect Indian thought with Ionian speculations

which form the starting-point of Greek philosophy and science and literature. Greek accounts link up Pythagoreanism with India. The substance of Platonism is according to many Pythagorean. Apart from it Socrates and Plato have been directly connected with India. Reading the history of Western philosophy one has the impression that Socrates and Plato have generally been misunderstood in the West, because the real drift and scope of their dialectics have been missed. Platonic dialectics do not aim at *proving* what lies beyond proof, but to reveal the self-stultifying character of Pythagorean relativism and scepticism and also to *point* to the universal factors in our knowledge. Our knowledge is a blend of the true and the false, the universal and the particular. While the senses give us particulars, the raw material of our experience, they do not give us universals, without assuming which no science or conduct is ever possible. Our conceptions of truth, justice, and beauty take for granted timeless principles. Rational life is not possible without them. The universal, of which no *certain* knowledge can be had through the senses or reasoning, can be known immediately by intellectual intuition (*buddhigrahya*), whose meaning is not generally clear to the modern interpreters of Plato. It is for this reason that a fantastic notion about Platonic universals, like a series of concrete realities alongside of the particulars of sense, has been entertained by a long line of writers. Platonic statements become clear by being viewed in the Indian context. Plato is a rare synthesis of Indian depth and Greek form.

Indian faiths and philosophies flourished in Asia Minor in pre-Christian times. Krishna worship was prevalent in Armenia at least in the second and third centuries B. C. Temples dedicated to Krishna and containing big images of the deity were set up near the lake Van. These were later on destroyed by the early Christians. In fact Indian religions were dominant in Western Asia till

quite recent times, namely, the rise and spread of Islam.

The Syrian countries which formed part, first of the Persian and later of the Graeco-Roman world for nearly five centuries before the Christian era, were long exposed to Indian influence. They had intimate contact in particular with the Bhagavata religion and Buddhism. There is little doubt that Christianity owes its origin to the impact of India upon Israel. This is probably one reason why Judaism became hostile, and has remained so ever afterwards, to the new faith as something outlandish.

Islam similarly arose on a soil permeated by these different influences. The Arabs took out of them the elements which answered to their needs and formulated a faith which gave a new dynamic impulse to the people. Its chief strength was derived from its militant monotheism and its rare freedom from race-consciousness. The spiritual language just suited the people and was adequate to circumvent the conflicts of race and blood. Its militant creed provided a superior outlet for their fighting impulses. Its essentially simple and strong commonsense approach to the spiritual problem came later on as a serious challenge to ancient faiths which had gathered round its pure and original core fantastic accretions as time went and which often spoke in terms too lofty for the common understanding. Islam certainly put across spiritual truths, directly and simply, to large masses of men.

The silent and deep penetration of Indian ideas into the remotest fields of civilization remains yet to be fully explored and told. Still, when we remember that Ionian speculation went from Asia Minor to Greece and Magna Gracia to form the basis of the later brilliant superstructure of Greek thought and culture, and further when we realize that the Roman civilization was only a continuation of the Greek and that the Western culture is derived from the Graeco-Roman and Christian sources, and when to all these we add that Indian ideas went beyond

mountains and across seas in the north and the east to China and Tibet, to Burma, Malay, and the Indonesian islands, creating conditions everywhere for the rise of new civilizations, we can form some idea of Indian contribution to humanity.

In India the broad teachings of the new faiths that arose in answer to the changing needs created a wide field of unity among a complex people. This unity gradually found a political expression and set up before ambitious rulers the ideal of a universal monarchy. Though the ideal generally lay beyond the range of their achievement it was constantly present before the minds of religious thinkers and political philosophers. The name Bharatavarsha which came to be applied to India as a whole in the Epics and the *Puranas* represents this aspiration. The *Vishnu Purana* has the following remarkable verse :

*Uttaram yat samudrasya Himadreshchaiva
dakshinam
Varsham tad Bharatam nama Bharati
yatra santati*

'The country which lies north of the ocean and south of the snowy mountains is called Bharata, for there dwell the descendants of Bharata.'

It is instructive to remember that this national idea arose in India long before the present nations of the West started life and history.

The first big political translation of this national sense is seen in the rise of the Magadhan power which, shortly after Alexander's death, extended its domain over nearly the whole of India and flung back across the Hindukush the Greek adventurers on the Indian soil. Mauryan political inspiration is derived from traditional sources ; it was only later on, after the State had been firmly established, that the entire machinery of administration was turned over to the propagation of Buddhism. The dynamic impulse which moved the people to heroic action and immortal achievements came from

spiritual sources. Asoka's State was universal in character, though his leaning towards Buddhism became very marked towards the end of his rule. He preached moral and spiritual precepts common to all the religions. To the people in general his edicts preach a simple morality that will win for them happiness in heaven. The amazing achievements of the Mauryan times in material and moral planes reflect the Titanic fire which possessed the people. Their depths had been stirred by great ideals from which all immortal creations arise.

It is necessary to pause here for a moment, for the Asokan period contains more than one lesson for us. It is not without reason that this period holds our imagination and casts a spell over us. It is, however, necessary to look at the whole picture, and not merely at certain parts of it. What usually catches our eye are the bright lights and not the dark shadows. Asokan politics, in its idealism, went beyond its range. Politics cannot take over the functions of moral and spiritual orders. Its business is different and is mainly concerned with the play of forces in and outside society. It is true, force is no solution for force. But neither is an appeal to the pure spiritual principle enough to eliminate our savage impulses. Some kind of sanction in society will be necessary for a long time to come. It is, of course, right and necessary that politics should look beyond itself for the ends it will pursue, for like everything else in this world it belongs in the realm of means. But it cannot eschew force and follow the extreme morality which can only suit particular individuals. Politics and spirituality do not mix well. Asoka made an extreme experiment which has cost us much. His political officers became spiritual missionaries (*dharma mahamatras*). The turbulent tribes along the frontiers of the Empire, in the northwestern parts in particular, were left to the tender care of the preachers of morality. It is not difficult to foresee the results of politics that speaks a high moral language but has not got the strength to use force, when

no other way is left, to secure its moral aim. The vast empire so elaborately organized and commanding almost limitless resources in men, money, and technique vanished swiftly, almost like a dream, after Asoka's death. While the battalions of Seleucus, who had inherited the Asiatic dominions of Alexander, were defeated by Chandragupta Maurya even before the Maurya power rose to its height, the full resources of the same, at the plenitude of its power, failed to protect the country against the depredations of petty Greek princelings of Bactria. A palsy had struck the elephant of the State machinery, so that a mosquito sting brought it to a collapse.

A brahmanical revival marked by the flaring up of the *Gita* religion and repeated performance of the horse-sacrifice followed shortly after and put an end to the shrunken Maurya rule in Magadha, but not before the empire had fallen in ruins and foreigners had planted themselves in the Northwest. It was centuries before anything like the Mauryan political structure could be constructed again. Nothing exactly like it ever reappeared in pre-British India. If the Northwestern marches could have been held firm against incursions for another two centuries, the whole subsequent history of India might have been very different from what we know. As it is, a great opportunity for social progress and steady political evolution was lost for ages.

Mauryan politics struck a mortal blow at the brilliant and incomparable kshatriya tradition of India. Consider the epic heroes of India. There was nothing like them elsewhere in fact or fiction. King Arthur and Sir Galahead, who may be said to have had some sort of epic semblance, fall far short of the clear and high spiritual conception of the Aryan fighter; they are a lone and faint echo of it, which again faded away as quickly as it rose. In medieval times some flashes of it occur in India now and then, but these cases are rare and record a great decline. In later ages circumstances condemned the descendants of the mighty heroes to brigandage,

when no healthy outlet was left for heroic self-expression. Chinese and other travellers from the fifth to the eighth and ninth centuries tell us of an India, the *madhyadesha* in particular, which enjoyed peace and security. Roads were free for travel and without danger from brigands. But from the advent of the Muslim rule in the north down to British days the conditions change. The country becomes full of brigands and the roads grow unsafe. It is not difficult to see that the kshatriya power which had been broken up, more by our own faults than anything else, turned to these channels of expression in absence of healthier ones. Virtue is not learnt by suppression.

The substance of Indian history from the fall of the Mauryas down to the time of the Guptas is formed by foreign incursions and the attempts on the part of indigenous rulers for checking these as well as for restoring the fallen fabric of Mauryan imperialism. The new political attempts are heralded by a fresh and broad dynamic spiritual revival, the full harvest of which was reaped only during the Gupta period. The spiritual movements are generally the less obvious part of Indian history, though in fact they are the more fundamental and important. The fresh revival put a new heart into the people and gave a vigorous impulse to the quiet process of assimilation of foreign peoples and races into the Indian society. Pure spirituality is preached in simple and picturesque terms; it is mixed with a strong dose of common sense and fancy for the masses in general. Myths and images and other concrete helps are widely employed. There is an appeal to emotion and the will, a repudiation of the negative form of self sacrifice and an emphasis on self-expression. This is preeminently the age of the *Puranas*. They achieve their aim of social cohesion on a spiritual basis.

A few significant and broad facts relating to the above may be mentioned. This is the time when the Mahayana form of Buddhism, to which we have referred earlier, sprang into

life. It built up a new emotional religion with concrete images and a new literature, especially under the influence of the *Gita dharma*. All these enabled it to bring into the Indian fold large masses of foreigners, Greeks and Parthians, Sakas and Kushans and so on. But the greatest headway was made first by Vaishnavism and, subsequently, by Shaivism. This period is preeminently the period of the *Gita* and the Bhagavata religion, which take account of all the past and present factors and build up a balanced view of life and spirituality. It is no wonder that Krishna worship flares up after negative Buddhism had failed the nation. It is significant that the dynasties which sought to retrieve the political disasters of the Maurya rule, namely, the Sungas, the Kanvas, and the Satavahanas, were all of brhmanical origin, and that most of the rulers were ardent worshippers of Krishna. They announce their rise to political supremacy by horse-sacrifices. The brahmin, deriving inspiration from the traditional sources, took up the sword of defence after the kshatriya had dropped it, abjuring his natural function. The background of the *Gita* naturally comes to the mind. The flaring up of the *Gita dharma* had a historical context. Ignorant scholarship which fails to see the deeper tides of history that lie below politics and social movements has represented this traditional upsurge as the sign of a selfish and sectarian reaction against Buddhism. The judgment is not only puerile but also prejudiced, born as it is of a tendency to paint black all that smacks of Hinduism. No, negative Buddhism had opened the gate to social and political chaos.

The Bhagavata religion won large converts. This is testified very clearly by numerous archaeological and numismatic finds. A Greek ambassador to an Indian court in the second century B. C. raised a *garudadhvaja* column in honour of Vishnu and proclaimed himself a *bhagavata*. This is only typical. Converts were made from other races also. The Gandhara region in this period saw a

great religious upsurge. The coins of the times recently dug up also tell other tales no less interesting. When the foreigners freshly arrived in the Northwest from Central Asia, they brought with them Babylonian, Iranian, Greek, and other non-Indian deities, whose names are mentioned on the coins struck by their rulers. But these foreign deities disappear shortly after and the coins come to bear the names and images of Indian gods like Shiva and so on. The rulers themselves take up Indian or Indianized names, get merged in the Indian society, and proclaim themselves as devout worshippers of Indian deities.

Many of these foreigners also brought with them into India elements of a decadent Hellenism, particularly in the field of art. After their conversion these art forms were used to express Indian conceptions. This put a fresh inspiration into the art itself and created a new style, which later on formed the starting-point of the Far Eastern art. Though this school of the Northwest lacks the depth and sublimity and idealism of the purely Indian schools of the south, it nonetheless stands as a concrete symbol of India's response to foreign challenges and her ability to synthesize alien forms with the native spirit.

The rise of the Satavahana and Pallava powers in the South, beyond Aryavarta and wedded to vigorous Brahminism, calls for notice. When the North failed, the daughter South came, as it came often afterwards, to the rescue of Indian civilization. The South has often been like a chrysalis from which the perennial Tradition has renewed itself more than once.

In the confusion and turmoil created by the incursions and the ambitions of rulers the need was felt for the consolidation of gains and compilation of ancient knowledge and codification of rules of social and personal conduct. The need for preservation was paramount; it was no ideal time for fresh advance. A kind of international structure of society based on certain common fundamental con-

ceptions was necessary for reducing clashes and preparing the way for progress. So begins the great age of compilation of all kinds of knowledge. Standard works on grammar, law, politics, and religion, come to be written down during this period. The Epics, the important *Puranas* and *Dharmashastras*, as we find them today, received their final shape at this time. They present the picture of an elaborately organized social hierarchy. The ruling classes among the foreigners and the Hinduized border tribes came to form new classes of kshatriyas, while the rank and file came under less exalted social groups.

The full fruits of the new awakening were gathered in the Gupta period which, from many points of view, is the most brilliant epoch of Indian history known to us. By all tests and from all accounts the common people were happy and prosperous; there was peace and good government in the country, roads were safe and free, charity was abundant and piety widespread. Conditions were sufficiently stable for a length of time in the central parts to enable the people to attain an amazingly high level of material and moral progress. Some of the Gupta creations in art are among the immortal products of all times. The same can be said in regard to creations in other fields also.

