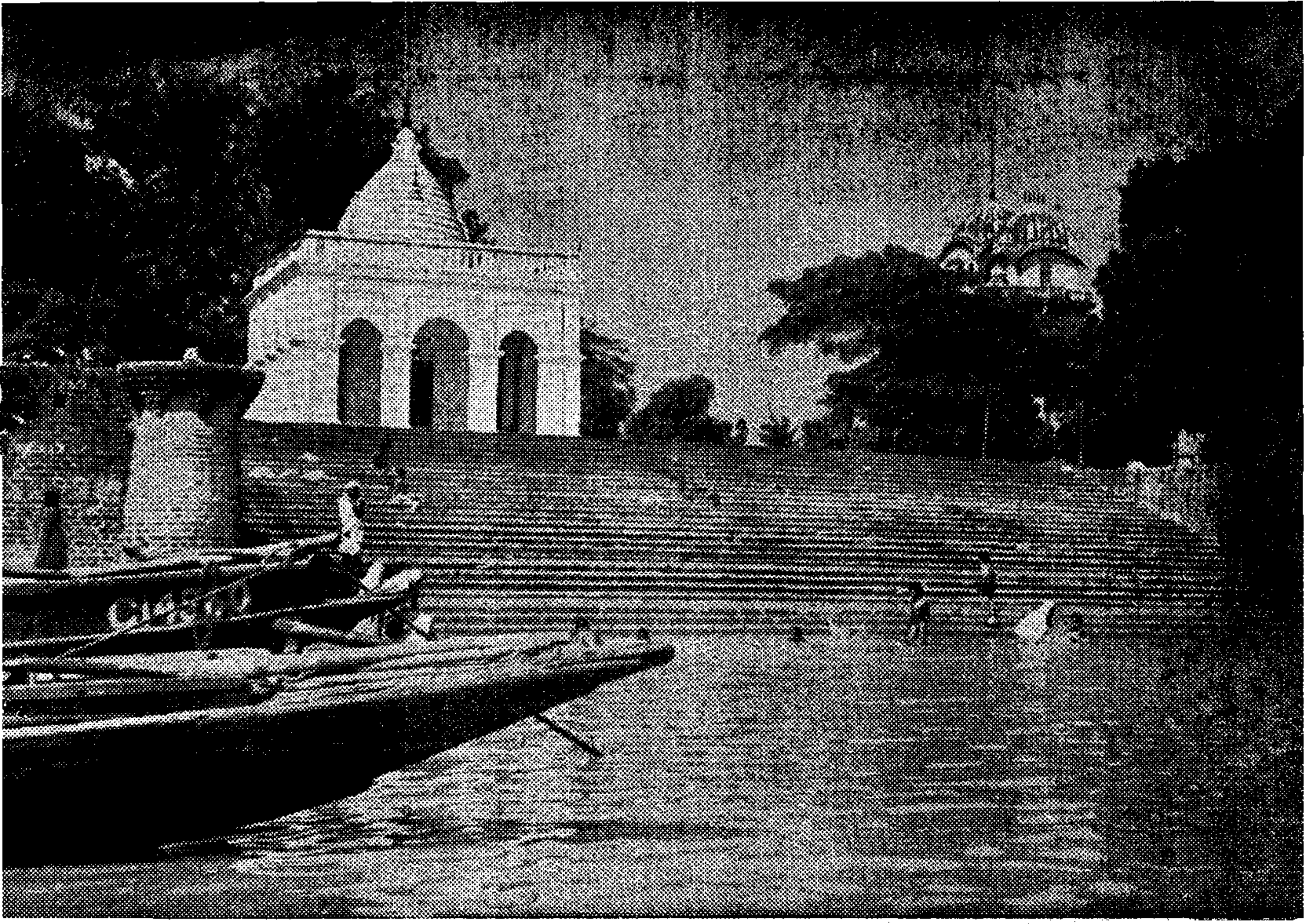

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Prabuddha Bharata

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उत्तिष्ठत जाग्रत प्राप्य वरान्निबोधत

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

——:o:——

SPIRITUAL TALKS OF SWAMI SHIVANANDA

Belur Math, June 23, 1932

It had been raining from early morning. Mahapurushji was in a very happy mood. With folded hands, he prayed to the Mother of the universe : 'How can your creation be saved, Mother, unless you yourself save it ? All was, in fact, being destroyed for want of rain.' Then, according to his direction, some grains were scattered on the adjacent terrace for sparrows, pigeons, and other birds. He was highly delighted to find the birds sweeping down in flocks on the grains and helping themselves to these. And he said : 'I can't move out ; so this alone gives me much delight.'

After a short siesta following the midday meal, he sat quietly on his bed with his mind indrawn. Then he asked an attendant to read from the *Bhāgavata*. The portion dealing with Śrī Kṛṣṇa's talk with Uddhava was read. At one place, in connection with the efficacy of association with saintly people, the Lord says to Uddhava :

'Yoga cannot bind me, nor Sāṅkhya, nor religious duties,
Nor study of scriptures, nor charity, nor rites and rituals, nor even gifts ;
Nor vows, nor sacrifices, nor the Vedas, nor pilgrimage, nor control of bodies and senses
As does the association of the good which snaps all worldly ties.'

Hearing the last line, Mahapurushji was visibly moved, and he said : 'Aha, aha, what a fine sentence ! Do you mark that the Lord Himself says that holy companionship is incomparable ! As a result of association with the good, one reaches the state of being freed from all worldly entanglements. All wants and desires are then destroyed root and branch, and one then feels the nearness of God. How much of spiritual practice can a man undertake with the little strength that he has ? Besides, can one really comprehend God by spiritual practices and austerities ? God is a lover of His devotees ; He is satisfied with love and devotion alone. He reveals Himself wherever there is love and earnestness. That's why the Master said : "The devotee's heart is the parlour of God." The

mind becomes purified by spiritual practices, renunciation, and austerities; and in that pure heart, the love for God finds expression, and God reveals Himself there. The main thing that matters is to love God, thinking Him to be one's nearest. The *gopis* knew "Kṛṣṇa is ours". Just think of that idea of intimacy! In that, there is no idea of God-hood, no hankering even for salvation; only love absolute reigns supreme, and only pure devotion persists.

'And holy companionship has the wonderful power of generating love for God. Who is a really holy man? The man in whose heart sits God Himself. It is only as the result of merit earned in a succession of lives that one has the good fortune of associating with holy people and being blessed by them. It must be the result of your merit earned in many lives that you have been able somehow to enter this holy Order of the Master. The whole course of a man's life becomes reorientated as a result of holy association; and its effect, too, is very lasting. In our own lives, we noticed that we might have been in the Master's company, perhaps, for an hour or two, during all of which, we might not have even talked with him much; but its effect lasted for days. We would be then in a state of God-intoxication, as it were, and we would be thinking of God all the time. He is an exception, to be sure; for he was none other than God Himself, the incarnation for this age. A mere kind look of his could grant a man *samādhi*; and a mere touch of his could bring about the revelation of God.

'The contact with perfected souls will, as a matter of course, stimulate love for God in others. That's a unique phenomenon; that's also a test for knowing whether one has seen God. One imbibes thoughts of God as soon as one comes near a realized soul. In a book of the Vaiṣṇavas, they have a fine saying:

"At whose sight one is reminded of Kṛṣṇa spontaneously,
Know him to be a chief among the Vaiṣṇavas."

'Just as one feels the heat of fire when one approaches it, so also one's heart and soul are afire with thoughts of God when one comes in contact with a truly holy man.

"A worm is placed on the head of a deity along with the flower it sits on;
So also does the companionship of the saints save the fallen ones."

It is not to be thought that only those who suffer from the afflictions of the world and fall on bad days should visit holy men; even if those who are born with a silver spoon in the mouth, those who are steeped in luxury and enjoyment, get the companionship of the holy people by some past merit, then from their minds also is wiped away for ever the hankering for this ephemeral, so-called happiness; their minds also turn towards the everlasting bliss, and their lives become fulfilled by tasting that unsurpassable joy, that highest joy of God-realization. To the Master also came quite a number of people rich and highly placed. And he turned their minds godward out of his own mercy. And then they became filled with the bliss of God. Could we ourselves even become what we are, unless we had seen him and been blessed by him? How can I express his compassion in words? ... The Master was, after all, none other than Mother Kālī, who in the form of the Master is saving the world even now. Ah, how kind he was! How limitless was his compassion! We were extremely fortunate to have been granted the companionship of an incarnation of his stature. Our lives have been fully blessed. To you, also, I declare that he is the incarnation for this age; he is the saviour of all creatures, the protector of all—God Himself. Take refuge in him, lie down at his feet; you will have everything fulfilled. You will be blessed with devotion and salvation and whatever else you need. This is all that I have to say.'

Belur Math, July 27, 1932

As Mahapurushji's room was being cleaned in the afternoon, he sat in the adjoining room

facing the Gaṅgā, and started teaching to a *brahmacārin* the song, 'I stand here firm with the magic ring of the name of Kālī drawn around me' etc. At times, his voice became choked with cough; so, he cleared the throat now and then, and said: 'My voice is gone; how can I sing now?' And yet, the voice was really fine!

Next, the *brahmacārin* asked him: 'Was the song "Who, indeed, abolished your own name, O Kānāi (i.e. Kṛṣṇa)?" used to be sung by the Master?' 'Yes, he used to sing it', said Mahapurushji, and he started singing:

'Who, indeed, abolished your own name, O Kānāi, thou stealer of butter at Vraja?
Where's your yellow garment, and who took away your charming diadem?
Coming to Nadia, you wear a shaven head, and put on a loin cloth with string.*
What mood are you in, O Kānāi, and out of what want is this?
Renouncing your power and majesty of all the six forms, you have assumed the loin cloth and string.
With tears, tremulous body, faltering voice, and all limbs throbbing with divine joy,
You have lost yourself in the name of Hari, in the company of your followers.'

The song finished, he sat silently for a while and remarked: 'Aha, how charmingly would the Master sing! And he became lost in spiritual moods as soon as he started singing. I never again heard such charming and soul-enchanting song from anyone else. My heart and soul are filled up with his songs. And how beautiful was the dancing! This was so because he danced out of the ecstasy of divine communion. That's why it looked so beautiful. His body was very well proportioned and soft. He danced out of the fulness of his divine mood. Those scenes are still very vivid to me. That charming dancing of his would stimulate us also to dance; and he, too, would force us to join company. "Why should you feel shy?" he would say at times. "You have to dance in the name of Hari. That's not, certainly, a matter to be ashamed of. Nothing can be achieved so long as one is not rid of three things—shyness, hatred, and fear. One, who cannot become mad in the name of Hari and dance, lives a vain life, indeed." He would talk to us like that. In that dilapidated house at Baranagar (near Calcutta, where the first Ramakrishna monastery was started), we danced so madly, that we were afraid, at times, lest the house should collapse. Aha! blessed be the name of Mahāprabhu (Śrī Caitanya)! What an invaluable thing he has done for the good of men! The whole locality, as far as this sound of the singing of Hari's name (introduced by him) reaches, becomes sanctified by that holy music. Girish Babu's composition of this song is very fine:

"Call on Hari, my mind, call on Hari!
O Keśava, thou who roamest in gardens and forests, be kind to me!"