The Guptas, however, could not recover in full, even in their best days, the fallen power of the Mauryas. The political and social problems had become more complicated and difficult in the meantime. New factors and conflicting forces were present on the scene. The situation that faced the Mauryas was comparatively simple. Besides, many things had been irretrievably lost. In particular, the Northwestern marches lay outside the Gupta imperial power and were shortly afterwards run over by the fierce Huns, whose depredations covered a wide tract, reaching in the West to some of the fairest provinces of the declining Roman Empire. It is possible that, given a little more time, the Guptas might have gradually extended their power

over the Northwest and stabilized things for a steady and unruffled evolution of Indian history.

As it is, the Gupta power fell, due mostly to Hun incursions and the rivalries of ambitious rulers who aspired for imperial dominion. The substance of Indian history from the fall of the Guptas up to the advent of Islam is made, as in the post-Mauryan times, by foreign incursions and indigenous resistance to these. Rulers who aim at political supremacy look back to old days and make it a point to fight the Huns as a necessary qualification for political overlordship of India. The Vikramaditya tradition is continued and constant war is maintained against the invaders. The frontier question necessitates a shift of the centre of political authority from the east to the west. Magadha is too distant, Kanauj and Ujjain rise to new importance. The old process is to some extent reversed. Indian geography, till recent times, dictated that the country's political capital should be somewhere close to the Northwest. But the problem of the frontier was hardly ever grasped intelligently by the ancient rulers who generally chose the seat of government somewhere in the prosperous, rich, and fertile lower Ganges valley. When the logic of facts forced a decision to the contrary, militant Islam was already at the gate, and its tides rolled over the Indian plains before a fragmented India could once more be reunited under an indigenous ruler.

But while political authority moves west, culture retires to south and east and other secluded spots, away from the depredations of the vandals. Lights of civilizations go out one after another along the frontier. They gradually go out at other places also as vandalism sweeps on, and it was long before they began to reappear again.

Below the surface of politics, however, below all this turmoil and clash of forces, the old process of spiritual renewal and fresh assimilation of new elements continues. This movement is represented by a long line of Vaishnava, Shaiva, and other *acharyas* in the North as

well as in the South. Shaivism gains ascendancy over others, but all these are rooted in the vedic tradition. Prominent among the *acharyas* of the period were Udyotakara, Shankara, the Shaiva teachers of Kashmir, of whom the most celebrated is Abhinavagupta, the *Nayanars* and the *Virashaiivas* in the South. Vaishnava teachers arose in great numbers in the South, among whom the most important were Yamunacharya and Ramanuja, the latter of course belonging to the twelfth century. There were *mimamsaka* teachers of great repute also. All had a common foe in Buddhism in particular. But the rigid *mimamsaka* school also declined along with Buddhism. The new teachers gave a fresh impulse towards national renewal and synthesis.

The Huns were gradually absorbed into the Indian society. But as we have noted above, before politics could take advantage of this spiritual renewal, a deluge was preparing in the heights of Afghanistan and beyond, which shortly after swept over India. Their work, however, was far from vain. While politics failed the nation, society and culture were preserved against the unprecedented fury and fierce onslaughts of Islam by the new strength that these preachers put into the people. The tide of Islam swirled and foamed around the rock of Indian culture for centuries but failed to submerge it, thanks to their labours. In their various *sampradayas* they preserved the seed from which India sprang up again.

(To be continued)

I SAW THE RECORDING ANGEL

BY N. BANGARAYYA

It looks as though Incarnations of God often bring their own recording angels. Valmiki accompanied Rama, and Vyasa came with Krishna. Who accompanied Ramakrishna? . . .

I can never forget the day in November 1916 when I first had placed in my hands a copy of the glorious *Gospel*. It came as a present from specially holy hands—a monk who had dedicated his life to the service of others and the quest of Truth, one who, even in this Iron Age, had lived all the four traditional *ashramas* (stages of life) in an exemplary way, and at last reached the Goal of life. His disciple, who actually brought it, was also a great lady—a life-long celibate given to austerity, pilgrimage, and *sadhana*.

But for that *Gospel*, I would have perhaps missed Ramakrishna. No doubt, there are other books—great in themselves—giving an account of Ramakrishna's life and sayings.

But the *Gospel* stands unique among the Ramakrishna literature, if not among the scriptures of the world. In it we are face to face with the Lord—no veil of interpretation standing between. Ramakrishna speaks, and we listen. How was it possible to preserve the freshness and inspiration, God alone knows. My artistic temperament would not have been attracted to Sri Ramakrishna, but for the fascinating picture in the *Gospel*. For some time, I entertained a doubt whether the English-educated disciple did not polish up and smarten the crude speech of his illiterate Master. But when I met Master Mahasaya or M (as the modest pen-name goes) I became fully convinced that it is impossible for anybody to add to the charm of Ramakrishna. M spoke beautifully; but there was a distinct and ineffaceable barrier between the two styles, the style of the Master as the disciple has recorded and the style of the disciple him-

self. The originality, suggestiveness, simplicity and directness of the former are all its own. It soars far above the reach of any human intellect, be it ever so great. It is not possible for anybody to have invented for the world 'The Ramakrishna Art'. It is greatness enough to have preserved it.

The *Gospel* prompted me to visit M. For this literary curiosity apart, I had an intense longing to meet the great benefactor who gave a hero after my heart. I lived in a corner of South India before I actually decided to go and meet him. I had started correspondence with him for about three or four years on questions pertaining to my *sadhana*. At my insistence and in spite of his advanced age and neuralgic pains he wrote a whole card in his own hand, blessing (praying for the Master's blessings as he put it) and encouraging me. I have kept the letter as a precious memento.

II

On 1 August 1930, I with two companions started for Calcutta. We reached there on the 2nd and put up in a South Indian hotel in the Chittarajan Avenue. We met M for the first time on the 3rd of August. Early in the morning we took a guide from the hotel and started to find out M's residence. Amherst street in which he was then living was very near our hotel. The roads were already wet with the rain of the previous night, and by the time we started (early morning) a slight drizzle had begun. When we reached the house of M, we were straightway directed to the third floor where M was having his residence. It was a big building in which a school was run, of which M was the Proprietor. The stairs led us to a very tiny apartment, where stood two or three rickety old chairs and a bench. The apartment, on one side, opened into a pretty spacious open terrace. On the other side there was a very big room which we later discovered to be the meditation room. When

we occupied the chairs in the apartment, there was nobody there. We had brought with us a garland of fresh jasmines and sat meditating upon Sri Ramakrishna. It must have been about 9 A. M., quite a long time since we arrived, when the door of the meditation room suddenly opened.

There stood before us a tall and stately figure with an overflowing silvery beard. Is it a *mantra drashta* that has stepped out of the Vedas? We fell prostrate on the ground before him. He bade us rise up and take our seats. 'I shall be coming presently,' he added and went downstairs. He came back shortly after and sat on a bench opposite to us. He spoke for about an hour. There was first a dialogue between us and then an uninterrupted speech by him. The speech was replete with quotations from the *Gita* and the *Upanishads*. It was at once fluent and sparkling. There was a singsong intonation in it such as is found among the Christian missionaries of our parts. If I had a mind, I could have recorded the whole speech from memory after I returned to my hotel. But at that time I did not take it into my head to record it, and now I regret it very much. When he was still going on with his speech, a lean Bengalee boy who was waiting upon him spoke to him something in Bengali. Then M. turned to us apologetically, saying, 'I am sorry; recently I fell ill. My heart is weak and doctors advised me not to speak.' Upon this we said, 'We are very sorry to have troubled you. We would beseech you to follow the injunctions of the medical advisers strictly.'

This was the first day. I recorded what I thought important in the dialogue. Though the record is a little fragmentary I would like to share it with the reader. After the introductions were over I started the conversation.

I: (Pointing to one of my companions)
He is suffering very much from lust. Can you give him any helpful advice?

M : Every man can be a pilot in a calm sea. He is an expert who can steer his ship in stormy weather. In the same way he is a real *sadhaka* who manages to remember God in spite of lust and other passions assailing his mind. There is true greatness in it.

I : We are far from greatness, and the suffering is too much for us.

M : After God realization not the slightest trace of it will be left. You will not feel embittered, because you have suffered so much. You will only laugh at all this struggle.

I : (Within myself) God realization ! Goodness gracious ! How far away it must be ! There was a short silence.

M : Have you gone to the Belur Math ? Have you paid your respects to Swami Shivananda ?

I : Yes.

M : Have you come to take initiation from him ?

I : For me there is a point of pride. I have made up my mind that I should not take initiation from anybody else except Sri Ramakrishna. Will my desire be fulfilled ?

M : What objection can there be, if there is God's grace ?

My companion (Sj. Narsu) : Do you advise us to take initiation from Shivananda ?

M : How can I give any advice in the matter ? It is for individuals to decide for themselves. It has become a fashion to take initiation and then to remain in the vortex of worldliness. What purpose is served by such an initiation ? After all, your *guru* must appeal to you and you must appeal to your *guru*.

Narsu : We cannot stay here for more than a week ; we have no money with us to do so.

M : Is God realization such a light thing as to be decided in a week ? If once you take initiation the consequences follow for lives. You must think very carefully in this matter. Have you not heard the proverb :

'Marry in haste and repent at leisure' ? So be careful. You must observe your *guru* for at least ten or fifteen days before you take initiation from him. Then if he appeals to you, you can have initiation.

I : Is Shivananda a realized soul ?

M : How can I say ? Do not depend upon my opinion. 'Lean not on a broken reed ; for man is such.' If you depend upon man you may be totally misled. Suppose I say he is a realized soul. What guarantee is there that you will have faith in it ? You must decide for yourselves. . . .

M : Have you seen Dakshineswar—the scene where Sri Ramakrishna played his Divine drama ?

I : No. We have not yet been taken there.

M : Oh, no, no. You must not delay it. You can see the temple's pinnacle even from the Belur Math. Have you seen it ?

I : Yes. Every inch of the land in that temple—

M : Why, every particle of dust in that temple is instinct with spirituality. If you just step into that temple you will have spiritual progress.

I : But we may also feel the pain that Sri Ramakrishna is not physically present there.

M : Wherever there is pleasure there is pain also. He who transcends both is a *yogi*. Even though you cannot feel the physical presence of Sri Ramakrishna, you can try to imagine the presence of his *sat-chit-ananda* (spiritual) form there.

I : Can imagination give satisfaction ? We must see Him face to face. Otherwise how can the thirst be quenched ?

After this the sage who was facing us turned a little sideways and exclaimed, 'We have become known to each other ! We are all of one family. This is all due to the grace of Sri Ramakrishna. Through the grace of an Incarnation people belonging to different nations and races forget their differences and behave as though they are blood-brothers.'

When he exclaimed, 'We are all of one family,' a spring of joy welled forth from within us.

With a glow in his face he asked us, 'Have you seen our *Thakurs* (gods)? and rose up to take us into his worship room. As we were going, I said, 'You are not doing well. Otherwise I would have requested you for some reminiscences of the Master.' He turned round and exclaimed, 'All that I have spoken to you today are reminiscences of the Master. Take away the Master, the disciple is nothing!' I have already referred to a continuous speech made by M, of which unfortunately, I did not keep a record. That was a bit general and no personal incident was narrated therein. So I failed to understand how it could have come under the head of reminiscences, so I added, 'I mean personal reminiscences.' Still the sage insisted, 'They are intensely personal,' and repeated, 'take away the Master, the disciple is nothing.' I did not like to pursue the point further.

The meditation room was very spacious. But it was not neatly kept. The floor was full of some unbound printed formes; and books lay scattered here and there. I was reminded of the Master's description of a *sattvic* devotee's surroundings. On the walls were hung some pictures. But they were so very old that it was hardly possible to decipher them. Pointing to a photo he said, 'This is Vivekananda at twentythree.' We put faith in his words and took it to be a picture of Vivekananda, for, left to ourselves, we could not see much of a picture there. Similarly he pointed at other pictures, naming each. But one thing gave us very great delight. Pointing to each picture the venerable sage bowed before it, and we had the good fortune to be with him at that heavenly moment. It gave us a thrill of joy.

He next took us on to the open terrace. From there he pointed out saying, 'That is our flower garden.' On the terrace was the sacred *tulasi*, basil, plant. He fell prostrate

before it, and we followed suit.

My companion Narsu wanted to place the Jasmine garland round his neck; but as he attempted to do so the apostle gave a start as though he were shocked. He asked the young Bengalee boy standing by his side to take it and place it on the picture of Sri Ramakrishna in the worship room. As he was doing so M exclaimed in Bengali '*sugandhi*' (very fragrant). At our home for years we had been decorating the picture of Sri Ramakrishna with garlands of flowers. But when we saw the writer of the *Gospel* decorating the picture in his worship room with a garland we took with us, we counted it a unique moment in our lives.

Then we took our leave of him. Before we parted I pleaded, 'It is unfortunate that you are not doing well. We intend to come here now and then. You need not exert yourself. But please allow us to sit in your company for some time. That boon you must grant us.'

He replied, 'Please do come.'

As we were parting I wanted to say how happy we felt to have met him. But before I could finish my sentence he exclaimed, 'Speech is silver, but silence is golden. So I did not like to give expression to my joy. This meeting is a blessing to me.'

His modesty silenced us.