And so on.

A little later, he slowly moved out to the verandah over-looking the Gaṅgā. It was difficult for him to walk. He stood there holding the railing, and looked at the beauty of the Gaṅgā. When a disciple expressed his mental anguish for his failure to have realization up till then, Mahapurushji said: "Weep before the Master, call on him; all will be granted in time. My son, does peace of mind come without any effort? Call on him and weep with all sincerity.' A boat was gliding on the river with full sail. Pointing to this, he told the disciple: 'Just see how finely the boat glides up the stream with the help of the southern breeze. Do you understand that? The *guru's* blessings help one in one's spiritual endeavour. By Mother's grace, you have it already. Now dive deep into prayer, meditation, etc. Eat very little at night, and engage yourself in *japa* and meditation. Night is, in fact, the best time for *japa* and meditation. Over and above that,

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* The belief is that Kṛṣṇa incarnated as Śrī Caitanya at Nadia. The former was a cowherd boy, the latter a monk.

you have the bank of the Gaṅgā, the monastery of your *guru,* and the association of holy monks to help you; you will succeed very soon. Now and then, you should forego a night meal altogether and spend the whole time from evening to sunrise in *japa.* Call on him with heart and soul. Perform your duties, but keep your mind fixed at the lotus feet of Hari. Then he sang in a very low voice:

"O monk, drink the cup filled with the juice
of Hari's name,
And be fully inebriated" etc.

Belur Math, 1932

Mahapurushji Maharaj had hardly any sleep in those days; he was, all the time, merged in one or the other of the various spiritual moods. From his talks with the numberless devotees and inmates of the monastery, who visited him during the daytime, one could get an inkling of the blissful state he was in. At times, he talked of such high states of realization that most people failed to grasp their purport. This state became more manifest during nights. He would then, sometimes, sing religious songs in a very low tone, and at some other times, he would intone the verses of the Upaniṣads, the *Gītā,* the *Caṇḍī,* or the *Bhāgavata.* Often enough, he would suddenly stop in the midst of his chanting and sit silently, absorbed in his own mood. Very often, he would become unaware of the outer world and his surroundings.

One night, he sat on his bed with his eyes shut. It was about two o'clock. The whole monastery was perfectly silent. After a long meditation in this way, he intoned softly from the *Gītā* two verses, beginning with '*Āpūryamāṇam acalapratiṣṭham*' etc. Then he asked the attendant there: 'Do you know the meaning of these?' The attendant kept silent, and so he said: 'Just as the sea, always full and steady, remains undisturbed by the entry of water through the rivers etc., similarly, although thoughts of desirable things may rise as a result of past tendencies in a man of realization, still his mind is not perturbed at all, just like the full and unagitated sea. Having realized the absolute state of peace, he remains contented with his Self. But people running after enjoyment can never attain peace. True peace comes to one who renounces all kinds of desire, becomes passionless, egoless, and devoid of the idea of possession. Eternal peace cannot come, so long as passions and desires persist; and those passions and desires cannot be wholly uprooted without the grace of God. As for myself, the Master wiped off all passions and desires from me out of his own mercy; I have none at all. This body continues by his will and for his work alone; for I am none other than the pure, intelligent, free soul. As for this body itself, I often forget that it exists at all, though it is true that the Lord is having much of his work done through it; and hence it is that he preserves it. But I myself have no desire. Do you understand that point? I am the Bliss Itself, that is Brahman.'

With this he sat silent; his countenance seemed to have changed wholly for the time being—as though he were a new man altogether. One felt afraid even to look at him. At long last, he said, in a sort of soliloquy: 'Mother has granted me all that I may need, out of Her mercy. She has filled me up fully with all She had in Her store. I have nothing else to desire. By Her grace, I have everything. *"Yaṁ labdhvā cāparaṁ lābhaṁ manyate nādhikaṁ tataḥ"*—getting which, one does not think of any other gain to be greater. She alone knows why she still preserves this body.'

On another occasion, it was also dead of night. Mahapurushji was seated on his bed, deep in meditation. After a long while, he started opening his eyes at times and closing them. Just then, a cat entered the room and mewed. He looked at that direction and saluted the cat with folded hands. The attendant nearby could not, at first, under-

stand that he was saluting the cat. So, he looked inquiringly at Mahapurushji, who then explained: 'Look here, my boy, the Master has now brought me to such a state that I see everything as nothing but Consciousness Itself. That same Consciousness is at play through everything—houses, furniture, beds, bedsteads, and all creatures; the difference is only in names, but there is oneness behind all. I can see that very clearly, so that I cannot check that mood howsoever I may try. That Consciousness shines even through this cat in all its brilliance. This is the mood in which the Master now keeps me fully absorbed. Men and women come in and go out; and I talk with them, because I have to. I also eat and move about as in common life, because I have to. All that proceeds as though out of past habit. But, whenever I take away my mind even a little from all these, I come face to face with this play of Consciousness everywhere. Names and forms, and all such things belong to a very low order of existence. When the mind transcends names and forms, you come to the acme of realization; then everything is full of Bliss, everything is full of Consciousness. Such things cannot be explained through words of mouth. He alone can know who attains that state.' He seemed to be in a mood to talk of many things more; but he became silent all of a sudden. The attendant stood stock-still, wondering at what he had heard.

THE BASIS FOR PEACE

The twentieth century has taken great strides in the acquisition of material knowledge. The progress made by physical science is, indeed, phenomenal. What once seemed impossible is today within the easy reach of an ordinary man. The spectacular and rapid achievements in the realm of matter has baffled all expectations, and man is kept in a kind of breathless expectation of the next day's miracle. The prodigious gains of science and technology have become the symbol of reality, relegating the other values, like those of humanities, to a secondary place. But what has been the result? Bertrand Russell's observation on the point, though made about twenty-five years ago, is very expressive: 'Science has shown us how to achieve our immediate purposes far more successfully than former ages would have deemed possible. We can manufacture commodities with a hundredth of the labour required in pre-industrial times; we can move on the surface of the earth with ten times the velocity of a hundred years ago; we can fly better than birds, and move under water faster than fishes. Unfortunately, the intellectual powers which have led to these achievements are not accompanied by corresponding moral powers. Our aims have not advanced *pari passu* with our capacity to realize them. The dominant nations of the world have used their scientific knowledge for two purposes: to increase the material comfort of the wealthy minority, and to perfect the means of slaughtering each other.'

The material prosperity in itself is not bad. The Hindu religion has given a place of honour to wealth (*artha*), inasmuch as it has been classified with liberation (*mokṣa*) as one of the four objects of human achievement (*puruṣārtha*) to be attained. But it is bound up with the condition that acquisition and use of wealth must be according to the tenets of piety (*dharma*). It is not an end in itself, only a means to something higher. 'The ultimate aim of mankind', in the words of Lecomte Du Noüy, 'should be the attainment of human dignity with all its implications.

In other words, all his intellectual acquisitions, all the facilities which society puts at his disposal—schools, universities, libraries, laboratories; all those offered by religion; all the occasions given him to develop his own aptitudes, his work, his leisure, must be considered by him as tools destined to improve his personality, his moral self, and to make it progress. He commits an error if he sees in education and instruction a means of increasing the field of his intellectual activity, his power or his prestige, or a means to enrich himself materially. He must use his science and his culture to better himself morally and to make others progress. Instruction is sterile if it is considered as a goal in itself, dangerous if it is subordinated to selfish sentiments or to the interest of one group. No matter how considerable it is, the accumulation of knowledge does not confer any superiority on man if he utilizes it only outwardly, and if he reaches the end of his life without having deeply evolved as a responsible element of humanity.' This 'responsible element of humanity' is the development of that consciousness in man which invests him with a feeling of unselfishness and inspires in him the spirit of sacrifice. Swami Vivekananda says: 'When a man has no more self in him, no possession, nothing to call "me" or "mine", has given himself up entirely, destroyed himself as it were, in that man is God Himself; for in him self-will is gone, crushed out, annihilated. That is the ideal man.'

II

But it may be pertinently asked if such an 'ideal man' can be found in each human being, or if every man can attain to that ideal state; and also, if all men are such, can the work of the world go on? We submit that is not possible. But the ideal must not be lost sight of. So long as creation exists, it will have varieties. Some men will be spiritually better than others, just as some will be stronger than others, or some others more intelligent than their fellow beings. Degrees in achievements and differences in attainments will ever remain. To be in bondage is not so bad as to consider bondage to be a fact for ever and lose sight of liberty as an ideal. Man has got body, mind, and soul. People will, naturally, take care of the body, as they should; they will develop their intellect, as they ought to; but they should also pay attention to the Soul that is the real existence behind all fleeting pageants of life and also, try to realize it. By developing the body, one may have physical happiness; with the growth of the intellect, one may have knowledge of the external nature and its phenomena; but, unless one dives deep within oneself, one can never have real peace. Unless a man develops spirituality, however high may be his intellectual powers, however refined he may be in his ways and manners, or whatever wealth and honour he may be master of, at any moment, he may find himself, perhaps to his great dismay, no better than a blind creature, bound painfully by those very things which he held in high esteem. Though unreal in essence, the animal in man is, unfortunately, struggling all the time to assert itself. Only that man who is conscious of this danger, and who has control over himself, can keep it in check. He can kill it, too, only if the battle is pursued in right earnest with weapons of spirituality. But, truly, how few are the persons who can do so! Man may conquer the waves, man may control the elements, but it is not easy to get control over this animal in man. It requires constant vigil and strenuous efforts to conquer one's lower nature.