III

In the evening of that very day at about seven we again repaired to that tiny apartment. It was dark and there was no lamp in it. He was meditating along with some devotees. As we entered, a devotee ran down stairs, brought a lamp and accommodated us on one of the benches. Another devotee whispered to me in broken and faulty English, 'He is prays.' The meditation continued, and we too sat meditating. After about half an hour he opened his eyes.

M: (Turning to us) Have you been to Dakshineswar?

I : No.

M : Have you been to the Belur Math again ?

I : No. Tomorrow we propose going to Dakshineswar.

M : Before you go there you should prepare yourselves for the visit.

I : Today we have been busy preparing ourselves. That is why we did not go either to the Math or to any other place.

After a short pause, he burst into what I would call an inspired utterance. It was meant to be an introduction to our pilgrimage to Dakshineswar.

M : Seeing Dakshineswar you can have an idea of what Sri Ramakrishna's surroundings were. The temple was the background of Divine scenes and incidents. At Dakshineswar you will find the *bel* tree under which the Master practised great *tantrik sadhanas*. There is also the *panchavati*, where he went through many spiritual exercises. You will also see the Master's chamber. When you enter the Master's chamber you will see with your mind's eye the Master seated with his disciples and talking to them on divine subjects. We always found the Master absorbed in spiritual moods. Some times he would be in *samadhi*. Some times he would be singing and dancing. At other times he would be talking to the Divine Mother. We have seen a man who actually talked to the Divine Mother. We were fortunate enough to see a man whose experiences form as it were a living *Veda*. It is revelations from such people that we have to fall back upon and not on our 'ounce of reason'. Intellect cannot go far into spiritual matters. Intellect has been weighed and found wanting. Christ said to his disciples, 'I speak of things which I have seen with my own eyes; and yet you believe me not.' One has to put faith in the words of a man of realization. When you go to the temple you must purify yourselves and strip yourselves of all

sensuality. Only the pure in heart can see God. You must also prepare yourselves to receive wireless messages from the Master. This pilgrimage to Dakshineswar will help you a good deal towards God-realization.'

He went on talking like this, when a devotee whispered into my ears, 'Master Mahasay has recently fallen ill. So please don't allow him to go on. The doctors have warned us that there is danger if he is allowed to speak much.' Upon this I interrupted, M, saying, 'Revered Sir, you are suffering from a heart trouble. If you go on speaking like this, it will do you harm. I would request you to desist.' He at once realized the situation, and in a gentle and tender voice pleaded, 'Yes, it is true that am ill;' and stopped. He afterwards spoke something in Bengali to some one sitting by his side. A lamp was brought there from downstairs. A devotee gave us *prasad*.

I cannot describe in words the impression made on our minds that night. Each sentence of the speech was a diamond. How much he must have been absorbed in the Master may be gleaned from the fact that he forgot altogether about his illness. He risked his health for our sake, and earnestly prepared us for the unique pilgrimage of our life. I thought, within myself, 'Suppose I now go on a pilgrimage to Brindavan shall I find an Uddhava or a Vyasa to introduce me to the place? How fortunate am I!'

We knelt before him and prayed, 'Please bless us that we may be fit to enter the temple of Dakshineswar and receive the Master's wireless messages.' But it is impossible for him to slip from his exalted humility even casually. He replied quickly, 'Let us all pray for His blessings. Who am I to bless? Lean not on a broken reed, for man is such.' The repetition of the last sentence sounded like one of the epic repetitions of the *Ramayana*.

IV

Our third and last visit was after we had

finished our pilgrimage to Dakshineswar. It was probably on the 5th of August. The climate of Calcutta did not suit me and I fell ill. So lest we should be troubling the *sanyasins* of the *Math*, we wanted to cut short our stay there and return home.

It must have been nearly 5-30 p.m. when we reached M's apartment for the third time. It was evening and the sunset was beautiful to watch. The mellowed light of the evening sun enveloped the open terrace. Some boys and girls were flying kites and shouting merrily. Undisturbed, the sage was meditating within the room. We sat on the bench and after some time he came out and greeted us cordially. Saying that he would return shortly he went downstairs. After a short interval there came a young man of about twentyfive. He had a smiling appearance and had overflowing hair. We entered into a conversation with him.

I: Are you a son of Master Mahasay?

He: No. But you can take me for one from the reverence I bear towards his spiritual instructions.

I: How many sons and daughters has he?

He: Two sons and two daughters. (He then pointed out to a boy and a girl playing there as the grandchildren of M.)

I: Does Master Mahasay give initiation to anybody?

He: No. He does not.

It must have been about 7-30 p.m. when M again came upstairs. By that time about a dozen devotees gathered in that apartment, evidently to bask in the soulful company of M and spend the evening in prayers and *kirtans*. M requested to be excused saying that he delayed us long. We gave a suitable reply.

With a glow in his face he said, 'Come in. You shall visit our *Thakurs*.' We went in to the meditation room and that evening we again bowed down before the pictures of Sri Ramakrishna, Vivekananda, and other deities. Point-

ing to a picture he said, 'These are *Saptarshi Maharajas*.' It was rather a picture of the old type, and there was not much art in it to admire. He then showed us some cuttings of pictures from newspapers. They were pictures of the *kumbhamela* at Hardwar which took place that very year. 'This is Sitapati Maharaj conversing with the *sadhus* at Hardwar,' he explained. I asked, 'Who is Sitapati Maharaj?' He replied, 'Swami Raghavananda.' Both the names were equally unfamiliar to us; he then led us to the terrace, and we all prostrated before the sacred basil plant. I narrate this in detail to show that though he was an illumined sage, how punctiliously he observed these practices with a view to set an example to others, and fulfilled the dictum of the *Gita* in this respect.

That day it was *ekadashi* (the eleventh day of the fortnight), considered particularly auspicious by the Hindus. It must have been a day of fasting for him. He had a harmonium brought there through one of his attendant devotees and asked us to sing some Telagu songs. Our only qualification seemed to be that none of us knew anything of music, and we had never touched a harmonium or any other instrument. But there was one thing, namely,—that we were deeply devoted to the *kirtanas* of Tyagaraja. I explained to him that we did not know anything of music. However on his insistence I gave out the texts of some three or four *kirtanas* of Tyagaraja. I explained their meaning in English to him. On hearing them he burst out, 'Oh! He is a great seer. A *mantra drashta*. He is a God-realized soul.'

After that he asked the young man with whom we had a conversation before to sing some Bengali songs for us. In the *Gospel* we had read the translation of many a Bengalee song which the Master used to sing, but that was the first time for us to hear Bengali songs of Ramprasad and Kamalakanta among the ancients, and Sjt. Girish Chandra Ghosh among the moderns. We considered our-

selves particularly fortunate to hear the favourite songs of the Master sung under the direction of a direct disciple. I said smilingly, 'We are exchanging bad for good music.' At this M blushed and exclaimed, 'Oh! No, no.'

We stayed on till 9 P.M. The *kirtan* was still proceeding. We rose up to take our leave. I explained to him how our stay had to be cut short. He felt sorry for my ill-health, and placed two beautiful oranges in my hand with a prayer in his heart for our spiritual well-being and progress. . . .

It will be presumptuous for anybody to attempt to assign the place of M among the Master's disciples. Maybe he is the least among them. But this much is certain, namely, that he has achieved what no other

(not excluding even the great Vivekananda) has done. He has built an indestructible shrine in letters to his Master, which shall stand as a Wonder of the World to the admiring gaze of posterity. As Vivekananda put it, it must be that the Master was with him in this unique achievement. The self-effacement, the love of humanity, and the immense *tapasya* that stood behind the achievement will be adored by mankind for ever.

The relics of two disciples of Buddha, Sri Sariputta and Mahamoggalana, are, at the time of writing this, being received with great eclat. And in this context we cannot but feel how fortunate we are to have seen with our own eyes an intimate disciple of an equally great One!

THE POLITICS OF W. B. YEATS

BY GRATTAN FREYER

I

The political views of W. B. Yeats were unconventional. He rejected a very large part of the assumptions on which what we understand by democratic civilization rests. There seemed to him no evidence that the great modern advances in science, medicine, popular education, or social reform have made men wiser, better or happier. The whole mood behind our anxiety for safety-first living was repulsive to him. Against the counting of heads, which forms the final argument under democracy, he asserted those unpopular values which it is convenient to call 'aristocratic'—personal courage and intellectual integrity. He opposed the popular modern religion of progress, believing rather in the exhilaration derived from maintaining an active relationship to heroic tradition. In the political field, his opinions were quite definitely of a Fascist order.

These views are a part of Yeats' work

which it is disconcerting to take seriously. In recent years fashion has demanded that intellectuals be 'progressive', and wishful thinking has sometimes even asserted that they always are. If that be so, Yeats is certainly an outspoken exception.

The purpose of this paper is to explore the basis of his opinions, both for their own interest and for the help they may give in understanding his poetry. For the greater part of his life, Yeats was intimately concerned with the fight of the Irish people to re-assert their national independence. His wider political views grew directly out of the provincialism of Irish politics. The most useful starting-point for the present purpose, therefore, is a consideration of Yeats' association with the Irish nationalist movement.

II

Yeats' early childhood was passed in County Sligo in the West of Ireland. He

realized from the start of his career what an advantage Irish imaginative writers possessed in their non-industrial environment, where speech had not yet been reduced to its lowest common denominators, if they could once learn to harness its robust energy in literary form. In an early essay, *What is Popular Poetry?* he notes the preference of the country people for 'words and verses that keep half their meaning to themselves', and contrasts this with the growing explicitness and writing-down of popular poetry in Victorian England. Thus he was able to learn at first-hand from his Sligo countryside that technique of evocation and ambiguity which was only later brought back into English poetry with the spread of the symbolist movement from France and the re-discovery of Elizabethan ways of thinking suggested by Eliot through *The Sacred Wood*.

While he was still a boy Yeats' family moved to London, and his early teens were passed, except for Sligo holidays with his grandparents, in England. Later, as a young man, he divided his time mainly between London, Dublin, and Paris. It was at this stage of his life that a normally warm feeling for the environment of his childhood broadened and deepened into an interest in the Irish nationalist movement. It is difficult to imagine a change of scene more violent than that he underwent in leaving Sligo (before the appearance of the motor-car) for a suburb of Victorian London. In his *Autobiographies* we read of the first horror he felt at being dropped into the hub of an industrial and commercial civilization. The consequent nostalgia is, of course, the theme of *The Lake of Innisfree*. What impressed and terrified him most in his new environment was the anonymity of English life. Before leaving Sligo, a relative had said to him 'Here you are somebody, there you will be nobody.' Even at the end of his life, the contrast between the two civilizations seemed to him just as great. 'Because Ireland is a backward country,' he wrote in 1938, 'everybody is

unique and knows that if he tumbles down somebody will pick him up. But an Englishman must be terrified, for he knows that there is a man exactly like him at every street corner.'

It was as a direct result of these feelings that Yeats came to make common cause with the political movement, although he refused to identify himself with it completely. In London and Dublin he mixed with Fenians who believed fanatically in the armed struggle for an independent Ireland. For himself, however, independence was not the only, or even the principal, goal. He regarded the political movement as an instrument in a campaign to revitalize the popular culture of the nation and to preserve it from the corruption of commercialism. In criticizing the effects of industrialism, he was, of course, adopting the attitude of some of the more sensitive minds of Victorian England, but as an Irishman he felt that opportunities they lacked were opened up. Looking back in 1907 on this period of his life he wrote: 'I dreamed of enlarging Irish hate, till we had come to hate with a passion of patriotism what Morris and Ruskin hated . . . Ruskin and Morris spent themselves in vain because they had found no passion to harness to their thought, but here (in Ireland) were unwasted passion and precedents in the popular memory for every needed thought and action.'

During this time the poet did not shrink from any aspect of political activity which he deemed necessary. When Queen Victoria visited Dublin near the end of her reign, he launched an original propaganda story to the effect that she had driven round Dublin in a cab 'a shilling between her finger and thumb, a bag of shillings under the seat.' But Yeats felt obliged to wage a simultaneous war on two fronts—against British imperialism and against the cruder, black-versus-white nationalism on his own side. He was sharing lodgings with the old Fenian John O'Leary, a conspirator of the Irish Republican Brotherhood who had passed much of his life in prison, and who

was a patriot of the old school. Two of his dictums which Yeats was fond of quoting reveal very well the critical stand this man maintained with regard to his own associates and the chivalry he was ready to extend to the other side. One of these was: 'There are things that a man must not do to save a nation.' The other 'Never has there been a cause so bad that it has not been defended by good men for good reasons.' This attitude set both Yeats and O'Leary in striking contrast with the newer type of politician who was even then gaining power in Ireland and indeed all over Europe. It is instructive to compare O'Leary's sayings with Balfour's terse comment at the outbreak of the first World War: 'We shall stick at nothing,' and Lloyd George's cynical defence later of the Italian Secret Treaty as a 'bargain.' Balfour's and Lloyd George's attitude marks them as men of the age that produced Michael Collins and Mussolini as decisively as O'Leary's places him in the world of Mazzini and John Stuart Mill. After his death, O'Leary becomes a symbol of Yeats' poems for this 'gentlemanly' ideal of patriotism.

Yeats became increasingly aware that he was fighting a losing battle as the opening years of the twentieth century passed. 'The heralds of the Irish Renaissance had blown lustily on their trumpets, but where were the eagles and the chariots?' It must be admitted that Yeats was more successful in converting Irish poets to an interest in politics than in permeating Irish political life with a liberal attitude to culture. He was instrumental in creating the National Theatre Movement which provided a forum to Irish dramatists in the Abbey Theatre. But the greatest of their productions, Synge's *Playboy of the Western World*, proved too realistic for good patriots. They wished only for a romantic eulogy of the native peasantry, and for a long while every attempted performance broke up in a riot. There is a very bitter passage in Yeats' *Autobiographies* where he describes his feelings in watching the first of

these scenes of hooliganism: he wondered what part the political side of his own activities might have played in unleashing such patriotic hysteria. In 1907 we find Yeats bewailing the passing of leadership in the national movement to the class he despised most, the 'shopkeepers and clerks.' In September 1913 he wrote the poem which contains the well-known refrain:

Romantic Ireland's dead and gone
It's with O'Leary in the grave.

This particular lament was proved by events to have been premature. When Easter Rebellion broke out in Dublin in 1916 the flame of romantic nationalism flared up brilliantly once more for a short interval. Three of the leaders who were subsequently shot were poets, and Sir Roger Casement's conduct at his trial for high treason was infused with the same spirit which had dominated O'Leary. Yeats was profoundly moved and regretted his earlier jeremiad. In a trilogy of poems written within a few days of the executions, he praised the courage of these men with lyric fervour. What impressed him most was that several of those shot had gone out to fight in the knowledge that they had already been betrayed, but believing that a deliberate blood-sacrifice was necessary. This is the theme of *Sixteen Dead Men, Easter 1916*, and *The Rose Tree*.

The Easter Rebellion, or rather the manner of its suppression, had its effect in arousing Irish public opinion to a last showdown with the British Government. In 1918 a Sinn Fein parliament was set up in Dublin, and spasmodic fighting developed slowly into a widespread guerilla war. This led eventually to the Anglo-Irish Treaty of 1921, which established the Irish Free State. Another winter of fighting followed, this time civil war between the extremist republicans led by de Valera and the moderates who supported the compromise which the Treaty settlement represented. Only in 1922 was the new Free State administration able to restore a minimum of public order.

the more obvious signs of British occupation —by establishing a parliament in Dublin, by painting pillar-boxes green instead of red, and by playing *The Soldier's Song* on occasions when *God Save the King* would sound in Britain. Against this, Yeats demanded a scrutiny of the underlying assumptions of Irish society, and a form of government adapted to house best the talent of the nation. In a piece of advice to future revolutionaries he subsequently expressed himself forcibly :

Do not try to pour Ireland into any political system. Think first how many able men with public minds the country has, how many it can hope to have in the near future, and mould your system upon these men. It does not matter how you get them, but get them. Republics, Kings, Soviets, Corporate States, Parliaments, are trash . . .

Democracy appeared to him to be a system of government admirably adapted to prevent such talents playing too large a role in the state. The poet looked back wistfully to that eighteenth century which he spoke of as the time when 'men of intellect reached the height of their power, the greatest position they ever attained in society and the State.' They had been losing their pre-eminence ever since, and his own experiences within the national movement and his observation of the civil war had convinced him how easily democracy in a young country might turn to crude majority rule, to mob hysteria, and to public violence. Authority and force must be given back their rightful role in the good society :

Might of the Church and the State,
Their mobs put under their feet.

O but heart's wine shall run pure,
Mind's bread frow sweet.

Pacifism and democracy failed to recognize man's unconscious longing for violence and danger; unless this be given its rightful, controlled outlet in strong government, it will find free play in the anonymous violence of public opinion :

What if the Church and the State
Are the mob that howls at the door?
Wine shall run thick in the end,
Bread taste sour.

Italian Fascism was established in the very year that the Free State triumphed, and it was only natural that one holding such views as Yeats did should be interested. It is interesting to notice that while Winston Churchill and others were praising Mussolini's role primarily as a champion against socialism, it was the dynamic Nietzschean aspect of fascist philosophy that appealed to Yeats. Though he scorned democracy, there is no merely negative hatred of socialism in his writings. In a speech at an international sports gathering in Dublin in 1924, he referred to Mussolini's ideas and well indicated the authoritarian direction his own thoughts were taking :

We do not believe that war is passing away, and we do not believe that the world is growing better and better. We even tell ourselves that the idea of progress is quite modern, that it has been in the world but two hundred years; nor are we quite so stalwart as we used to be in our democratic politics. Psychologists and statisticians in Europe and in America have all challenged the foundations, and a great popular leader has announced to an applauding multitude, 'We will trample on the decomposing body of the goddess of liberty.' . . . The steam has turned backwards, and generations to come will have for their task, not the widening of liberty, but recovery from its errors—the building up of authority, the restoration of discipline, the discovery of a life sufficiently heroic to live without the opium dream.

Yeats later visited Italy and found practical aspects of the fascist system which also appealed to him. The remodelling of the form and content of the Italian educational system, carried through by the philosopher Giovanni Gentile, while Minister for Education, seemed an experiment which Ireland should find

instructive. The principle of the corporate state was itself an idea which had appealed to Yeats many years previously. In the *Autobiographies* he speaks of his youthful arguments in favour of 'a law-made balance among trades and occupations' against his father's standpoint as a liberal and free-trader.

Yet it would be a mistake to imagine that Yeats swallowed every aspect of the Fascist or Nazi doctrines. Hitler seemed to him a lesser figure than Mussolini, though the Nazi laws for protecting impoverished ancient families attracted him. But under both dictatorships there were indications of a faith in numbers, an uncritical emphasis on quantity irrespective of quality, even cruder than that which he despised under democracy. He believed that eugenics was a matter which the state must take seriously before it was too late, and there are passages in his final writings which suggest an almost racialist belief in the destiny of the Irish nation, but never, either in word or deed, did he countenance anti-semitism. Two close friends, Ezra Pound and Oliver Gogarty, were enthusiastic admirers of Hitler on this point, but Yeats himself remained unmoved.

These were long-term views. In matters of practical policy, the thinker compromised with his age, as every philosopher who wishes to have any influence on day-to-day affairs must. Yeats was nominated to the Free State Senate by the Cosgrave government, and he took his duties very seriously. It helps us to place his life in perspective when we find the poet who had rejected science and democracy and who had expressed grave misgiving over universal compulsory education discussing such routine matters as the sanitation and milk-supply for schools. His greatest speeches were, naturally, on cultural subjects, or on matters where he considered high principles were at stake. He spoke at length and with effect on the Irish case for the return of the Lane Art Collection, which is held in London on a now admitted legal

technicality. He served as chairman of an official Commission to select designs for the new Irish coinage, and immediately invited submissions from Yugoslav and Italian modelers as well as from Irishmen and Englishmen. The designs were judged strictly on their merits and those of an English artist were eventually chosen. On June 11, 1925 he delivered his great speech against the introduction of a bill prohibiting divorce in Ireland, an occasion which earned him many enemies among the new puritans who were coming to rule the country. It was less the actuality of the bill than the spirit which lay behind it that he attacked. He regarded it with some justification as the first step towards legalizing that majority tyranny he had always fought within the national movement. When a bill to establish a book censorship was introduced, he protested likewise, and subsequently continued to protest against its practical operation. To little effect, however. Its vigilance has been progressively extended, though, oddly enough, Yeats has remained almost the only distinguished Irish writer not to have had books named on this secular index.

Altogether Yeats' experiences in the upper chamber of the Irish legislature did not serve to resuscitate his faith in political democracy. He later spoke with distaste of his fellow-members as 'those old lawyers, old bankers, old business men, who, because all habit and memory, have begun to govern the world.' Irish politics threatened to combine the corruption of Latin parliamentary institutions with the philistinism of Anglo-Saxon Public life. Yeats decided at the end of his first six year term as Senator not to stand for re-election. His allegiances in Irish party politics were never very emphatic. He usually voted with the Cosgrave government, which had accepted the Anglo-Irish Treaty. After the change-over in public opinion had brought de Valera to the head, the two met, and it is said that each was impressed with the other's personality. But what de Valera represented

could hardly appeal to Yeats. Cosgrave's had been the party of the large farmers and those of the native aristocracy who accepted Home Rule. de Valera's power was based on the small peasantry and the new Irish industrialist, it was a party of 'shopkeepers and clerks' *par excellence*. Yeats longed for a new movement to arise which would consolidate by disciplined leadership the national tradition, and he toyed with extra-parliamentary ideas. When General O'Duffy began to organize an Irish fascist party in the early thirties, Yeats thought for a time that this might fill the role. *Three Songs to the Same Tune*, later re-written as *Three Marching Songs*, was originally composed with the activities of the 'Blueshirts' in mind. However, General O'Duffy soon showed himself a politician like the rest. On realizing his error, Yeats changed the title of the poem and published it with an introduction calling for a new party that should honour and unite all those within the national tradition who had lived 'with precision and energy.' Such a movement, he goes on, would 'promise not this or that measure but a discipline, a way of life ... There is no such government or party to-day, should either appear, I offer it these trivial songs and what remains to me of life.'

No such movement arose in Yeats' lifetime, and he gradually ceased to hope for anything from practical politics. But it would be wrong to picture the poet retiring from public life to hold up his hands in despair. He continued to handle the Irish theme in prose and verse. The heyday of nationalist fervour had now come to seem like a heroic dream. In a late poem, *The Municipal Gallery Revisited*, he describes his sentiments on looking at pictures of the revolutionary days :

This is not, I say

The dead Ireland of my youth, but an
Ireland

The poets have imagined, terrible and gay.
But he was still concerned more than ever

before to clarify and vindicate the great Irish tradition—Gaelic, eighteenth-century, and modern. In certain last ballads, such as *The O'Rahilly*, *Roger Casement* or *Come Gather Round Me*, *Parnellites*, he attained to a form of simple popular utterance, freed from literary affectations, which he had sought in vain in earlier life. His new heroes were all who had dared to live 'with precision and energy.' Their manner of living and dying appeared to him in the nature of a sacred challenge to the present and future generations :

Fail, and that history turns into rubbish,

All that great past to a trouble of fools.

The nation must be strengthened and disciplined by its knowledge of the past :

That we in coming days may be

Still the indomitable Irishry.

The most striking feature of Yeats' final attitude was the courage and optimism with which he viewed the future. There is a note that suggests extreme bitterness in some of the Last Poems, as he felt the strength of manhood slipping from him. But it would be wrong to regard these poems as more than the expression of one mood which afflicted him in his final years. In one poem, *The Circus Animals' Desertion*, he even succeeded in embodying this growing sense of failure into a remarkable poem ; the inward admission of the drying-up of the sources of poetic inspiration is used here as a highly affective theme. The strongest note in the final volume is an almost boyish assertiveness and self-confidence. There is no doubt that Yeats was made to feel happier than he might otherwise have been in rejecting so many of the faiths and opinions of his contemporaries partly by his acceptance of the cyclic view of history :

All things fall and are built again,

And those that build them again are gay,
and partly by his spiritualistic researches. He believed that he had received supernatural evidence that we are nearing the end of a great cycle of human history which

began with the dawn of classical civilization and whose mid-point was the birth of Christ. Although he died before the Second World War had shown its full character, he had forecast a new armageddon and considered that this would eventually lead to the 'transvaluation of all values' of which Nietzsche spoke. The civilization we have known would turn bottom upwards. In the poem *The Second Coming*, published in 1921, he had already suggested that the disharmony and disintegration of this age formed the prelude to some great change involving both the close of our civilization and the opening of a new, of which the outlines were still indiscernible. In his final writings, this thought became a secure and precise conviction in consequence of his believed revelation, and it is the basis of such poems as *The Gyres*, *Lapis Lazuli*, and his own epitaph *Under Ben Bulbin*. Even war, he insisted in a final pamphlet, must be accepted gaily both for its own sake and as a means of hastening us on towards the great transformation, when the rejects of our civilization would come into their own and must therefore rejoice :

We who have hated the age are joyous
and happy.

There is little danger of Yeats' more extreme opinions being influential. His views do not form a philosophy in any accepted sense. In fact, it is only too easy to point out illogicalities and inconsistencies. But, they do possess an inner coherence of their own—perhaps in the last analysis they will be regarded as the errors of genius. In any case, they form the essential backbone of his development. It is inconceivable that he would have maintained the steady evolution of his verse from the naive lyricism of *Innisfree* to the tautness and intensity of his work between *The Tower* (1928) and *Last Poems and Plays* (1940), had he not found it possible to fill the vacuum left today by the decay of traditionally held faiths. It is primarily for this reason that his belief should repay the trouble of understanding them. In addition, whatever the merits of the remedies he proposed, there is no doubt that he pointed a critical finger at some of the weak points of democratic civilization which many of us find only too comfortable to take for granted.*

*By courtesy of the International Literary Pool,
UNESCO.

VEDANTA AND THE WEST*

BY SWAMI NIKHILANANDA

I am literally overwhelmed by your gracious words of welcome. If I give you my thanks, however, it will sound terribly formal. I only pray that I may deserve your love and affection and dedicate the rest of my days to the service of India and the world. Your appreciation of my insignificant

work in America will always be a source of courage and inspiration to me.