The Upaniṣads say that it is a tragedy of human life that a man's senses always go outward and become the cause of suffering. The Ātman residing within, as a matter of fact, the only unchanging Reality giving 'a name and a local habitation' to all these ever-changing activities of life, is not sought after. The ideal of man should be to turn his senses within and behold and realize this

immortal One. Peace and happiness does not consist merely in having freedom of action, liberty of conscience, and equal opportunities for material progress. Many people say that man will attain an ideal state when he can follow his will unhampered and obey his conscience without any hindrance. But man will not be really happy, though he is given complete freedom of thought and action, unless he develops his inner life. And how can 'freedom of conscience' grow, at all, unless 'conscience' is taken care of? The call of the senses, the dictates of the desires, if listened to at the instigation of the extrovert senses, only help in killing the 'pure conscience'. In most cases of easy life, given to the satisfaction of senses, the 'whims' are mistaken for conscience and what is sought for is unbridled liberty to these whims. But this is not the way that 'leadeth unto life'. Man has to realize that it is not by accumulation of wealth, not by fulfilment of earthly desires, not by having sway over others, and not by shrewdness or cunning, but by renunciation of all these alone that he can see the face of real happiness. He has to manifest the divine in him by following the ways and means prescribed by saints and prophets, who were true lovers of humanity, and who very much desired to see it peaceful and prosperous. It needs a change in the assessment of values and a strong will to achieve this arduous task. It is, no doubt, very difficult.

But it is not impossible, at the same time, though the psychology of our times has, perhaps, made it more difficult. Today, we do not attach much value to this basic aspect of human civilization. A civilization should be judged chiefly by its spiritual culture, and not by its material power only. But, unfortunately, reverse is the case today. Though two great world wars have shown what a catastrophe can be brought on civilization by accumulation of uncontrolled physical strength and by unwise utilization of material acquisitions, and in spite of all talks of disarmament and international trusteeship over nuclear weapons, a mad race for hoarding more and more of destructive devices is going on in its own way. A nation that can have such things better in quality and more in quantity boasts itself of being more advanced. The culture and civilization of a nation have no value, unless it has military power to compel attention of other contending nations. Sometime, just before the last world war, a Japanese had said very significantly: 'We brought you (the people of the West) our flowers and paintings, and you took no notice of us. It was only when we adopted your guns and made ours better improved, that you paid us any attention.' Just as a rich man easily gets the reputation of being wise, though he may be, in reality, a fool, in the same way, a nation with great military strength is generally recognized to be progressive and advanced, though it may not have all the qualities which characterize a truly civilized people. Wealth and power are not always the true standards to measure the greatness of a people or a man. The greater a man resembles his Maker, the more civilized he is.

III

The great American President Abraham Lincoln once said: 'For a man to rule himself is liberty; for a nation to rule itself is liberty. If one nation robs another nation of its freedom, it does not deserve freedom for itself, and under a just God, it will not long retain it.' This fact is being understood by right thinking men all over the world today, even in the midst of the present chaos and confusion. They consider that, in spite of various differences in race, colour, creed, and language, men should belong to one world and one human family, and no nation or group, without loss or injury to itself, can be indifferent to the interests of others.

Human brotherhood is being hampered by various factors wrongly brought into prejudiced considerations. In the name of nationality, racial integrity, particular social status,

and also, privileges conferred by religious hierarchy and political set-ups, men confine themselves into groups—big and small. Differences in physical characteristics, languages, and in manners and customs are as non-essential matters as being member of a particular race and citizen of a particular State. But these have been made too much of by most of us owing to narrow understanding. It is to be understood that variety is the plan of nature, but not its law. Unity is the law, the only principle that man has to understand and learn by a steady pursuit of right knowledge, with an open and all-embracing heart. He has to realize that 'everything that makes for oneness is truth'. One may remain an Indian, and another an Englishman or a Negro, without losing one another's sympathy and love; similarly, the capitalist and the labourer, the professor and the illiterate, the white and the coloured, the Brāhmaṇa and the Pariah may live in love and goodwill in human society, without hating one another. Men feel themselves foreign to one another, due to want of a vision of oneness which can be cultured with a little of proper thinking and wider understanding. Prof. Gilbert Murray wrote once in an interesting letter to Rabindranath Tagore: 'There are touchy and vain people in all parts of the world, just as there are criminals in all parts; just as there are thinkers, artists, poets, men of learning; just as there are saints and sages. And it is valuable to remember that, as Plato pointed out long ago, while criminals tend to cheat and fight one another, and stupid people to misunderstand one another, there is a certain germ of mutual sympathy between people of goodwill and good understanding. An artist cannot help liking good art, a poet good poetry, a man of science good scientific work, from whatever country it may spring. And that common love of beauty or truth, a spirit indifferent to races and frontiers, aught, among all political discords and antagonisms of the world, to be a steady well-spring of good understanding, a permanent agency of union and brotherhood.' It only means that the great family of individuals, races, and nations must learn to live together in peace and goodwill. These people, who are cosmopolitan in their outlook must believe in God as the Maker of all men and nations. It has been asked: 'To whom does the earth belong? Does it belong to the strong in muscle and to the shrewd in intellect? Does it belong to those who can exploit and conquer their neighbours?' The Bible answers: 'The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof.' And 'God hath made of one blood all the nations of men to dwell upon the face of the earth'. Buddha taught human brotherhood and preached against slavery of all kinds, in any form, to any clan of human beings. Jesus exhorted men to cherish and cultivate friendliness towards all others, and said: 'Love thy neighbour as thyself.' Swami Vivekananda said: 'Everything that makes for oneness is truth. Love is truth and hatred is false, because hatred makes for multiplicity. It is hatred that separates man from man; therefore, it is wrong and false. It is disintegrating power; it separates and destroys. . . . As soon as this separation comes, it opens the door to all mischief and leads to all misery. If a very small fractional part of human beings living today can put aside the idea of selfishness, narrowness, and littleness, this earth will become a paradise tomorrow.'

What is to be done then? How can we develop in us the spirit of this unselfishness, this love for others? We have to know, as Swami Vivekananda cautions: 'With machines and improvements of material knowledge only, it will never be. These only increase misery, as oil poured on fire increases the flame all the more. Without the knowledge of the Spirit, all material knowledge is only adding fuel to fire, only giving into the hands of selfish man one more instrument to take what belongs to others, to live upon the lives of others, instead of giving up his life for

them. Positive values have to be taken care of. Such qualities as love, unselfishness, non-violence, etc. will have to be cultured and, above all, a belief in the existence of God must have to be developed to give strength to our efforts towards these ends. Spirit manifests itself in Truth, Beauty, and Righteousness. These are the three aspects of the one Reality, which theists call God and all sentient beings comprehend as love. The votaries of Truth, the devotees of Beauty, and the upholders of Righteousness pay their homage to the same deity. The conduct of such men who believe in this deity, finds it easy to transcend the limits forced on the mind by national jealousies, racial animosities, economic considerations, political dissensions, and also, religious bigotries. Their behaviour towards their fellow men stands regulated by the light of the Spirit; their actions lead to harmony and ever-increasing integration.

IV

Humanity stands at the cross-roads today. The common man looks up to the leaders of the nations for peace and safety. Every moment he is driven to greater fear and poorer sense of security at what he is seeing in the exhibition of deadly destructive weapons of war and expression of suspicion and lovelessness by the strong nations of the world. Enough suffering has been caused to humanity by the claims of narrow nationalism, false sense of race superiority, and also, exclusive religious fanaticism. Ideologies based on particular economic and social theories have also created strife and disharmony. To quote Dr. Radhakrishnan: 'We live in an age which is aware of its own defeat and moral coarsening, an age in which old certainties are breaking down, the familiar patterns are tilting and cracking. There is increasing intolerance and embitterment. The creative flame that kindled the great human society is languishing.'

But as we have said before, there are people today, who are seriously thinking of building a human society more secure about its existence and more hopeful of a happier living. To such brave workers, who have foresight to perceive the true interest of their fellow beings and of the generations yet unborn, the general welfare of humanity and the particular interests of the group to which they belong, would appear quite harmonized. Who lives if the world perishes and who would fail to realize the fullness of life if the whole of human society is so organized as to give everyone the opportunities of self-expression and desired progress? Fortunately, men with broader vision are to be found all over the world, irrespective of caste, creed, race, or nationality. They are the true nation builders, and at the same time, true lovers and servants of humanity. They may be silent, perhaps, unknown beyond a small group. But they are the salt of the earth. Civilization, nay, mankind itself might have been wiped away long ago, had it not been for the silent constructive work of these comparatively unknown votaries of love and goodness, who have existed at all times. They, though citizens of a particular State or born in a certain country, belong to whole humanity. They all believe that political adjustments or formal peace treaties or military pacts, however wisely made, can never guarantee peace to mankind, unless the spiritual qualities like love, forbearance, tolerance, and unselfishness form the basis of human life. It is encouraging to see some non-political and international movements and organizations also working in this direction. Though essentially a political organization, the U.N. itself has its cultural units working non-politically to bring about international co-operation and mutual understanding. We only hope that in the welter of political turmoil and frenzy of theoretical disputes, the leaders of the world will not forget to listen to the saner advice of those unassuming and peaceful voices, which believe that true amity and progress for mankind cannot be assured, unless the existence of

Spirit in man is recognized and unless this recognition is manifested in culture and development of those spiritual qualities which make for real and permanent happiness.

V

Man is essentially one everywhere. His aspirations, his problems, his needs are almost the same, allowing for the differences created by circumstances. The solution of his problems, too, will be more or less on similar grounds. This deeper outlook about the similarity of human nature is a necessity today. At the same time, we have to realize this great truth that only intelligence, however keen and astounding it may be, if bereft of spiritual contents and unbacked by moral principles, cannot deliver the goods ultimately.

Du Noüy is correct when he says: 'Today we are faced with the question of whether intelligence or morality will win. The fate of humanity, its happiness, depends on the answer chosen by man. Intellectualism can only lead to a utilitarian morality, apparently practical, but deprived of ... the imperative character to which the moral law owes its prestige and its strength. ... If intelligence alone should rule, all the human traits of which we are proud, the sense of duty, of liberty, of dignity, of the beauty of disinterested effort, would disappear little by little and fade out into oblivion until civilization would vanish without even an afterglow. On the other hand, if the moral law dominates, it will not oppose itself in any way to the free development of the mind. It will progressively gain ground and will allow all the human, intuitive, and intellectual characters to develop in perfect freedom. It will allow the human spirit to blossom and to perfect itself without limit. It does not matter how the spirit evolves; true progress is internal and solely depends on the sincere, passionate desire to improve in the strictly human sense of morality and spiritual values.'

This, as we have said before, is the vital question that requires a decisive answer, which, again, calls for earnest and immediate action in that direction. We believe all of us know the answer. In the heart of our hearts, we all agree with Swami Vivekananda, when he says: 'Great, indeed, are the manifestations of muscular power and marvellous the manifestations of intellect, expressing themselves through machines by the appliances of science; yet, none of these are more potent than the influence which Spirit exerts upon the world.' We, in our smallness of conception and blindness of self-interest, only forget this great truth. But enough has humanity suffered for this mistake. Let us and our leaders now turn our attention towards this essential factor of human progress; let us coolly look within our hearts; let us come to realize the tremendous effect that the development of moral and spiritual elements in human society can bring about towards the establishment of lasting peace and happiness, and towards the making of a world where men and women will live happily, free from fear, free from insecurity, free from mutual distrust and hatred; and let us all sincerely work in that direction. As Gandhiji said, 'in politics, also, we have to establish the Kingdom of Heaven.'

Let us all live and act with the fervent hope that that day will soon come, when the sun of righteousness will shed its lustre of peace, prosperity, and goodwill on earth, and when man, in fullness of the joy of life, shall raise his hands towards Heaven and say: 'O Lord, Thy kingdom has come, Thy will has come to be done on earth, as it is in Heaven. Glory unto Thee! Amen!'

WALT WHITMAN AND VEDĀNTA—1

By Sri P. Sama Rao

'In this broad earth of ours,
Amid the measureless grossness and the slag,
Enclosed and safe within its central heart,
Nestles the seed perfection.

'Gliding over all, through all,
Through Nature, Time, and Space,
As a ship on the waters advancing,
The voyage of the soul—not life alone,
Death, many deaths, I'll sing.'

—Whitman, *Gliding Over All.*

Vedāntism is both an attitude and an end in itself. It is a means, too, which culminates in a perfect identity of the subject with the object, or rather in an oneness of the aspirant with his ideal. The knower, the knowledge, and the known having all become one incomprehensible Whole—a non-dual One—we are left with only the Absolute, the unitary common factor (the digit), which pervades all creation. This attainment is a non-descript of all life, that is immutable and eternal. It is a perfect realization of one's own self in the super-self, a determination of the same essence in both.

The ego, 'I-ness and mine-ness', which is stained and covered over with desires, passions, and attachments is not the Self that is pure and unconditioned. The pure Self is of the very essence of the supreme Self, of which it is a part when viewed dualistically, and is the very supreme Self when it is in identity with It. The Self when divested of its *upādhis* (coverings) is all too subtle and all pervasive. Thus the realization of the Self is none distinct from cosmic consciousness which perceives One in the many, and many in the One.[1] A perfectly realized soul is therefore 'everyman in no man'; and 'no man in everyman';[2] for there is left no individuality of any kind of either the body or of cognizance, or of any other kind of apperception. The process of realization is an emptying of the soul of all that is not itself—i.e. of its super-ambient dross. This transformation, if we may call it so, of its appearance to its own reality, is 'a Prodigal come home', the return of the Self to its parent, the super-Self. This is the sum and substance of all true spiritual endeavour which culminates in a perfect effacement of the Ego.

The identification of the Self with the supreme Self is described as akin to the dissolution beyond all recognition of a salt or a sugar doll in water or that of a drop of water in an ocean. Literature is full of such identity gleaned from experiences of perfect lovers (Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa, Lailā and Majnūn, etc.) who, though bodily distinct, have one and the same existence in a perfect abandonment and resignation of one unto the other. They are only conscious of their blessed state. In this blissfulness one is not aware of either the inner or the outer.[3]

This capacity to sink one's own identity into others and experience their joys and griefs is, at once, the bed-rock of both the poetic and spiritual endeavours. It is a sort of expansion or dilation of the subject into its object with a pervasiveness peculiarly its own. This can only be mystically felt but not adequately described. Keats and Shelley, Coleridge and Blake, Whitman and all mystical poets have experienced and given expression to it. Keats has said: 'The setting sun will always set me to rights, or if a sparrow come before my window, I take part in its existence and pick about the gravel. The first thing that strikes me on

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[1] Cf. *Bhagavad-Gītā*, VI. 29.30

[2] Shakespeare, *Merchant of Venice*, Act I. Sec. 2.

[3] Cf. (a) *Brhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*, IV.3.21; (b) Keats, *Isabella*; (c) Kālidāsa, *Meghadūta*, II. 19; (d) Homer, *Odyssey*.

hearing a misfortune having befallen another is this, "Well, it can't be helped; he will have the pleasure of trying the resources of his spirit", (Letter to Bailey, dated 22.11. 1817). Whitman's experience of others' joys and griefs is a dispassionate becoming of them himself in an identity perfectly resigned, uncomplaining and dispassionate. He sings:

'I am the hounded slave, I wince at the
bite of dogs,
Hell and despair are upon me, crack and
again crack the marksmen,
I clutch the rails of the fence, my gore
drips thinn'd with the ooze of my skin,
I fall on the weeds and stones, ...
Distant and dead resuscitate,
They show as the dial or move as the
hands of me,
I am the clock myself'[4]

—*Song of Myself*, Sec. 32

Out of this intuitive experience is born the great compassion of our *ṛṣis*, Buddhas, and *kavir-manīṣīs*.[5] But no expression of experience is valid or beneficial unless it satisfies Śrī Śaṅkara's injunction: 'The test of the authority or otherwise of a passage is not whether it states a fact or an action, but its capacity to generate indubitable and fruitful knowledge. A passage that has this is authoritative, while the one that lacks is not.'[6] For then it is truly of a vision of and into Reality that invests the statement with *adhikāra* (authority).

To Śrī Śaṅkara, Sri Ramakrishna, Sri Vivekananda, etc. who are unique synthetists and advocates of Vedāntic monism there was no regimentation of real knowledge into the four branches, that of the *jñāna, karma, yoga,* and *bhakti mārgas*. The mystic vision into Reality fused them all into one, that of the only way to perfect realization; for each of these depended upon others for completion and greatest efficacy. Besides, the *summum bonum* of all being and becoming is the transformation at the finale into the one Absolute, who in a descent of its own into worlds of sense perception transforms itself first into Īśvara and thence into creation. And, the God of one's own predilection (*iṣṭadévatā*) is, in all reality, the embodiment of one's own qualities, aspirations, ideals, and beliefs. This is so on the dualistic plane of existence where there still persist as distinct entities the knower, the knowledge, and the known. As tersely expounded by Śrī Śaṅkara, the Nirākāra (the formless Absolute) is metamorphosed by Its own power of Māyā (Illusion), into the *ākāravat* (formful) in order that the finite mind may comprehend It. 'The religion of a personal God (*iṣṭadevatā*) is not a mere dogma but a product of realization and experience. As the end of religion is *sākṣātkāra* (realization), what is termed *bhakti* is striving for this *sākṣātkāra* or realization by means of a personal God or symbol (*pratīka*), which may be an image, a painting, or other object in nature. It will thus be seen that Śrī Śaṅkara does not exclude or expel the framework of the external world.'[7]

But what is Māyā (Illusion) that conceals the Reality? She is a Power of the Absolute again. As poetized by Śrī Śaṅkara: 'This (Goddess of) Illusion (Māyā) has four crests (eminent qualities). She is always *fresh* and ever *young*. She is *skilful,* because she is expert in accomplishing even the impossible. She is sweet-mouthed (*ghṛtasya*, mouth besmeared with ghee, i.e. tempting at first, but finally leading to ruin) at the outset. Thus, too, she *veils* the knowledge derivable from the Upaniṣads. In Her dwell the supreme Self and the individual soul like two birds,[8] for they alone make all things manifest. ... Of these two, the former (the supreme Self) remains unattached, while the latter (the individual soul), falling into the ocean of ignorance (*avidyā* or nescience) and forget-

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[4] See also *I Sit and Look Out.*
[5] Cf. Shelley, *Defence of Poetry.*
[6] Śrī Śaṅkara, *Bhāṣya on Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad,* I.4.7.
[7] Dr. C. P. Ramaswamy Iyer's Preface to *Śrī Śaṅkara's Teachings in His Own Words,* Compiled by Sri Atmananda.
[8] *Vide Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad,* III. 1. 1, 2.

ting the real nature of the Self, perceives the apparition of these various worlds. But no sooner has he turned his consciousness within himself than the unborn (Māyā) abandons him, and he abandons her. There is thus the One only. But the wise, somehow (for purposes of instruction and not as representing the ultimate Truth) render that One variously[9] by their teachings.[10] Thus the universe consisting of manifold worlds is configured by the senses, which are themselves finite and elusive. So, the universe is only as real as the senses. In the realization of this Truth, the absolutely resplendent One, 'the distinction between the self (Jīvātman) and the supreme Self (Paramātman) is entirely wiped out'.[11] 'Thus the world according to Śrī Śaṅkara is neither non-existing nor void. Its attributes are neither *abhāva* nor *śūnya*.' But it is not the ultimate Reality (Brahman), although it is in Him alone. A true and perfect *advaitin* has in him the indubitable faith 'that the whole universe is born in Him, has its support in Him, and dissolves in Him'. Therefore, that very Brahman is he.[12]

Walt Whitman is one such believer, an *avadhūta* in essence, as described in *Avadhūta Gītā* (IX. 6-9), one who is pure in his beginning, growth, and decay (*ādimadhyānta-nirmalaḥ*), a blissful one who lived only in the present having transcended all stations and circumstances in life, one who was freed of the shackles of all desires, who was ever conscious, if it can be said, of only his divine origin (with an unabashed and sometimes even with what appeared as impudence) namely, that he is the creator himself (*Aham Brahmāsmi*). His 'Song of Myself' is a testament of Advaitic Truth that way. Declarations such as these are all Vedāntic: 'In all people I see myself, none more and not one barley corn less', 'To me the converging objects of the universe perpetually flow, all are written to me, and I must get what the writing means', 'I know I am deathless, I know the orbit of mine and cannot be swept', 'I do not trouble my spirit to vindicate myself or be understood, I see the elementary laws never apologize', 'I exist as I am, that is enough. ... If no other in the world be aware, I sit content. ... One world is aware and by far the largest to me and that is myself', 'My foothold is tenon'd and mortis'd in granite, I laugh at what you call dissolution, and I know the amplitude of time.' Can the divinity of the Self be better expressed?

Whitman cannot be impugned with any personal ego of 'I-ness and mine-ness' when he owns himself as an egoist or when he declares:

'I celebrate myself and sing myself,
And what I assume you shall assume,
For every atom belonging to me as good belongs to you.'

—*Ibid.*, Sec. I.

He entreats people to spend their time with him in order that they become wise; 'Stop the day and night with me and you shall possess the origin of all poems.' And he assures:

'You shall possess the good of the earth and sun (there are millions of suns left),
You shall no longer take things at second or third hand, nor look through the eyes of the dead, nor feel the spectres in books,
You shall not look through my eyes either, nor take things from me,
You shall listen to all sides and filter them from your self'

—*Ibid.*, Sec. 2.