By far the most important event that has taken place in India between my last visit, in 1938, and my present one, is the attainment of political freedom. My salutations go to those brave souls who have sacrificed their all to win India's independence. My most respectful salutations go to Mahatma Gandhi, who led the country in its fight for freedom. Both by his life and by

*Speech delivered on 15 March 1949 in Calcutta by Swami Nikhilananda, Head of the New York Ramakrishna Vivekananda Centre, at his public reception in the University Institute.

his death he has created respect for India in every part of the world. Independence has no doubt given us a new confidence in our destiny and at the same time has brought us recognition among other nations. But let us not forget that the Goddess of Freedom is an extremely jealous deity, who can be propitiated only by constant sacrifice, unceasing vigilance, and high courage. Without stern moral discipline and ethical integrity, freedom becomes as illusory as a mirage.

Political freedom is a means to an end. It enables a nation to express its soul. The soul of free England has expressed itself through the system of parliamentary government, and that of America through the ideal of equality and democracy; but the soul of India has always found expression through spiritual channels by proclaiming the reality of God, the divinity of the soul, the unity of existence, and the harmony of religions. India, even during the days of her greatest power, never stained her hands with the blood of other nations. She has never been politically aggressive. Like gentle dew-drops opening the buds into flowers, her culture has opened the inner life of peoples wherever she has sent her cultural emissaries. Today, all over the world, the sky is darkened by ominous clouds. The angel of death seems to be hovering over the house-tops once more. Let India throw her weight on the side of life and peace. Let her assume the moral and spiritual leadership of the world in this supreme crisis of humanity.

You have asked me to tell you something about the great people of America. Though outwardly dissimilar in many respects, America and India have a strange fascination for each other. In spite of her material progress, America cherishes high respect for India's spiritual culture and has tremendous faith in her future mission. India, on her part, has been sending some of her best young men and women to America to acquire knowledge in the modern sciences.

India and America have never been al-

together strangers to each other. As you all know, Christopher Columbus set out to discover a route to India and her fabulous wealth and instead stumbled upon America. The chests of tea thrown overboard in the Boston Tea Party, which set off the American War of Independence, came from India. And it is interesting to note that even now the only cows that thrive in the southern states of Florida and Texas come from India and are known as 'brahminy' cows.

By far the most important event to bring India into the thought current of American life was the appearance of the young sannyasin Swami Vivekananda as the delegate of Hinduism at the Parliament of Religions held in 1893 in connexion with the Columbian Exposition. How on that Monday—September 11th—at the Art Institute of Chicago, the Swamiji, with his noble bearing, his handsome face, his musical voice, his brilliant apparel, and his compelling personality, electrified the seven thousand people who packed the great hall, when he addressed them as 'Sisters and Brothers of America,' has now passed into history. How well they understood—those learned men and women with their Yankee common sense—that a sound brotherhood of men on earth can be created only on a spiritual basis! Swami Vivekananda, as he stood in that historic conference, formed the confluence of two great streams of thought, the Oriental and the Occidental, and dominated them both. In order to realize the full significance of the occasion, it is necessary to know the background of the Swamiji's thought and also that of the contemporary American culture.

After his master's passing away, Swami Vivekananda travelled the length and breadth of India, studying with learned pundits, meditating in caves and wildernesses, talking with princes and with beggars. But all the time his sharp eyes were focused on the problems of his motherland. He became convinced that spirituality was the backbone of the Indian nation and its mission to the

outside world. But what appalled him was the crushing poverty of India, the backwardness of her masses, and the stagnation of her society. How to rejuvenate Hinduism and make it once more the vehicle of a great spiritual culture was the substance of his thoughts by day and of his dreams by night. Finding no response from his own countrymen, he thought he would go to the scientific and dynamic people of the West, share with them the much needed knowledge of Vedanta, and bring to India in return the secrets of their science and technology to raise the standard of living of the Indian people. He thought it was futile to preach religion among them without first trying to relieve their poverty and suffering. He had the clearest vision that India, revitalized through the knowledge of science and technology learnt from the West, would once more become the spiritual leader of the world. It was the finger of God, he knew through direct experience, that led him to the New World.

America, too, was ready to receive the young prophet from the East. From the very beginning of America's colonial history religion had played an important part in her social and cultural life. The pilgrims who came to the New World in the *Mayflower* in 1620 had left first England and then Holland for the sake of freedom of worship. The later colonists were dissenters who could not submit to the religious restrictions imposed by the then rulers of England. These were the forbears of those sturdy, religious-minded New Englanders who, two centuries later, became the leaders of America's intellectual and spiritual movements.

The American Constitution and the Bill of Rights show the influence not only of the writings of Locke, but also of the Holy Bible. The second paragraph of the Declaration of Independence, which proclaims the equality of men and emphasizes their God-given and inalienable right to enjoy 'life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness,' bears the impress of the Christian ideal of the Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of men. Thomas Paine,

the fiery high priest of the American Revolution, wrote in his pamphlet *Common Sense*, published in 1776: 'O ye that love mankind! Ye that dare oppose not only tyranny but the tyrant! Stand forth! Every spot of the world is overrun with oppression. Freedom hath been hunted round the globe. Asia and Africa have long expelled her. Europe regards her as a stranger. And England hath given her warning to depart. O receive the fugitive and prepare in time an asylum for mankind!' Abraham Lincoln, in his Gettysburg Address, spoke of America as a nation 'conceived in liberty and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal.'

A tremendous passion for freedom, equality, justice, and oneness permeated the thinking of Americans during the first hundred years of their independence. To these ideals Swami Vivekananda gave a spiritual interpretation from the standpoint of Vedanta.

The cultural history of America during the nineteenth century presents a panorama of events which found their fulfilment in the Columbian Exposition and the Parliament of Religions in Chicago. The original thirteen colonies had grown into the United States of America, a land of inexhaustible natural resources, into which the European immigrants brought not only the flavour of an older civilization, but also a spirit of adventure, technical skills, and an indomitable courage. During this period America produced a remarkable number of statesmen, politicians, jurists, inventors, economists, practical men, idealists, military experts, thinkers, poets, and writers—all men of uncommon calibre. Scientists and technologists flooded the country with new inventions that revolutionized agriculture, industry, and methods of transportation. Towns grew into cities. The material prosperity of the country was accompanied by a new awakening of men's minds and consciences. Its penitentiary system, based on humanitarian principles, became an object of envy to European nations. In 1833 an anti-slavery society supported by the Quakers was started in

Philadelphia. The five years between 1850 and 1855 saw the flowering of American literature, a period that has hardly ever been surpassed in imaginative vitality. During this time were published *Representative Men*, *The Scarlet Letter*, *The House of Seven Gables*, *Moby Dick*, *Pierre*, and *Leaves of Grass*. In the nineteenth century flourished great men of culture like Hawthorne, Poe, Whittier, Longfellow, Thoreau, Whitman, Emerson, Lowell, and Holmes. It was at this time, as well, that the historian Bancroft, Mr. Justice Story, the artist and naturalist John James Audubon, and the botanist Asa Grey were at the height of their powers.

The Transcendental Movement, of which Ralph Waldo Emerson was leader, and Thoreau and Alcott staunch supporters, was in a sense the forerunner of the Vedanta Movement of Swami Vivekananda. Emerson was influenced by the philosophy of Greece, the ethics of China, the poetry of the Sufis, and by the mystical ideas of India. He was a keen student of the *Bhagavad Gita* and was familiar with the doctrines of the *Upanishads*. Henry Thoreau, Emerson's neighbour for twenty-five years, read and discussed with him in great detail the Hindu religious classics. He wanted to write a joint Bible taking materials from the Asiatic scriptures, and adopted for his motto: *Ex Oriente Lux*—Light from the East. By 1840 the Transcendental Club, founded in Concord, was in full swing. Walt Whitman, who was a contemporary of the Concord philosophers, seems also to have come very near to Vedantic idealism. *Leaves of Grass* breathes the spirit of identity with all forms of life. The *Song of the Open Road* is full of Vedantic sentiments. In the spirit of a wandering monk, Whitman writes :

'Allons! We must not stop here!

However sweet these laid-up stores—however convenient this dwelling.

We cannot remain here,

However sheltered this port and however calm these waters, we must not anchor here,

However welcome the hospitality that

surrounds us, we are permitted to receive it but a little while.'

An apostle of democracy, Whitman was a religious individualist, free from all church conventions and creeds. To him religion consisted entirely of inner illumination—'the secret, silent ecstasy.' The land that gave birth to Walt Whitman, Emerson, and Thoreau, did not find it difficult to understand the Hindu monk Vivekananda and his message of universality, equality, freedom, and oneness.

But the marriage of East and West conceived of by Emerson and Thoreau was not at that time consummated. Suddenly the American life-current turned into a new channel. The desire to possess 'bigger and better' things began to cast its spell upon the majority of American minds. Economic utilities and corporations sprang into existence, and the spiritual and romantic glow of the pioneering days was transformed into the sordidness of competitive materialistic life.

Among the several events that conspired to shatter the dream of the Concordians may be mentioned the Gold Rush of 1849, which diverted people's attention in other directions, the Civil War, one of the most terrible events in American history, and the rapid development of science and technology, which brought about a great change in people's attitude toward life, intensifying their desire for material progress. It may also be noted here that the money-hungry and pleasure-loving immigrants from poverty-stricken parts of Europe, who now began to come to America in large numbers, dampened the spiritual ardour of the early colonists. The publication in 1859 of Darwin's *Origin of Species* caused a revolution both in natural science and in men's thinking. The implications of the doctrine of evolution influenced every field of thought: law and history, economics and sociology, philosophy, religion, and art.

But people were by no means satisfied. Reflective men were disappointed by the tawdriness and materialism of their society. Their souls hungered for the freedom and joy

that the scientific method of thinking could not inspire and that could not be found in the possession of material things. The innate idealism and spiritual nature of enlightened Americans made them yearn for a philosophy that, without going counter to the scientific method, would show the way to a greater vision of life, interpreting man's thought, feeling, and action and harmonizing the diverse claims of science, the humanities, and mystical experience. The time, indeed, was ripe for the fulfilment of Thoreau's dream of a marriage of East and West, of a synthesis of science and mysticism. To bring about this synthesis, no worthier person could have been found than Swami Vivekananda of India.

The United States of America, fermenting with new ideas, overflowing with new vitality, always eager for new truths no matter where found, and in a large measure free from the encrustations of class, caste, and race prejudice, was ready to welcome this representative of mystical India, the bearer of an ancient yet virile spiritual culture. This seems to me, ladies and gentlemen, the chief reason for the spontaneous welcome accorded by the Americans to Swami Vivekananda in the Parliament of Religions, and also for the abiding interest they have shown ever since in the Vedanta movement he inaugurated.

At the Parliament of Religions Swami Vivekananda presented the universal aspect of Hinduism. He emphasized the Hindu attitude of respect toward others' faith, described the divine nature of the human soul, and demonstrated the rational basis of spiritual experience and the scientific validity of religion. All this has been recorded and is even now read with deep interest by spiritual students. As his fame spread, the Swamiji was invited to different parts of America to explain the doctrines of Hinduism. Drawing-rooms and clubs, and respectable homes as well, were open to him. Everywhere he was received with respect and affection. Though called a 'cyclonic' Hindu on account of his untiring activity, his soul pined for solitude and meditation. At heart he was a mystic,

philosopher, and poet. This desire for peace and solitude was fulfilled, however, only after two years of strenuous work, when he spent seven weeks of intense meditation and study at Thousand Island Park, on the beautiful St. Lawrence river. There he made plans for his future work in India.

Even during Swami Vivekananda's lifetime, demands came from America for more Swamis and Vedanta centres. At present there are a dozen Swamis of the Ramakrishna Order preaching the ideals of the Hindu *dharma*, following in the footsteps of their great leader. Four Swamis of the Order have given up their lives in the discharge of their duties. The congregations at the Vedanta centres consist mainly of Christians, with a sprinkling of Jews. There are many people in the United States—and their number is growing—who take religion seriously and are looking for practical disciplines such as concentration and meditation. They wish to be guided by teachers in their inner development. They want a rational statement of spiritual truths and seek a universal religion that will be in conformity with other universal truths. Such men and women are the regular students of the Vedanta centres. A number of American men and women have completely dedicated their lives to the practice of religious disciplines and live with the Swamis at the centres. Outside the congregation, the Swamis have a large circle of friends among university professors, clergymen, lawyers, and businessmen—friends who admire their work and character. The Swamis are often invited by churches, educational institutions, cultural societies, and other similar organizations to speak on the Hindu religion and philosophy. And everywhere they are treated with respect and friendliness. The Vedanta work is carried on in the usual unobtrusive vedantic manner. Naturally, the dramatic element that characterized the first phase of the movement is no longer present. The work is now being consolidated on a firm and permanent foundation.

It is too early to estimate the long-range

effect of the Vedanta movement in America. It may appear almost insignificant if judged by the size of the buildings or of the congregations. But its intangible influence is to be sought elsewhere—in the silent transformation of the lives of a few here and there, and in the liberalizing of America's religious thought. There is a genuine effort in America to replace the old spirit of exclusiveness by a new spirit of fellowship. The Christian ministers are talking about respect for other faiths and about the necessity for meditation and the inner life. The divinity of Buddha, Krishna, and other prophets is admitted by many of them. Among the several factors that are bringing about this revolution in the thought world of America, Vedanta is an important one. Like a leaven it is silently raising the spiritual consciousness of the country.