II

Walt Whitman was born at Paumanok (Long Island, N.Y. State) on 31st May 1819, and died at Camden, New Jersey, on 26th March 1892 in his seventy-third year. His father was a sturdy English settler who lived a 'hardy outdoor life', while his mother had Dutch blood in her veins. She was tradi-

[9] Cf. *Rg-veda*, '*Ekaṁ sat, viprāḥ bahudhā vadanti*'.
[10] Śrī Śaṅkara, *Śataślokī*, 26.
[11] *Ibid.*, 97.
[12] *Ibid.*, 101.

tioned in the simplicity, dignity, and spirituality of a typical Quaker-kind. He portrays his material grandmother in *Faces* :

'Behold a woman !
She looks out from her Quaker-cap, her face is clearer and more beautiful than the sky. ...
Her ample gown is of cream-hued linen,
Her grandsons raised the flax and her granddaughters spun it with the distaff and the wheel ;
The melodious character of the earth,
The finish beyond which philosophy cannot go and does not wish to go,
The justified mother of men.'

He celebrates his many ancestors, too, in no less incisive terms indirectly :

'He was six feet tall, he was over eighty years old, his sons were massive, clean, bearded, tan-faced, handsome, ...
He drank water only, the blood showed like scarlet through the clear brown skin of his face.'

There are only two beautiful portraits of Whitman handy : one that of a stalwart yokel of just the middle age, quite virile and of 'devil-may-care' expression. It is not presumptuous or insolent, but mild and humble, with orbs for eyes exuding compassion for humanity. The other is that of hoary age—mayhaps, of his last days—perfectly calm, contented, transparent, and resigned. It is a quiet one with its soul beaming out his great optimistic belief that death is a gateway to higher spiritual altitudes of existence, because, as he declares :

'The smallest sprout shows there is really no death,
And if ever there was it led forward life, and does not wait at the end to arrest it,
And ceased the moment life appeared. ...
All goes onward and outward, nothing collapses,
And to die is different from what anyone supposed and luckier'

—*Song of Myself*, Sec. 6,

and the meanest creature, say a blade of grass, was 'the handkerchief of the Lord, a scented gift and remembrancer designedly dropt,' (*Ibid.*) for an identification of the Godhead latent in it. Whitman had the faith that the hand of God was the 'promised of his own, and that all the men and women ever born were his brothers and sisters, and that the kelson of creation was love (*Ibid.*, Sec. 5). This portrait of his old age is really like one of our gracious *ṛṣis* overflowing with love and benefaction. Whitman was, indeed, 'brother to the elements, the mountains, the seas, the clouds, the sky. He loved them all and partook of them all in his large, unselfish, untramelled nature. His heart knew no limits, and he, feeling his feet tenon'd in Infinity, knew the amplitude of time'.[13] When Abraham Lincoln met him for the first time strolling majestically past him, Whitman was fifty-one years old, massive, and looked 'a stevedore or possibly the foreman of a construction gang.' Lincoln remarked : 'There goes the Man.' But Whitman's long flowing beard was snow-white and 'the shock that covered his Jove-like head was iron grey. His form was that of an Apollo who had arrived at years of discretion'.[14] Dr. Bucke, an intimate friend of Whitman, while confirming this all, adds that Whitman was a perfect man, what with his 'cleanliness of mind and body, the grace of his movements and gestures, the grandeur, and especially the magnetism of his presence ; the charm of his voice, his genial kindly humour ; the simplicity of his habits and tastes, his freedom from convention, the largeness and beauty of his manner ; his calmness and majesty, his charity and forbearance—his entire unresentfulness under whatever provocation ; his liberality, his universal sympathy with humanity in all ages and lands, his broad tolerance, his catholic friendliness, and his unexampled faculty of attracting affection'.[15]

[13] Quoted from Elbert Hubbard, *Little Journeys to Eminent Americans*, (1896).
[14] *Ibid.*
[15] *Ibid.*

III

Of the trio of American culture—Emerson, Whitman, and Thoreau—the greatest poet-cum-spiritual man was, perhaps, Walt Whitman. The most learned philosopher of them all was Emerson, and the most ethical and practical was Thorcau who, with much attitudinizing, lived his own humble life amid rural surroundings neither desiring nor being desired by others. Whitman had his own uniqueness in the spiritual and literary worlds of the old and the new Englands. From a perusal of American literature, it can easily be said that Whitman was the most pronounced instance of a great metaphysical poet who singularly expressed in genuine, and no less ecstatic and sensuous terms, the high visions he had of Truth and Reality in *savikalpa* and *nirvikalpa samādhis*. His expressions are not simply academical; they have the tang and lusciousness of actual experience. Therein lies his pre-eminence over even the old metaphysical poets of old England, like Vaughan, Donne, Herrick, etc. In fine, Whitman's insight into the Reality is as authentic as that of our Vedic and Upaniṣadic seers. Statements such as these bear it out :

1. 'Urge and urge and urge,
   Always the procreant urge of the world. ...
   Out of the dimness opposite equals advance, always substance and increase, always sex,
   Always a knit of identity, always distinction, always a breed of life'
   —*Ibid.*, Sec. 3.

2. 'Clear and sweet is my soul, and clear and sweet is all that is not my soul,
   Lack one lacks both, and the unseen is proved by the seen,
   Till that becomes unseen and receives proof in its turn'
   —*Ibid.*, Sec. 3, (Cf. *Iśa Upaniṣad*, 14).

3. 'I believe in you my soul. The other I am must not abase itself to you'
   —*Ibid.*, Sec. 5.

4. 'A child said, 'What is the grass ?' fetching it to me with full hands; I do not know what it is any more than he; ...
   Or I guess it is the handkerchief of the Lord,
   A scented gift and remembrancer designedly dropt, ...
   Or I guess the grass itself is a child, a produced babe of vegetation,
   Or I guess it is a uniform hieroglyphic,
   And it means, Sprouting alike in broad zones and narrow zones,
   Growing among black folk as among white; ...
   The smallest sprout shows there is really no death,
   And, if ever there was it led forward life' ... —*Ibid.*, Sec. 6.

5. 'I pass death with the dying, and birth with the new-washed babe, and am not contained between my hat and boots,
   And peruse manifold objects, no two alike and everyone good.
   I am the mate and companion of people, all just as immortal as fathomless as myself' —*Ibid.*, Sec. 7.

6. 'The sharp-hoofed moose of the north, the cat, ... turkey-hen,
   I see in them and myself the same old law' —*Ibid.*, Sec. 14.

7. 'What is commonest, cheapest, nearest, easiest is Me, ...
   Not asking the sky to come down to my good will' —*Ibid.*, Sec. 14.

8. 'I am of old and young, of the foolish as much as the wise,
   Regardless of others, ever regardful of others,
   Maternal as well paternal, a child as well as a man,
   Stuffed with the stuff that is coarse and stuffed with the stuff that is fine, ...
   A learner with the simplest, a teacher of the thought-fullest,

A novice beginning yet experient of
myriads of seasons,
Of every hue and caste am I, of every
rank and religion, ...
(The bright suns I see, and the dark
suns I cannot see are in their place,
The palpable is in its place and the
impalpable is in its place.)'

—*Ibid.*, Sec. 16.

Herein is contained Whitman's equable vision into the Reality, which is an amalgam of the pairs of opposites such as 'is' and 'is not', 'Good' and 'bad', etc. and a most comprehensive picture of the Self that is all and eternal.

The thoughts, the dreams, and the achievements of all men in all ages, that of the great and the small, are next to nothing 'save, perhaps, as facts which are themselves mutable, of the tying and the untying of riddles of life, the appearances of which are also changing'. These are insignificant as the tiny grass that is born, grows, and dies 'wherever the land is and the water is, for this is the every day empirical experience—the common air that bathes the globe'. But this description is none too distant or strange from that of the statement about the region of the Absolute (*Vide Māṇḍūkya* and *Śvetāśvatara* Upaniṣads), where neither the sun nor the moon (*Vide Bhagavad-Gītā*, XV. 6), nor even the stars shine. It is a region where one sees nothing else, hears nothing else, understands nothing else—that is the Infinite. Where, however, one sees something else, that is finite. That which is Infinite is immortal (*Vide Chāndogya Upaniṣad*, VII. 23-24; *Muṇḍaka-Upaniṣad*, II. 2.10).

To Whitman, this poetic seer, who is ingrained so thoroughly with *yoga* and non-predilection, body and soul, man and woman, earth and heavens, are of the same attraction, although he is not of the earth or selfish. He could sing as rapturously of the earth as of the regions of the soul. What more alluring picture of the earth could be given than that in the lines:

'I am he that walks with the tender and
growing night,
I call to the earth and sea half-held by the
night. ...
Press close bare-bosomed night—press close
magnetic nourishing night!
Night of south-winds—night of the large
few stars!
Still nodding night—mad, naked summer
night. ...
Smile O voluptuous cool breath'd Earth!
Earth of the slumbering and liquid trees!
Earth of departed sunset—Earth of mountains misty-topt!
Earth of the vitreous pour of the full moon
just tinged with blue!
Earth of slime and dark mottling the tide
of the river,
Earth of the limpid grey of clouds brighter
and clearer for my sake!
Far swooping elbow'd Earth—rich apple-blossom'd Earth!
Smile, for your lover comes.
Prodigal, you have given me love—therefore I to you give love!
O unspeakable passionate love'

—*Ibid.*, Sec. 21.

To Whitman, the 'body is but an expression of the soul', and, unless the body is lit up by the beauty of exemplary conduct, the body did not matter much. Contrast for instance, his abovenoted passionate reference to the earth, with his calm, collected non-sensuous and clarified utterance of the Soul:

1. 'Behold the body includes and is the
meaning, the main concern and includes and is the Soul;
Whoever you are, how superb and how
divine is your body, or any part of
it'

—*Starting from Paumanok*, Sec. 13.

2. 'I say to mankind, be not curious about
God, ...
Why should I wish to see God better
than this day?
I see something of God each hour of

the twenty-four, and each moment then,
In the faces of men and women I see God, and in my own face in the glass,
I find letters from God dropt in the street and everyone is signed by God's name,
And I leave them where they are, for I know that whereso'er I go,
Others will punctually come for ever and ever'

—*Song of Myself*, Sec. 47.

Compare the second passage above with verses 29 and 30 of Chapter VI of the *Bhagavad-Gītā*. This passage is, as it were, an elucidation of these verses. In the Vedāntic conception of Reality, we may not quite agree with the contents of the first two lines of the earlier passage; for how could a finite and phenomenal amount to an Infinite and Noumenal? Here is, however, one of his great contradictions, for the body can never be the Soul. This is especially so, when he voices his conviction again that his own Self is pre-eminent and infinite, and is none other than the limitless Supreme: 'Nothing, not God, is greater to one than one's Self is and Divine am I inside and out, and I make holy whatever I touch or am touched from' (*Ibid.*, Sec. 24).

Nature is pre-eminently a book of wisdom to Whitman; not the Bibles and other scriptures, however much they be divinely inspired. This is quite in the spirit of Śrī Śaṅkara who said that experience alone is the touchstone of truth. The reason which Whitman assigns for this determined stand of his, is that they have all proceeded from people like him. He therefore asserts: 'A morning glory at my window satisfies me more than the metaphysics of books' (*Ibid.*, Sec. 24). The knowledge he would then have is only that of the highly spiritual, gleaned irtuitively from nature at an endless creation of her own, and which enables him 'to ascend dazzling and tremendous as the sun'; round up and enfold the many orbs on the way, level them all, and continue beyond,[16] to that absolute world for blending with It, 'where neither the sun shines, nor the moon, nor the stars; nor even doth the fire burn; but by His light everything is lighted'.[17]

Whitman is none too hurrying or impatient. He believes in the divine order of things (*ṛta*) to happen at its appointed time; 'All truths wait in all things, they neither hasten their own delivery nor resist it'.[18] Though not a student of the Vedas, he still had discovered the *ṛta*. He had realized that the spiritual essence in all things—big and small, significant and insignificant, tangible and intangible—is one and the same; therefore, he held that every bit of creation is as holy and symbolic of the Godhead as any other, and valued as much as any other bit. He declares:

'I believe a leaf of grass is no less than the journey-work of stars, ...
And the running blackberry would adorn the parlours of heaven, ...
And a mouse is miracle enough to stagger sextillions of infidels'

—*Ibid.*, Sec. 30.

To Whitman as well as to St. Augustine, time is but a speck of an indeterminate Eternity, a crest as it were of the wave linking up the past and the future; and the subtlest sense is powerless to grasp the present because, no sooner than it is sought to be apprehended, it is joined to the irrevocable past. He is simply dumb-struck:

'My ties and ballasts leave me, my elbows rest in sea-gaps, I skirt sierras, my palms cover continents,
I am afoot with my vision.'

—*Ibid.*, Sec. 32.

Whitman had many a vision of Truth. He had one of the oneness of creation and his own kinship with it. He sets this out enspellingly:

'Swiftly arose and spread around me the

16 *Vide Song of Myself*, Sec. 45.
17 *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad*, II. 2. 10.
18 Dattātreya. *Avadhūta-Gītā*.

peace and knowledge that pass all the
argument of the earth ;
And I knew that the hand of God is the
promise of my own,
And that all the men ever born are also my
brothers, and the women my sisters
and lovers,
And that a kelson of the creation is love'

—*Ibid.*, Sec. 5.

'I fly those flights of a fluid and swallow-
ing soul,
My course runs below the soundings of
plummets'

—*Ibid.*, Sec. 32.

'A vast similitude interlocks all,
All spheres, grown, ungrown, small, large,
suns, moons, planets,
All distances of place, however wide,
All distances of time, all inanimate forms,
All souls, all living bodies though they be
ever so different, or in different
worlds. ...
All identities that have existed or may
exist in this globe, or any globe,
All lives and deaths, all of the past, present,
future,
This vast similitude spans them, and always
has spann'd,
And shall for ever span them and com-
pletely hold and enclose them'

—*On the Beach at Night Alone.*

Whitman does not shrink at the touch of others; he does not higgle-haggle for any benefit to himself; nor does any restraint keep him away from in-folding others on the basis of equality and commiseration. He is as wide as space and as charitable as the sun. He is not a pugilist, not a sentimentalist, nor even an attitudinarian, out to 'give lectures or a little charity'. It is perfect truth that when he gives, he gives himself wholly away. He declares that he has realized thus : 'The supernatural is of no account, myself waiting my time to be one of the supremes, the day getting ready for me when I shall do as much good as the best, and be as prodigious.' He has genuinely felt 'already a Creator putting' himself 'here and now to the ambush'd womb of shadows' (*Song of Myself*, Sec. 40). Caparisoned as he is with due modesty, humility, and self-sacrifice, he bestrides all time and circumstances with the faith that, like an *avatāra*, he shall 'come again upon the earth after five thousand years, waiting responses from oracles, honouring the gods, saluting the sun,' nor calling 'one greater, one smaller,' in order that he may 'launch all men and women forwards ... into the Unknown'. The realization of his Self is indubitable; his own declaration is a vision of the Self's infinitude :

'I am an acme of things accomplished, and
I am an encloser of things to be.
My feet strike an apex of the apices of the
stairs,
On every step bunches of ages, and larger
bunches between the steps,
All below duly travell'd and still I mount
and mount.
Rise after rise bow the phantoms behind
me,
Afar down I see the huge first Nothing,
I know I was even there,
I waited unseen and always, and slept
through the lethargic mist,
And took my time, and took no hurt from
the fetid carbon. ...
Cycles ferried my cradle, rowing and rowing
like cheerful boatmen,
From room to me stars kept aside in their
own rings,
They sent influences to look after what was
to hold me.
Before I was born out of my mother, genera-
tions guided me,
My embryo has never been torpid, nothing
could overlay it.
For it the nebula cohered to an orb, ...
Vast vegetables gave it sustenance,
Monstrous sauroids transported it in their
mouths and deposited it with care.
All forces have been steadily employed to
complete and delight me,

Now on this spot I stand with my robust soul' —*Ibid.*, Sec. 43.

This is, however, *savikalpa-samādhi* where the cognizer is still conscious and separate from the cognized. Whitman is not satisfied with this blissfulness. He would aspire after what is beyond :

'I know I have the best of time and space, and was never measured and never will be measured.
I tramp a perpetual journey, ...
And I said to my spirit : "When we become the enfolders of those orbs, and the pleasure and knowledge of everything in them, shall we be fill'd and satisfied then ?"
And my spirit said : "No, we but level that lift to pass and continue beyond" ' —*Ibid.*, Sec. 45.

The passage from section 43 of the *Song of Myself*, cited above, is a Yogic picture of evolution and the eternality of life. Could spiritual poetry be more concrete and touch the apex of all being higher than this ? Could transmigration of souls in any cosmic scheme be better depicted ? Could any spiritual progress be better envisaged ?

We are afraid that this picture of the descent of the soul on to earth would be incomplete without the complementary vision of Reality he saw in his old age ; for 'every condition promulges not only itself, it promulges what grows after and out of itself, and the dark hush promulges as much as any'. And, of this vision of Reality, he says :

'I open my scuttle at night and see the far-sprinkled systems,
And all I see multiplied as high as I can cipher edge but the rim of the farther systems,
Wider and wider they spread, expanding, always expanding,
Outward and outward and forever outward.
My sun has his sun and round him obediently wheels,
He joins with his partners a group of superior circuit,
And greater sets follow, making specks of the greatest inside them. ...
A few quadrillions of eras, a few octillions of cubic leagues, do not hazard the span or make it impatient,
They are but parts, any thing is but a part.
See even so far, there is limitless space outside of that. ...
My rendezvous is appointed, it is certain,
The Lord will be there and wait till I come on perfect terms,
The great Camerado, the lover true for whom I pine will be there' —*Ibid.*, Sec. 44.

If all this relates to life, what is death then ? Whitman, though he regards death as a 'bitter hug of mortality', is not afraid of her ; for he deems her as the mother of further births, in the same way he thinks life as 'the leavings of many deaths'. He believes in the transmigration of souls, for he declares : 'No doubt, I have died myself ten thousand times before' (*Ibid.*, Sec. 48). Life and death, to elucidate him, may therefore be considered as the bright and the dark sides of the 'Primeval Egg' (Hiraṇyagarbha) of creation, when the creational light of the Godhead (Īśvara) plays upon It. He does not stop from going into the indescribable Beyond, transcending both life and death in rather symbolical and mystical terms :

'I hear you whispering there O stars of heaven,
O suns—O grass of graves—O perpetual transfers and promotions,
If you do not say any thing how can I say any thing ?
Of the turbid pool that lies in the autumn forest,
Of the moon that descends the steeps of the soughing twilight,
Toss, sparkles of day and dusk—toss on the black stems that decay in the muck,

Toss to the moaning gibberish of the dry limbs.
I ascend from the moon, I ascend from the night,
I perceive that the ghastly glimmer is noonday sunbeams reflected.
And debouch to the steady and central from the offspring great or small'

—*Ibid.*, Sec. 48

In a descent from *nirvikalpa-samādhi*, Whitman describes something of what he experienced therein, which can be verified only by a *yogin*:

'There is that in me—I do not know what it is—but I know it is in me.
Wrench'd and sweaty—calm and cool then my body becomes,
I sleep—I sleep long.
I do not know it—it is without name—it is a word unsaid,
It is not in any dictionary, utterance, symbol.
Something it swings on more than the earth I swing on,
To it the creation is the friend whose embracing awakes me. . . .
It is not chaos or death—it is form, union, plan—it is eternal life—it is Happiness' —*Ibid.*, Sec. 49.

This is, indeed, the inexpressible Bliss of *nirvikalpa-samādhi*, attained in a cycle of Eternity. Cycles of creation and dissolution are repeated, time and again, at the sweet will and pleasure of the Lord, and the Avatārahood of spiritual beings is being also endlessly repeated. Whitman confirms this:

'The past and present wilt—I have fill'd them, emptied them,
And proceed to fill my next fold of the future.' —*Ibid.*, Sec. 50.

Of course, in further cycles of Eternity!

(To be continued)

THE CONCEPT OF NON-VIOLENCE ACCORDING TO GANDHI AND THE GITA

By Sri Paras Mal Mehta

INTRODUCTION

Almost all the great religious teachers of the world have preached *ahiṁsā* or non-violence. Lord Buddha, Lord Mahāvīra, and Lord Christ are a few outstanding examples.

The most popular meaning of the term *ahiṁsā* is non-killing. It is a negative term which means desistance from *hiṁsā*, denoting desire to harm, injure, or kill.

The philosophy of non-violence is based not only on metaphysical, but also on psychological foundations. Some of the modern psychologists hold that *hiṁsā* (pugnacity, aggressiveness, rage, and the urge to destroy or kill) is a natural instinct, common to both animal and men. If we carefully observe our children, while they are engaged in spontaneous play, we find that the element of *hiṁsā* is present in them. According to Prof. B. L. Atreya, almost all children are selfish or cruel and play the role of the tyrant with a tinge of satisfaction. Sometimes, we find our own friends and relatives do the cruelest things for the smallest benefit.

The instinct of *hiṁsā* is probably the root of all the evils and sufferings in human society on this earth. It is believed that if man could sublimate his instinct of *hiṁsā*, he would be able to put an end to all the social evils prevailing today.