It was Swami Vivekananda who built the spiritual bridge joining India and America. His dream of creating a new world culture through the exchange of healthy Hindu and Western ideals may not long remain unfulfilled. Hindu students have been flocking to American universities to learn science and technology. With a little preliminary training they can be made effective channels to spread a knowledge of Indian culture in America, thus creating further goodwill for India. America's businessmen and technical experts are being invited to India to develop the material resources of the country and organize its educational and health programs. Perhaps in the near future American students will come in large numbers to India to learn the profundities of the spiritual life.

In order to bring about true friendship between India and America, two things are necessary. America must learn—as she is fast learning through experience—to regard moral and spiritual achievements as more valuable than material aggrandizement. After all, the founders of the American civilization were highly ethical and religious-minded men. Let there be no mistake about the fact that what is abiding in the entire Western culture has been influenced by a

high standard of ethics. Religion has left an impress on the painting of Raphael and Leonardo Da Vinci, the sculpture of Michelangelo, the music of Palestrina and Bach, and the writings of Milton, Blake, Browning, and Tennyson, to mention but a few names.

But more important is the reorientation of Hinduism itself. Our eternal religion must come out of its isolation and become dynamic and aggressive. The whole world today is perishing for want of spiritual vision. This is precisely what Hinduism can supply. The malady the world is suffering from is a spiritual malady. Economic confusion, moral disintegration, and political uncertainty are but the outer symptoms of this deep-seated disease. The challenge of aggressive evil abroad in the world today can be met only by aggressive goodness. Greed, sensuality, jealousy, and the other vices that are undermining the social structure both in India and elsewhere, can be removed only by the power of spirit. Neither ethical humanism nor the development of science and technology can completely correct the present human situation. A tremendous responsibility rests upon the Hindu religion. Stagnation is death. During the days of her power, India sent her religious missionaries outside her own borders. The same thing must be done today. The one great obstacle in the way of Indo-American friendship is the view, cherished by many Indians as well as Americans, that it is India who must learn everything from the West and that the West has nothing to learn from India. Friendship is a two-way road.

I have heard from several Western thinkers that the fault of the Hindus is that they do not know the greatness of their own religion. If we do not have respect for our own culture, no one will have any respect for us. Macaulay wanted to Westernize the Hindus through English education, and he almost succeeded. Today the Indian leaders who have been influenced by Western civilization are fighting with the very soul of India. This is responsible, in a large measure, for our present

confusion and uncertainty. The *Bhagavad Gita* points out, in its last verse, the way to India's greatness: 'Wherever there is co-operation between Krishna, the Lord of Yoga, and Arjuna, the wielder of the military power, there is prosperity, victory, glory, morality, and order.' This means that a close co-operation between India's spiritual power and Governmental authority can alone lead to the complete unfoldment of India's inner soul. When the ruling power does not support the spiritual power there is a decline in spiritual power. This lesson is writ large in the history of India during the past thousand years.

Many misconceptions about Hinduism are cherished even by so-called educated Hindus. We are told that Hinduism is anti-scientific, otherworldly, and communal. But it is not true that Hinduism is opposed to the scientific method. The Hindu seers tell us that the validity of religious truth lies in personal experience, reasoning, and the testimony of others. The *Bhagavad Gita* asks the student to cultivate the questioning habit. Hinduism never accepts dogma as the final authority. The *Vedas* tell us to cultivate the knowledge of both science and super-science, that is to say, of both secular and spiritual knowledge. The *Mundaka Upanishad* says that ignorance and doubt are destroyed only when one knows both the transcendental Reality and its manifestation in time and space. The *Isha Upanishad* declares that he who worships only science enters into blinding darkness, but into a greater darkness enters he who worships only super-science. The wise man cultivates the knowledge of both. By means of science he overcomes physical handicaps like disease and death, and by means of super-science he attains to Immortality. It is only for the past three hundred years that India has lagged behind in the knowledge of the physical sciences. As Lord Acton has said, to condemn a culture for three hundred years of failure and overlook its three thousand years of achievement gives a wrong view of history.

Hinduism does not explain away the world

as a dream, nor does it minimize worldly values. Whatever may be the highest experience of illumined souls—and even they did not dare to despise the world during the normal state of consciousness—ordinary men have always been exhorted to acquire ethical virtues (*dharma*), respect wealth (*artha*), and heighten the capacity for enjoyment (*kama*). Then alone are they qualified for *moksha*, or communion with the Infinite. There is neither a short-cut nor an easy way to salvation. No one has ever dreamt of a fuller or more comprehensive view of life than the Hindu seers, who laid down the rule that boyhood should be devoted to the acquisition of knowledge, youth to the enjoyment of material pleasures, old age to contemplation, and the hour of death to the vision of the eternal Truth. Hinduism does not negate the world. It only reinterprets it in terms of spirit.

Hinduism is not a communal religion. Unlike Christianity, Islam, and Judaism, it does not share the Semitic belief that there is only one scheme of salvation. The Lord says in the *Bhagavad Gita*: 'In whatever way people render me their worship, I accept it and fulfil their desires.' Single-minded devotion to one's own faith, and respect for that of others, is the keynote of the Hindu *dharma*, reiterated by the Hindu prophets from the Vedic rishis down to Sri Ramakrishna. A genuine Hindu finds it easy to practise the universal religion. Look at Sri Ramakrishna. A Hindu to the very marrow, a believer in even the minutest details of his own faith, he yet saw God in all faiths and attracted devotees of all religions. His experiences and teachings are moulding the spiritual life of many Protestants, Catholics, and Jews in the Western world. The harmony of religions can only be established on the sure foundation of the deep spiritual experience that God is the centre on which converge the radii of the various faiths. Let a Hindu be taught to be a genuine Hindu, a Moslem a genuine Moslem, a Christian a genuine Christian, and there will be peace among the religions. The

other methods—religious eclecticism, shallow liberalism, ethical humanism, or what the Americans call the 'Pollyanna' attitude toward other faiths—will not succeed in eliminating religious friction, but will rather shake the foundation of religion itself.

I am told that the idea of a secular state in India is based on the assumption that Hinduism is a communal religion and also that India is a land of many religions. The second assumption is as false as the first. India is not a land of many religions. Her spiritual culture has been moulded by the *Sanatana Dharma* formulated by the Indo-Aryan rishis, which in the course of its evolution has thrown out several offshoots and has in addition assimilated, while remaining true to its fundamental ideals, healthy elements from other faiths. Till it is recognized that the culture of India in its every phase has been moulded by the *Sanatana Dharma*, I am afraid there will be neither peace nor happiness nor strength in our motherland.

I know that, like everything else, Hinduism has been abused. Many encrustations now cover up its shining core. Remove these abuses, by all means, but for heaven's sake do not give up Hinduism on their account. Superstition can be removed only through education. Let Hinduism be studied in every school and college, side by side with modern science and psychology. That which is outmoded and effete will be discarded, and that which is eternally true will come out brighter and purer. Thus we shall remove the stigma that Hinduism is a reactionary religion and make it a really effective channel for promoting democracy, social justice, and the welfare of the masses.

We must take pride in our spiritual culture. This is the way of life bequeathed to us by our forefathers. The great peoples of the world sacrifice their lives and their property for the preservation of their way of life. Today England and America are doing everything in their power to protect their culture from external enemies. But the enemies of our culture, it seems, are more within than with-

out. The more we take pride in our spiritual heritage, the easier it will become for us to banish such petty things as provincial jealousies or personal hankerings for name, fame, and possessions. Our present national leaders will do well to remember the pregnant words of Winston Churchill that those who want to see farthest into the future of a nation must see farthest into its past.

A great revolution is silently brewing in the thought-world of today. Undue emphasis on science has disturbed the balance between the body, mind, and soul of man. Physical science has given the Western races great power, which, if not properly handled, may bring about not only their own doom but the collapse of human civilization itself. But the West will not relinquish this power. Its problem is how to utilize this power not only for its own benefit but for the welfare of the whole world. The solution of the problem will come from religion. For the purely mechanistic interpretation of life and the universe no longer satisfies the soaring soul of the West.

In India our problem is how to preserve the purity of our spiritual culture and at the same time remove our social stagnation, poverty, and ignorance. This must be accomplished through the knowledge of science and technology. Otherwise our spiritual ideals of the divinity of the soul and the brotherhood of men will remain mere academic concepts.

The divorce of science from religion is a major tragedy of our times. Science and religion need each other. In the interest of human welfare religion should become scientific and science religious. This means that religion must not contradict reason, and the application of scientific discoveries must not be opposed to ethical and spiritual laws. In a harmony of science and religion lies the future hope of humanity. Only a few months ago, Professor Santayana told me, in Rome, that Vedanta, and Vedanta alone, can bridge the gulf between science and religion.

The West has been the leader in the development of scientific thought. The East has

been the custodian of spiritual truths. America is fast becoming the guardian of Western culture after the devastation of Europe caused by the last two great wars. India is the heart of mystic Asia. It was America that Swami Vivekananda chose as the spring-board for his action in the West. Like Thoreau, he dreamt of the union of East and West for the flowering of a new world culture.

In the past, when East and West have met, such meetings have been accompanied by tremendous revolutions in the realm of human thought. Thanks to the development of science and technology, they have been brought together again. During the first phase

of this contact, the West treated Eastern culture as alien and shunned it. During the second phase, also, the East was treated as alien but was studied objectively by an inquisitive West. Now the relationship has entered a third phase. Though still regarded as alien in many respects, the East is regarded as a part of humanity. Hence the West wants to understand it and assimilate its culture.

May this new contact between East and West, which by the inexorable march of events is taking place before our very eyes, help to bring forth the world's Unborn Soul, for whose sake all humanity is anxiously yet patiently bearing its present travail!

INDIA AND HER SAINTS

BY AKSHAYAKUMAR BANERJEA

Ever since the earliest dawn of Indian civilization saints and seers have played a unique role in moulding its character and directing the course of its development. Its foundation was laid by the ancient seers (*rishis*) of the *Vedas*, who in their deepest spiritual experience realized that all the finite and ever-changing diversities constituting the cosmic order have as their ultimate source and substratum one infinite and eternal, self-shining and self-revealing Truth (*satya*), which is immanent in and transcendent to them all, and are governed and regulated and harmonized by one spiritual principle (*rita*)—the supreme Law of the *being* and *becoming* of that Supreme Truth. They, with their inner eyes, discovered that the world-order, though material and mechanical in outer appearance, is spiritual in essence, and that all the apparently blind forces of nature are in reality modes of self-expressions of a plurality of self-conscious forces or spiritual powers (*devata*), which again are the diversified self-manifestations of one Divine Power—the Power of Truth. They further discovered that every man as a freely moving

self-conscious agent within this phenomenal world is endowed by the Divine plan of this cosmic order with an inherent capacity to pierce through the veil of appearances by dint of his voluntary self-discipline—the systematic discipline of his body and mind, his thoughts, feelings, desires, speeches, and actions—and to realize the *Truth* and the *Law* in himself and the world.

Accordingly these ancient teachers of Indian culture and civilization proclaimed with the irresistible strength of their own realization that man is born in this world with a spiritual mission, with a supreme spiritual ideal immanent in his essential nature, and that the true success of human life lies in the actual realization of this ideal through proper regulation of all the departments of its self-expressions in that direction. They taught that all the duties of human life in all the spheres of its activities should be so prescribed that man may be true to his own essential spiritual nature and to the spiritual basis of the universe and of all human relations within it, and may ultimately be blessed with the direct experience of the infinite eternal bliss-

ful Spiritual Truth—the real truth of his own existence and of the cosmic order. Life has to be put, through voluntary efforts, in tune with the Truth and the Law—with *satya* and *rita*,—with *Brahman* and *Dharma*,—with the Infinite Eternal Absolute Spirit behind and beyond the world and the Principle of Its self-manifestation within the world. This spiritual outlook on the world-order and on the human life seeking for self-fulfilment within it constitutes the basis and determines the progressive structure of Indian culture and civilization. It had its origin in the spiritual experiences of saints and seers of the earliest vedic age.

From that remote vedic age upto the present time, saints and sages have always been the true leaders of India. As with the advance of time the Indo-Aryan society grew bigger and bigger and the people were placed in more and more complicated circumstances, and as the natural urge for self-preservation, self-development, and self-expansion brought the people face to face with more and more puzzling social, political, racial, economic, and moral problems, newer and newer types of saints and sages appeared on the scene, and with their minds illumined by the Divine Light taught the people appropriate methods for solving the practical problems and tiding over all difficulties, consistently with the dynamic spiritual outlook on the world and the human life. The later saints verified in their own lives the Truth and the Law seen by the ancient seers and demonstrated how they could be made the governing principles of individual and collective life at all times and under all sorts of environmental conditions. India has in no age been without saints of the highest order of spiritual realization, and hence the ideal of human life—the ideal of culture and civilization—has never been lowered in India. The light kindled by the vedic *rishis* has never been extinguished.