THE CONCEPT OF NON-VIOLENCE ACCORDING TO GANDHI

(a) *Meaning* :

Gandhiji's contribution to the field of non-violence is unique. *Ahiṁsā* has been translated into the negative term, non-violence. But in Gandhiji's hands, it acquired the most positive meaning, i.e., love. By non-violence, Gandhiji means not only the traditional non-harmfulness, but pure and positive love. Pure, unselfish, positive love is perfect non-violence. Love and non-violence are identical. Thus Gandhiji elevates the meaning of *ahiṁsā* or non-violence. Moreover, Gandhiji firmly believes that non-violence, in the sense of pure unselfish love, is the only panacea for all the ills of this world.

(b) *Non-violence as a Weapon of Love and Truth* :

Non-violence is the weapon of love that casts out hate from our heart and replaces it with pure love. It is the soul-force, matchless and superior to armed force. By violence, we can win control over the body of a person, but by non-violence we can win the mind and the heart also. So, a victory won by violence is short-lived and full of evil repercussions, whereas the victory won by non-violence is lasting and full of goodwill.

Gandhiji says in one of his articles : '*Ahiṁsā* is the highest religion. If you express your love towards your so-called enemy he must return that love.'[1] Thus *ahiṁsā* is inextricably bound with the philosophy of love. At another place he says : '*Ahiṁsā* means the largest love. It is the supreme law. By it alone mankind can be saved.'

Non-violence as a weapon of truth and love can be used in all walks of life. It can melt the heart even of the cruel and the brute. Accordingly, Gandhiji believes that even thieves and dacoits deserve non-violent treatment so that they may be redeemed from their evil profession. By punishing the thieves and the dacoits violently, we make it all the more difficult to reform them. Gandhiji believes that it is better to endure the thieves and the dacoits with love than to resort to violent or physical punishment, because forbearance may one day cure them of their anti-social habits. We must realize, says Gandhiji, that the thieves and the dacoits are not different from what we ourselves are. They are our own friends and blood-brothers deserving all our love and sympathy.

According to Gandhiji, non-violence should be the law of human life, if human beings are really human. The law of love is infinitely superior to brute force. But, at the same time, non-violence should not be a covering veil for cowardice. Non-violence is the supreme virtue of the brave. Exercise of bravery and exercise of non-violence are the same. In fact, non-violence requires far greater bravery than is required in the wielding of the sword.[2]

According to Gandhiji, Truth is the fundamental essence of the cosmos. It is the unity underlying all diversity. To Gandhiji, therefore, Truth and God are identical. This knowledge or this experience of Truth i.e. Truth-God forms the metaphysical basis of non-violence. How can one be violent to the other, if he knows for certain that the other is, in fact, no other than himself ? Thus non-violence and truth are inseparable and truth forms the basis of non-violence. Therefore, Gandhiji says that, in non-violent behaviour, there is no scope for secrets, cunning or untruth.

(c) *Non-violence Involves Continuous Suffering but It Generates Lasting Peace* :

Non-violence, according to Gandhiji, is the fire-test of the quality of an individual or even of a whole nation in prosperity or misery. Non-violence involves continuous suffering. He who practises it, recks not even if he loses his hand, wealth, or wife. He does not

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[1] S. L. Polak, 'The Wisdom of Gandhi' in *Mahatma Gandhi : Essays and Reflections on His Life and Work*, Edited by S. Radhakrishnan, George Allen & Unwin Ltd., London, p. 235.

[2] *Vide* R. K. Prabhu, *Non-violent Way to World Peace*, Navajivan Publishing House, Ahmedabad, p. 4.

deviate from the right path, even if it involves the frustration of all his worldly desires. Even if it leads to frightful consequences, brings poverty, or invites the destruction of his life, he sticks to what is right and keeps himself non-violent. Just as one learns the art of killing in the training for violent fight, so one learns the art of dying as a training for non-violence. That is why Prof. Atreya remarks that the Hindus who followed *ahiṁsā* have suffered most in the history of the world.

Non-violence is the path of self-sacrifice to mould the behaviour of others and instil compassion and love in them. Gandhiji says: 'I seek entirely to blunt the edge of the tyrant's sword, not by putting against it a sharper-edged weapon but by disappointing his expectation that I would be suffering physical resistance. The resistance of the soul, I should offer instead, would delude him. It would, at first, dazzle him and at last compel recognition, which recognition would not humiliate but would uplift him.'

(d) *Non-violence Wins Violence*:

Now arises the vital question: How is a person or a nation wedded to *ahiṁsā* to defend himself or itself against a violent aggressor? Gandhi invented two weapons of non-violence for this purpose: (1) Non-violent non-co-operation with the aggressor and (2) Non-violent resistance against him. He says: 'One who believes in non-violence, must use it at the critical moment. He must not despair of touching the hearts even of the gangsters, though, for the moment, he may seem to be striking his head against a blind wall.' Violence can be put down by greater violence, but no violence can put an end to non-violence. 'When the violent waves break against a non-violent rock, it is the waves that are broken; the rock stands fast and non-aggressive', says Gandhiji.

Some people laugh at the doctrine of non-violence and ask as to what will happen to it when it has to face a machine-gun or an incendiary bomb. Gandhiji very beautifully replies that non-violence is not merely submission to aggression or passive non-resistance to evil, but it is a patient and persistent challenge to violence until violence exhausts itself and is overcome. No power on this earth can stand before the march of peaceful, determined and God-fearing people. Non-violence is more powerful than all the armaments in the world. It is the weapon of the strongest. The true man of God may have the strength to use the sword, but will not use it knowing that every man is an image of God. A victim of injustice or aggression should never co-operate with the aggressor, because this leads to the moral fall of the victim. Gandhiji suggests that a sufferer should struggle non-violently and console himself thinking that God is the shield of the non-violent.

(e) *Non-violence as the Soul of Satyāgraha*:

Satyāgraha is the name given by Gandhiji to the method of applying the principle of non-violence in one's life and actions. As has been said above, *satyāgraha* is the truth-force, love-force, or the soul-force. It requires the control of all bodily senses and all selfish desires. It is unfortunate that *satyāgraha* was not always rightly understood by the masses or the general public of India, though they did show great forbearance under the leadership of the Mahatma.

Gandhiji very carefully points out that a *satyāgrahī* should not forget the distinction between the evil and the evil-doer. He may hate the sin but he must not hate the sinner. He must always try to overcome evil with good, anger with love, untruth with truth, and *hiṁsā* with *ahiṁsā*. Working on this law, it is possible for a single individual to defy the whole might of an unjust empire to save his honour, his religion, and his soul. A *satyāgrahī* is one who does not behave like a beggar about his rights, but who convinces his opponent by non-violent means the validity of his stand. So says Quadir Abdul beautifully: 'The heart of a king trembles

at the sight of a beggar who begs not.'

Gandhiji had a firm conviction and faith that *satyāgraha* was the right means to fight the evil and he held that India was the most suitable country to lead the world in this respect.

(f) *Conclusion* :

Gandhiji's non-violence is a multi-purpose weapon. It may be used in war and peace alike. One can use it in his daily life for solving his daily problems. That is to say, there is no separating *ahiṁsā* in daily life from its application to world-problems. *Ahiṁsā*, if applied rightly, can purge the world of its evils and establish the '*Rāma-rājya*' or the rule of righteousness.

NON-VIOLENCE AND THE BHAGAVAD-GĪTĀ

(a) *What is the Gītā?*

Śrīmad Bhagavad-Gītā is one of the purest and the most brilliant gems among our ancient scriptures. It is the beacon light not only for India or the Hindus but for the whole world and all humanity. When one is faced with a critical moral situation, the *Gītā* serves as the surest guide.

(b) *Concept of Non-violence, a Controversial Issue in the Bhagavad-Gītā* :

It is a big controversial issue as to whether the *Gītā* teaches *hiṁsā* or *ahiṁsā* and it seems as if this controversy will last for ever.

When the two armies were drawn up in battle against each other, Arjuna suddenly laid down his weapons on seeing his grandsire Bhīṣma, his teacher Droṇācārya, and his numerous friends and relatives, ready to fight and kill and be killed. Arjuna thought: 'It would be sin to kill these dear ones even in a regular battle.' He visualized the disaster and the great sin involved in the great battle to be fought. Trembling, he exclaims: 'Oh, What a great sin we are up to!'

Śrī Kṛṣṇa takes hold of him in this mood and exhorts him thus: 'Enough of this philosophy! No one kills or is killed. The soul is immortal and the body must perish. Fight then the fight that has come to thee as a matter of duty. Victory or defeat is no concern of thine. Acquit thyself of the task. Thou hast already done the killing. Thou canst not all at once argue thyself into non-violence. Finish what thou hast already begun.'

To this Arjuna replies: 'Better I deem it, if my kinsmen strike, to face them weaponless and bare my breast to shaft and spear, than answer blow with blow.'

To this Śrī Kṛṣṇa retorts: 'Until yesterday, you fought your kinsmen with deadly weapons without the slightest compunction, and even today you will strike if the enemy was a stranger, and not your kith and kin.

'I am *Kāla*, the destroyer of the worlds. I am here engaged in my task of destruction. Kill thou those already killed by me. Give not thyself up to grief' (Quotations from Jag Parkash Chander, *Gītā the Mother*).

This scene and these teachings of Lord Kṛṣṇa show that, whereas Arjuna's inclination is towards *ahiṁsā*, Śrī Kṛṣṇa seems to be preaching *hiṁsā*. This dilemma leads us to the confusion as to whether the *Gītā* stands for violence or non-violence. All commentators of the *Gītā* have interpreted the intention of this great book, in this respect, according to their own preconceived notions.

(c) *Intention of the Gītā* :

The *Gītā*, basically, is not a treatise on the question of violence or non-violence. Apparently, it may seem as if Arjuna was a votary of non-violence, but in fact, this was not the case. Arjuna had not the slightest doubt in the common notion that violence had to be resorted to so as to put down the evil forces. His aversion to violence, in the given situation, was due to his respect and love for his family members, and not due to any doubt about the question of violence or non-violence. Arjuna's problem was this: Should a Kṣatriya continue his violent struggle against his near and dear ones as well when he finds them on the wrong?