India had of course to pass through many periods of darkness and despair. She had her due share of natural catastrophes, racial

animosities, materialistic ambitions, foreign aggressions, internal revolutions, etc. etc., which in different periods of her long history put to the severest tests the spiritual ideal immanent in her soul. But the Soul of India as manifested through the lives of her saints has always proved to be death-defying and all-harmonizing. The spiritual view of life and the world, on which her national culture is based, has never acknowledged defeat. Whenever the dark forces of materialism and militarism took temporary possession of the land, true India took refuge in the hermitages of saints and waited for favourable turns of events. She was always conscious within her soul that the seed of destruction was inherent in the very nature of materialism and militarism, in the very constitution of the *rakshasa* and the *asura* bhavas in the world. She knew within herself that these Satanic forces must spend themselves within a short time and kill themselves in accordance with the Divine plan of the universe. She believed that Divine Power must come down in due course and deliver the human society from these forces of evil. Time and again her expectation has been fulfilled, her faith in the Divine scheme of the world vindicated, and her deep-rooted spiritual idealism justified. When the cyclonic upheavals of the necessarily short-lived materialistic forces subsided, true India came out from the hermitages of the saints, revealed herself to the outer world in her immortal spiritual glories and began to reign again over the intellects and minds and hearts and activities of the people at large. The saints of India have in all ages been the true custodians of the spirit of Indian culture and civilization. The history of the inner life of India has been the history of her saints and sages, the persons who realized the spiritual truth of the universe and the spiritual meaning of life and those who consistently interpreted their realizations in terms of the intellect and the heart and applied them to all spheres of existence.

It should not be understood that all the

peoples of all the places, now included within the geographical boundaries of India, have in all ages been consciously guided by the eternal principles and the supreme spiritual ideals which lie at the basis of Indian culture. India had territorial expansions and contractions in different ages. She had cycles of growth and decay. Her inhabitants were divided into various political units, social groups, racial stocks, and religious sects. Her life underwent various changes in its external features. But the centre of her life, the source of her inexhaustible vitality, has all through lain in her deeply spiritual outlook, in the dynamic urge of the spiritual Ideal which inwardly operated in the soul of all her children in all ages amidst all the varying circumstances and all the external differences. The spiritual Truth might have originally revealed itself to the illumined consciousness of the earliest seers in one small corner of this vast territory, whether in some Himalayan cave, or somewhere in the Indus valley, or on the sacred banks of the Saraswati. The immortal soul of living India might perhaps have made its first shining appearance on the level of distinct human consciousness through the medium of a few exceptionally talented individuals in some forgotten spot of the Indian soil. True India is to be searched for in such self-expressions of her eternal soul, and not in the external features of her body. Her true nature has been manifested brilliantly in the spiritual realizations of the unbroken series of saints, who have flourished in different ages in different parts of the country. The body of India has spread out as far as the spiritual influences of these saints have been felt. India has grown bigger and bigger in bodily size with the increase of the sphere of the dynamic spiritual influences of her saints.

In every age true India is to be met with, not in the tumults and confusions and upheavals and depressions through which her outer life passes and moves on, but in her self-expressions through the disciplined lives, spiritual realizations and inspired teachings

of her enlightened saints and sages. True India has become more and more self-conscious and spiritually powerful with the advent of such enlightened persons. She has progressively realized the spiritual treasures of her soul in and through her literature and arts, her sciences and philosophies, her social and economic and political organizations, her diverse dogmas and methods of religious culture, etc. all of which are ensouled by the Truth and the Law experienced by the seers and saints in their inner consciousness. This spiritual idealism has exercised its informing influence upon the atmosphere of all the territories which India has in different epochs of her history accepted as her own and established sovereignty over the minds and hearts and lives of all the peoples whom she has embraced as her children. The centre of India's cultural life might outwardly have moved from place to place in accordance with the changes of the political, social, economic, and physical conditions of the country. But in course of the last thousands of years India has never lost herself, has never lost her soul, has never been deprived of appropriate vehicles of her self-expression, or of saints for conveying the message of her soul.

It is no wonder that the national historians (*pauranikas*) and the national poets of India, in their descriptions of the deeper currents of India's social, political, and cultural life, are found to have given only secondary attention to the rise and fall of kingdoms and empires, to the rivalries and hostilities among races and communities and nations, to the exploits of monarchs and conquerors and politicians, and to have employed their extraordinary talents and energies so assiduously in recording and glorifying the parts which the saints and the spiritual heroes played in the refinement of the people's moral and spiritual ideas and the development of their domestic and social and national life in conformity to those ideas. The history of the inner life of India has really been the history of her saints and sages, of the super-ordinary men of spiritual enlightenment, who

have in different ages vivified in their own lives the spiritual truths and ideals immanent in her soul and presented them in the most practicable forms to the people of the society, and who have in times of national crises guided the people with the torch of Divine Light in their hands and brought peace and order and purity and strength to the society with the aid of the Divine Power manifested through them. Saints and sages are, of course, not the monopoly of India. By Divine dispensation such men of spiritual light are born in every country, in every race, in every nation, in every section of mankind. But in no other country they are looked upon as the true representatives of the real life of the society or the nation; nowhere else they are universally accepted as the true leaders of thought and culture of the entire community; nowhere else do they exercise such a dominating influence upon all the departments of the individual and collective life of the people. The position of saints in Indian history is unique, and this is an index of the spiritual basis of Indian culture and civilization.

II

The cultural atmosphere of the human race is ruled by two distinct types of leaders, saints and intellectual geniuses. In most countries intellectual geniuses really rule, while only lip-homage is paid to saints or spiritually enlightened persons. But in India even the greatest intellects have in all ages acknowledged the superiority of saints, not only in any closed domain of so-called religion, but in the whole sphere of the government of individual and collective life. The philosophers, the scientists, the social reformers, the political leaders, the warriors, the administrators, the economists,—the greatest thinkers of all classes have always agreed that all the departments of human life should be efficiently regulated with the supreme spiritual ideal in view and hence in strict accordance with the universal moral and spiritual principles underlying the evolution of the cosmic process and

the development of the humanity in the world. To them, accordingly, Religion has never been a particular closed domain within the wider human life having various independent fields of self-expression. They have all been fully convinced of the organic unity of human life with a spiritual soul as its dynamic centre and an ideal of spiritual self-fulfilment as the ultimate goal of all its various endeavours. Religion, in the sense of spiritual self-discipline, has therefore been accepted by all classes of intellectualists as the governing principle of the entire life.

This being their view of human life and its fulfilment, the intellectual geniuses of all classes have, in all the departments of life in which they specially applied themselves, humbly followed the guidance of saints, who are spiritually enlightened. Saints have been, in India, teachers of human life as a whole, while the intellectual geniuses have been teachers in particular branches of human knowledge and activity. All schools of philosophy, which have grown in India, have recognized the spiritual experiences of saints as the strongest proof about the nature of the ultimate Truth—the Truth of human life, the Truth of the cosmic order, the Truth of existence. All the discoveries and creations of the human intellect have been seriously sought to be reconciled with, or affiliated to the spiritual realizations of the recognized saints.

The fundamental distinction between the spiritual realization of a true saint and the intellectual knowledge of a rationalistic thinker is that the consciousness of a saint rises to a supra-intellectual plane, in which it transcends the region of time, space, and relativity and of sense-perception, inference, and rules of formal and material logic, and comes face to face with the Eternal, Infinite-Absolute, in which knowing and feeling and being become one integral experience, and in which it, being relieved of the effort to know the Truth, becomes perfectly illumined by and identified with the Truth. The intellectual consciousness may no doubt enormously expand its field

of experience and knowledge by appropriate means and may become immensely rich in contents. But by the very nature of its constitution it must move within a *closed* sphere, it must be bound by spatial, temporal, and relativist conditions, it must be dependent upon sense-experience and governed by the principles and methods of formal and material logic. The Infinite, Eternal, Absolute Truth may be to it a matter of abstract speculation, but never an object of direct experience and, therefore, never a positive reality. What is above the limitations of time, space, and relativity always attracts the intellect and exercises an inexplicable influence upon it in its quest of Truth; but at every stage of its onward march that ultimate Object of its quest remains to it an unknown and possibly unknowable Beyond. It speculates on the nature of the Beyond and forms various conceptions about It; but with whatever earnestness and sincerity it may try to conceive the Beyond, its conceptions, constituted of the categories of the understanding, necessarily fall within the domain of space, time, and relativity, and hence the Beyond remains ever Beyond, its conceptions, constituted of the philosophy which are the systematized expressions of man's ever-progressive intellectual consciousness, always find themselves beyond their depths, when attempting to form a well-defined conception of what is beyond the closed domain of the finite, the temporal and the relative. They are unable either to deny the Infinite, the Eternal, and the Absolute, or positively to affirm It.

The rational intellect, however, represents a stage of self-manifestation of the dynamic human consciousness—undoubtedly a highly refined and glorious stage in relation to the spatial, temporal, and relative objective world. But it has the inherent capacity to transcend this stage. It is above this stage that the consciousness truly realizes itself—realizes its own transcendent universal self-luminous and all-illuminating character. A person, in whom the consciousness transcends the intellectual

stage and experiences itself as above all limitations and hence identifies itself with the Infinite, Eternal, Absolute Reality, is known to be a saint in the true sense of the term. In his inner consciousness he transcends his individuality and becomes universal. His consciousness attains a state, in which all intellectual consciousness constituting the individualities of all individuals of all times and places appear to be particularized self-manifestations of the same one infinite eternal absolute self-luminous self-revealing consciousness. He, therefore, finds himself in all and all in himself. In the highest stage of his experience all differences between himself and others and even the differences between himself and the objective world-order disappear. All existences of the world are realized as existing in, by, and for the same universal Consciousness—*sarvam khalu idam Brahma*. This is the spiritual realization of a saint.

It is to be remembered that true sainthood does not consist in austerity for the sake of austerity, or in renunciation for the sake of renunciation, or in the acquisition of miraculous powers or occult knowledge, or in complete indifference to all the affairs of the world, or any such sort of things. Sainthood means the liberation of the consciousness from all kinds of egoistic desires and passions, from all kinds of weakness and cowardice, all kinds of bias and prejudices, all kinds of narrowness and hatred, all kinds of dogmatism and intolerance, all kinds of physical and mental impurities. It means the liberation of the consciousness from the bondage of the body and the senses and the mind and the intellect. It means freedom from attachment and aversion, from self-identification with any particular family, or particular community, or particular race, or nation, attended with a sense of hostility or rivalry towards other families, or communities, or races, or nations. All these, however, are the negative characteristics of a saint. Positively speaking, a saint is one who, having conquered all the individualistic propensities and weaknesses and limitations of his senses

and mind, concentrates all the energy of his consciousness for transcending the closed domain of intellectual experience and knowledge and realizing within himself the Infinite, Eternal, Absolute Reality behind and beyond and pervading all the diversities of the spatial, temporal, relative phenomenal world. He attains true sainthood when he inwardly experiences the spiritual unity of himself and the world in the universal Consciousness. In this spiritual experience he realizes the Truth of himself, the truth of humanity, the Truth of all the forces and phenomena of the objective world. Until and unless this Truth-realization is achieved, no austerity, no renunciation, no miraculous power, no hypnotizing influence upon the minds and hearts of numbers of blind admirers, can make a person worthy of being regarded as a true saint.

Now, when a saint, after having, in the transcendent state of his consciousness, realized the spiritual unity of all the finite temporal relative realities of the universe, comes down to the plane of intellect and action, he becomes a fountain of a superior type of practical wisdom to the people of the society. His mind and heart are illumined by the light of his spiritual experience. He brings the Divine message—the message of the spiritual unity of all apparent diversities—the message of the Absolute Truth, Beauty, Goodness, and Bliss—to the empirical consciousness of the people imprisoned in the world of finitude, transitoriness, and relativity, and suffering from various kinds of wants and imperfections and sorrows and mutual antagonisms. He shines in society as a connecting link between the finite and the infinite, the temporal and the eternal, the relative and the Absolute, between the world of bondage and the world of freedom, the world of sorrow and the world of joy.

The highest ideas and ideals, which are exercising the most elevating and ennobling influence upon the minds and hearts of the people all the world over, have been imbibed from the lives and teachings of saints. It is

from them that the people have learnt to think of one God, one universe, one humanity, one Life pervading all the varieties of creation. They have taught the people to think that Spirit is more real than matter, that unity is more real than differences, that love is more powerful than hatred, that the spiritual interest of human life is more valuable than the material interest. They have infused into our minds the idea that the spiritual good of life is infinite and eternal, while the material goods are all finite and transitory, and that the spiritual good can be attained through the voluntary sacrifice of the material goods in the loving service of the fellow-beings and the realization of the spiritual unity of all phenomenal existences. It is from the saints that people have obtained the message of universal love, universal fellow-feeling and universal sympathy, the message of selfless service, self-offering sacrifices, the return of good for evil, the return of sweetness for harshness. Love and non-violence, peace and harmony, equality and fraternity, service and sacrifice, respect for the freedom of the self and others, regard for the comforts and feelings of others, which the saints practise in their own lives and preach to their fellowmen and which they want to be the guiding principles of all social conduct, admit of no restriction on the ground of caste, or creed, or nationality, or racial difference. They proclaim that the unrestricted practice of these virtues is necessary for every man for the realization of his true self, for the fulfilment of the essential demand of his own spiritual nature.

Saints liberate morality from social custom, and religion from sectarianism and communalism, and raise them to the plane of universal morality and universal religion. Under their inspiration people become necessarily peace-loving, inasmuch as they learn to look upon all men as their brothers, as the children of the same Divine Father, as the finite embodiments of the One Spirit. All selfish propensities, all hostile tendencies, all hatred and fear, all conflicts of interests, all competitions and

rivalries (whether individual or collective) they regard as born of Ignorance, ignorance about the true character of the self, the true interest of the self, the true good of human life. They seek for emancipating themselves and their fellow-beings from this ignorance and for the realization in this world of the universal spiritual character of the self, through contemplation, all-embracing love, and worshipful service. Their knowledge, their works, their emotions, and sentiments are all cultivated with this spiritual end in view.

All the aspects of Indian culture are saturated with such spiritual idealism. Indian literature and arts, Indian politics and economics, Indian social system and educational policy, the common life of the unsophisticated Indian masses, all reveal the spiritual influence of saints. However secular in her political self-reconstruction, Modern India may try to be, she can never get rid of the spiritual influence of the long line of saints, who have been

inwardly ruling Indian life for thousands of years. It has been quite in the fitness of things that in the present age India has regained her long-lost political freedom, not under the leadership of a war-lord, or an unscrupulous tactician, but under the holy leadership of a saint, who represented in his inner and outer life the true spirit of Indian culture, the culture of saints. It was the saintliness of his character and outlook that made him a lifelong warrior, a ceaseless fighter against untruth and injustice, against organized violence and oppression and exploitation, against all forms of hatred and fear in the human society, against all kinds of evils in man's dealing with man. The establishment of peace and order, love and feeling of unity, equality and fraternity, in the whole world, was the object of all his activities. All the methods of his warfare were the applications of the spiritual law. Free India must devote her energy to regain herself, to realize India of the saints.

NOTES AND COMMENTS

TO OUR READERS

I Saw the Recording Angel is an account of the writer's three interviews with M, the author of the *Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, at the latter's Calcutta residence in 1930. . . .

Sj. Akshaykumar Banerji's article *India And Her Saints* emphasizes the supreme role played by saints in shaping the culture and destiny of India.

SANSKRITIC STUDIES

Prof. Louis Renou, the distinguished French Orientalist, with whom our readers are familiar, has left India for France after a tour of the country for nearly six months. His arrival in the country was very timely, and he has rendered great service to the cause of Sanskrit and our culture. We drew attention

in one of our previous issues to certain of his remarks on Sanskrit as a bond of unity among the different Indian peoples of the north and the south. He has in a great measure the characteristic gift of the French writers to put things in a simple, clear, and logical way. Just before his departure the learned Professor, who is more than a linguist and is interested in the values of culture, spoke with great understanding on the *Future of Sanskrit Studies in India* at the Nagpur University. In our eyes Sanskritic studies are of paramount importance for Indians, both for cultural and national reasons. So we have chosen again to quote portions from his valuable observations.

'India' observed the Professor 'has the good fortune of being the repository of the

noblest spiritual tradition, the only one in the whole world which has been alive throughout the centuries. The Sanskrit language, which has been the privileged instrument of this tradition, is still honoured by all, spoken or at least understood by many.

‘Undoubtedly, India justly desires to become a great modern nation, well-suited to appear with an advantage in the competition of the peoples. But, I am sure she will know how to save her patrimony which has made her name specially respected and blessed.’

He then went on to refer to the amazing vitality of Sanskrit even now, and put in a strong plea for the enthusiastic cultivation of Sanskrit in the colleges and universities and other institutions of India : ‘It is far from my thought to enter into the controversies regarding the national languages. Nevertheless, I believe I can say that the leaders of the country would be better advised if they maintain Sanskrit as the language of culture, indispensable in the University teaching. It would be better also if they assure a decent status to the Pandits. It is necessary, indeed, to develop critical methods of scholarship, by aiding more effectively good institutions of research teaching the post-graduates. It is not less useful to keep in good condition this irreplaceable treasure which is the oral learning of the Pandits, who have maintained the texts and their orthodox interpretation during so many centuries in spite of so many perils.’

Professor Renou’s reference to Sanskrit in connection with the national language is significant. There are doubtless difficulties in making Sanskrit, however simple, the national language, but none in making it the matrix of the same. This course is necessary for a variety of reasons of the utmost importance. Much of the prevailing prejudice against Sanskrit arises from ignorance of it and much from false analogies and wrong understanding of history. Sanskrit, as the Professor says, is the privileged instrument of the spiritual tradition common to us all, Indians Our culture is the only one today that

lies outside the main currents of materialism. It is the only one that can lay claim to a consistent unbroken spiritual tradition. Further, it is the only one that can give a meaning to world history and a metaphysical support to our passion for social justice that is so widespread today. Finally, it alone is capable of providing a principle for transcending all difference of race and culture, which is essential to achieve unification of mankind.

Much of Sanskrit lore seems to be irretrievably lost today, but something has been and is being restored from translations in Chinese and Tibetan etc., of which the originals have vanished. Many texts and manuscripts still remain hidden in out of the way places and corners. All this requires to be brought to the fore, and this, of course, cannot be done without liberal financial help.

But the rediscovery of the texts will be only the first step in a vast project of research. The deep meaning of many of these philosophical texts generally lies beyond the comprehension of the students trained exclusively in the Western methods of scholarship. We do not for a moment deny the great value of the critical and historical methods applied to Indology. But if Indology is to be more than a mere exercise in linguistics, a wider outlook and a more informed approach to the problem is necessary. This means that the valuable elements in the traditional methods of study and understanding should be combined with the upto-date ones. It is only thus that we will be able to fathom the depths of the Indian mind. As it is, modern scholarship, almost without exception, is oblivious of an entire dimension of Indian thought.

The Pandits of India, the Professor rightly remarks, have maintained Sanskrit scholarship through the centuries in spite of endless perils. Their help is essential in building up a new and more comprehensive tradition of Indology. In fact all that is really significant in the writings of modern authors on Indian philosophy, psychology, and so on is derived from their help. Let us be clear on this point and

give all the help we can to make the status of the traditional Pandits at least equal to that which the teachers in the modern universities enjoy and also to enable them to become equipped with the upto-date methods of research.

REVIEWS AND NOTICES

MINKAN—THE MYSTICAL MEANING OF POSSESSING "FISH-EYES." By the Rev. H. Hēras S. J. *Hind Kitabs Limited, Bombay, 1947. Pp. 120 Rs. 4-8-0.*

This volume published under the auspices of the Indian Research Institute, St. Xavier's College, Bombay, is a serious attempt at elucidating the hoary text of an Indus Valley Inscription. Its rather uninviting title it owes to the expression Minkan that occurs in the body of the inscription as deciphered by the learned author. The expression on the face of it means 'one having fish-eyes.' The author reads deeper and brings out its inner meaning by referring to the episode of the *Mahabharata* which throws a flood of light on the otherwise enigmatical expression. Thus the theme develops into a highly interesting and profitable excursus of the 'secret doctrine' that is revelatory of the supreme knowledge of the Deity, conferring the final blessedness attainable by man. It is well that the author integrates this ripening of wisdom with the different stages of religious life, for the keynote of mysticism is always 'the understanding through life.' Apart from the light of spiritual discipline, the ecstatic utterances of mystics will degenerate into sheer pathological rhapsody.

In his exposition, the author makes copious use of quotations, but these are never obtrusive and inept, because his mind seems all along to be in tune with the Infinite. Again, the citations are not confined to any particular school, but are drawn from a variety of sources and the meanings of terms and expressions peculiar to different schools are evaluated and stabilized not by the ready, emasculating process of generalization that obliterates the specific differences of the moment to get at the common denominator. On the contrary, such terms and expressions are set forth against their proper context, philosophical or religious, and oriented in the light of Truth that is transcendent and self-luminous, yet appropriable and enjoyable by the devoted seeker in love and worship. A study, at once so sympathetic and critical, reveals a remarkable degree of unanimity in the utterances of mystics of different ages and climes, but this only means that all draw upon the same fundamental reality of Experience with evident claim to universal acceptance and adoration. As such, words may often differ, but once this heart of reality is grasped, it is not difficult to equate the mean-

ing to its appropriate word. In this way, the author in many instances reads meanings into texts which are not the usually accepted meanings. In so far as the truth of experience is vindicated, we may not quarrel with the author. But we can hardly agree with the author when he concludes: 'Finally, the acquisition of this supreme wisdom will make man forget himself and direct all his works and all his life to the greater glory of God. From this earthly moksa the transit to the real moksa of svarga is but natural (P 106).' So it seems that according to the author the highest stage of spiritual fruition is reached through the method of dynamic identification of wills, human and divine, making man God-like in knowledge and power. As against this, there is an impersonal expression of the transcendental will based on the identity of wills, human and divine. This is the standpoint of Advaita mysticism, which visualizes the final stage of realization as giving the taste of Absolute freedom here on earth not by way of identification of will, but by way of identity of being. The *Gita* bears eloquent testimony to this stage in the familiar words: *Ihaiva tair jitah svargo yeshām sāmye sthitam manah.*

MAKHANLAL MUKHERJI

BENGALI

VIVEKANANDA INSTITUTION PATRIKA. Edited and Published by S. J. Sudhansu Sekhar Bhattacharyya, *The Vivekananda Institution, 107, Khurut Road, Howrah. Pp. 38.*

This magazine brought out every year by the boys of the Institution is a medium for the expression of their literary talents and a means to stimulate their thoughts. This issue contains many good articles on Swami Vivekananda, Gandhiji, Aurobindo, and other great men as also other general articles and poems. It is creditable that it maintains a high standard even though the articles are contributed by the High School students. It is a joy to see such a good magazine and we hope the students of other institutions will make similar efforts. The boys can take just pride in their achievement.

UDAYACHAL (ANNUAL). General Editor Shri Satchidanand Dhar. *Published by Swami Lokeshwarananda, Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, 18 Jadulal Mallick Road, Calcutta 6, Pp. 68.*

Udayachal is coming out in print for the first time after being conducted as a quarterly manuscript magazine for about three years by the students of the Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, Calcutta, under the

guidance of Swami Lokeshwarananda. Most of the contributors are college students, and the magazine keeps up a high standard. We wish all success to this new venture.

NEWS AND REPORTS

RAMAKRISHNA MISSION VIDYAPITH, DEOGHAR ANNUAL PRIZE DISTRIBUTION

The annual prize distribution ceremony of the Ramakrishna Mission Vidyapith, Deoghar, was held on Feb. 25, 1949, in a beautifully decorated pandal under the presidentship of His Excellency Sri Madhab Sri Hari Aney, the Governor of Bihar. It was attended by the elite of the town. The function was a great success with concert, classical music, recitation, and drill demonstration. The Secretary's Report made all acquainted with the activities of this Residential Educational Institution. Swami Achintyananda of the Mission delivered a timely speech in Hindi which was appreciated by all. His Excellency spoke feelingly for about fifteen minutes. Most of the people, he said, are acquainted with the philanthropic activities of the Mission which was founded by Swami Vivekananda and his brother disciples. He continued, 'This is one of the educational institutions conducted by the Mission. The boys who have got the rare opportunity of getting education under the able guidance of the monastic workers of the Order are, no doubt, born under a lucky star. Time has changed; education nowadays means much. It is not a question of turning out of clerks to serve the foreign rulers. It means the building up of character, the making of men who will make this country great and show light to the world. India is now independent, but it is not the achievement of one individual. It is the tradition, the *Sadhana*, we inherited from the saints and sages of this sacred land, that gave the impetus, the strength, and inspiration. The spiritual renaissance which we find in Swami Dayananda, and which we see ablaze with the advent of Swami Vivekananda, is the source that supplied the fresh life-blood to the nation. After that we find the political upheaval which found its fullest manifestation in Mahatma Gandhi, and this too has the same spiritual tradition at its root. It is not the strength of sword, but a strength much more powerful than the mightiest of modern weapons; and it is purely Indian. This force changed even the minds of the foreign rulers who were made to leave the land, but who remained friends. But freedom is not all, and we should make our country

glorious. We should look into our faults and make good of them. We should further mingle with our culture whatever good we find in foreign civilizations. We have a glorious past; we have our *Upanishads*, our *Puranas* and *Shastras* which will supply us whatever necessary for the fulfilment of the national life. Education means doing all this.'....

His Excellency went on to say, 'I am very glad that the Ramakrishna Mission is also working in this province. I have travelled far and near. I met people in Ceylon, Siam, and Malay; I had the opportunity of coming in contact with the people of foreign countries who are acquainted with the men and activities of the Mission. They all have a great regard for the Mission and its work. The door of the Mission is always open to all. They are non-sectarian. I have full faith in them. They are truly educated. They are pure and sincere, they can feel and co-operate, they are courteous and efficient. So it is a relief that these band of workers have taken the work of education in their own hand. They will be able to rebuild the relation between the teacher and the taught, suggested by our *Shastras*, which was once lost during the serfdom of the nation. I believe that they are proceeding in the right direction, and the boys coming out of such institutions will once again make our Hindusthan great.'

His Excellency emphasized that 'the underlying meaning of education is the awakening of the eternal power lying dormant in each individual. No power is yet born that can crush the culture of Hindusthan. It is the power of *paravidya*, the spiritual education which and which alone, can make India great and save the quarrelling world from destruction. The boys should know what our *Shastras* teach. They should be made conscious of the spiritual treasure left to them by the *tapasya* of our forefathers. They should add to it. People of the foreign countries are now busy at making such weapons that can demolish the whole civilization in a moment. But the students of Hindusthan must know the power of *brahmacharya*, the force of *paravidya*, and they must acquire these if they want to save their own land and the world at large. Thus secular education based on spirituality is the only solution of the present-day problem.'