Śrī Kṛṣṇa's answer to Arjuna's problem is somewhat like this: Violence or non-violence is a matter of mental attitude. Violence lies not in the physical act of fighting, but in the ill will or hatred we may have in our heart for anyone. Moreover, violence lies in selfishness or attachment to results. If ill will, hatred, selfishness, and attachment to the results of one's actions are renounced, whatever one does thereafter is reduced not only to non-violence, but also to non-action. Kṛṣṇa solves Arjuna's problem by teaching him the art of transforming his actions into non-action, which automatically transforms violence into non-violence, and then to continue to fight even against his near and dear ones when they are found guilty of doing wrong. The *Gītā* asks us to be non-violent in our mental attitude, but allows us to be physically violent, if necessary, for a just cause.

Gandhi and the *Gītā* are one at the fundamental issue. Both agree that one must fight and continue to struggle against the evil. Gandhiji would have preferred even a violent fight to what is called a meek and cowardly submission to what one considers to be wrong. But, according to him, non-violence will be better suited as a weapon against the evil-doer than Arjuna's *pāśupatāstra*. If Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna were present today, they would have no objection to this. Hence it is wrong to see a conflict between Gandhi and the *Gītā* in respect of violence and non-violence. In fact, Gandhiji was one of the greatest followers of the *Gītā* that the world has ever produced.

INDIA FROM A DISTANCE

By Mr. Eric Johns

'India from a Distance', as the title for an article, serves as a warning to the prospective reader. It suggests that what will follow will be a pieced-together affair, full of mistakes and distortions that might be set right by first-hand contact with the country. But there is, often, some interest, and perhaps value, in knowing those very misconceptions that a foreigner may have formed about one's country and culture. It is in this spirit that I offer my own about India from the distance of America.

Recently, in a New York magazine I came across an advertisement for Air India. It showed an anthropomorphized champagne bottle wearing a fancy turban on its cork 'head'. 'Fit for a Maharaja' was the caption beneath the bottle. The advertising copy then proceeded to detail the special pleasures and luxuries of travel on that airline. Although used to seeing such advertising, I was, nevertheless, somewhat shocked at its application to an Indian business concern. I put that shock down to my special interest in India, until an American friend, without such interest, remarked similarly on the same advertisement. Something about its conception was just very 'un-Indian' to us. It was assumed that the promotion was concocted in New York. And that type of promotion would have seemed suitable for the airline of almost any other country. In some curious way, applied to an Indian airline, it seemed inappropriate.

The recent military operation in Goa, Daman, and Diu stunned much of the Western world, and particularly, the United States. The fact that India should have an army trained in the use of modern weapons was strange enough. That she should ac-

tually plan a campaign and carry it out was an affront.

Now, although the difference in scale of the above two instances is very great, there is, I think, a similar underlying conception exposed in each of them, the first on a personal, the second on a national level. This conception seems to be that India is for some reason a nation unlike other nations in that Americans apply criteria different from that applied to other countries. On the face of it, there is no cause for raised eyebrows in the use of worldly commercial techniques. Nor should a hue and cry go up at the legitimate use of a military establishment. These are the everyday facts of contemporary national life. Why then should Americans balk when India employs these practices? The answer to this question seems clear. Americans are not yet able to see India in the context of contemporary realities. They are not yet prepared to receive the image of a new and independent India.

From the earliest exploits of Alexander, down through the routes and colonies established by soldiers and traders from Europe, until our present day middle class travellers, the West has been treated to a diet of exotic and fabulous tales, descriptive not only of exotic appearances, but customs, religions, and philosophies as well. The tendency in the telling of these tales has always been to embroider upon, and thereby stress, the most alien and bizarre aspects of India, often without pointing out the reasons for them or relating them to the larger context of Indian life. The result has been to give a superficial view. It is no wonder that 'the mysterious East' has become a well-worn phrase. 'Never the twain shall meet' was Kipling's judgement as late as the end of the nineteenth century. Vivekananda ends his interesting study of contrasts, *The East and the West,* with the conclusion: 'In Europe, it is everywhere victory to the strong, and death to the weak. In the land of Bharata, every social rule is for the protection of the weak.'[1] More recently, Gandhi, though trained in British legalism, gave dramatic impetus to the Indian nationalist movement with his dress and decorum, going so far as to say: 'The central fact of Hinduism ... is cow protection. Cow protection, to me, is one of the most wonderful phenomena in human evolution.'[2] Thus, for centuries, both Eastern and Western observers have been calling to our attention the various differences between us, extolling now this side, now that. It has become an ingrained habit on both sides to believe that a profound dichotomy exists between the ways in which the East and West look at things. That dichotomy can be expressed in the phrase: materialism versus spirituality.

That there has been justification for the view embodied in this phrase is open to interpretation. In a gross sense, it can certainly be said to be true, and how is one to judge in the subtle? At any rate, it appears to a Westerner that it is coming to be a shibboleth, more caricature than reality. Everyday we seem to witness the dwindling of that notion. Can anyone believe that 'in Europe, it is everywhere victory to the strong and death to the weak' and that 'in the land of Bharata, every social rule is for the protection of the weak'? Can any not believe that Vivekananda himself gave the death blow to the notion, 'Never the twain shall meet'? For here was a man who realized the importance of bringing out the materiality in the Indian personality in order to protect India from an unhealthy spiritualism and, equally, the importance of emphasizing spirituality in American life to ward off unhealthy materialism. Vivekananda recognized the interdependence of spirituality and materiality in life as surely as he saw the dangers of their perversions, spiritualism and materialism. I used the words *bringing out* and *emphasizing* above, because it seems that Vivekananda's

[1] *Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, Vol. V. p. 537.
[2] *The Gandhi Sutras*, Edited by D. S. Sarma, p. 20.

work was not any import-export business. It aimed deeper into man's heart. True, certain methods and techniques could be imported, but this bringing out or emphasizing was only possible because human nature, to paraphrase the ancient Vedic dictum, is one, though men have manifested it variously. Given different circumstances, different forms will appear, and when changing circumstances promote the collision of cultural forms, as they are doing today, the forms themselves are bound to change. In India, we are seeing an increase of materiality and its corresponding evil, materialism, and in America, renewed interest in spiritual things and spiritualism. Neither country is prepared to see new manifestations in the other's national psyche. Even for the new manifestations in its own, it is still the tendency to give the other nation credit for the bad part. Hence Americans blame India for the influx of *haṭha-yogins* rather than seeing it as the result of new, if misdirected, spiritual interest. Indians, on the other hand, blame America for their local 'Babbitts' instead of recognizing them as an undesirable consequence of their new materiality. As the exchange between our countries grows, each will surely come to own its acquiescent part in these trends.

For my own part, if I analyse my reaction to the Air India advertisement, I find that reaction to be the reflex of a mind conditioned to think in the old Kiplingesque terms. Such conditioning has produced in Americans a mass of erroneous and romantic notions idealizing and vilifying India by turns. This is demonstrated, on one side, by the success with certain Americans of any enterprising Indian who sets himself up in America as a 'Yogi', and on the other, by their counterparts who are quick to take such men as representative of Indian values. In the main, Americans have not yet taken the trouble to understand India. We cling to a few obvious stereotypes. One of these stereotypes was implicit in the heated reaction to India's repossession of the Portuguese enclaves. Since the Indian action, that image should have little force. While it persisted, crystallized greatly by Gandhi, it was powerful in determining our relationship to India. It is the image of India as the colonial underdog.

Traditionally, Americans have been sympathetic to the underdog. In our early days, it came from a sense of identification with subject peoples. As the American revolution went further into the past, that identification was mixed with patronization, but continued to exist. It reached a high point during the Indian struggle for independence. Through the figure of Gandhi, his fasts and direct appeals to the masses, the sympathies of Americans were aroused, as were the passions of Indians. Gandhi was a slightly pathetic, though noble, figure and India, in her nonviolent helplessness, was the underdog *par excellence*. Moreover, in addition to the spiritual pride of America's correct moral position, the twisting of the British lion's tail once again, if only vicariously, gave a fillip to our virtue. Then came India's independence. Nehru's calm replaced Gandhi's passion. The pet image of the poor helpless Indian did not sit well in the secure figure of Nehru. There was a new image to be dealt with. Goa has given the image a definite stamp.

The United States has not chosen to see modern India as always benign or even honest. This is a fact of the cold war. The foreign policies that the United States has deemed it necessary, often unfortunately, to promote have been dictated by cold war psychology. Therefore, they have been, by and large, militarily determined. Negative and shortsighted in their approach, they have missed human values and aspirations, and thereby disaffected large masses of people. But there are indications that these sterile cold war tactics are changing. Programmes such as the Peace Corps and seminars on Indian history, language, and culture are a late

beginning. Indeed, they are a political need in the face of positive communist programmes. Why has the United States been slow, dangerously slow, in understanding the problems of India? In the first place, miracles of progress were expected right from the beginning. No allowance was made for the extreme differences between India's independence and America's own.

Following the American revolution, the thirteen original colonies found themselves with vast areas waiting to be developed, both geographically and spiritually. There was a great west to open up. Virgin farmland was available on claim. The industrial revolution had not yet closed the gaps of time and space, making it necessary to go faster than the democratic inclination permitted. In many ways, it was an ideal kind of development.

How different were things at the time of India's independence! Awakened from the stultifying sleep of two hundred years of colonial domination, here was an already over-populated sub-continent, exhausted by thousands of years of agrarian culture, and steeped in thousands of years of custom and tradition, a nation of nations in effect, pushed into prominence onto the world stage with all her feudal trappings and colonial mentality and expected to assume the role of Asiatic leadership by example and precept, and all this in the glare of a mid-twentieth century spotlight. That the performance has often been awkward and slow is not surprising. That it has been as effective as it has been without jeopardizing individual liberties and democratic procedures is remarkable.

It is to Nehru and his administration that credit must be given for this performance. His thoughtful restraint has assured that the means have not endangered the ends. This restraint, under constant fire by extremist factions in India, has been, no doubt, as annoying to the Soviets, in relation to social and political goals, as it has been to Americans in the area of international commitment. In spite of lip-service to a stirct anti-neutralist policy, however, a substantial group of Americans, and no doubt Russians, too, do certainly realize the enormous value of this neutralist bulwark in the context of the current world scene. India's mediational role in the United Nations is example enough.

Overriding any partisan misgivings Americans may have about Nehru's foreign policies is a confidence in his intellectual and humanitarian gifts as a man and his probity as a leader. Especially is there a confidence in what Nehru is doing for India domestically. The most significant feature of this domestic achievement appears to be Nehru's reflective assessment of where India is going and how she must get there—her rich possibility in terms of her rich heritage. To have reached this assessment has required patience of the Indian people. To work for its fulfilment will require much more. Yet, along with this need for patience is a pressure for rigorous haste. A number of problems, most evident to an American, seem already on the way towards solution. Maurice Zinkin, an economist of long experience in India, writes: 'India has been fortunate ... in national leaders who have known how to lead instead of driving their people, how to push and pull them into change instead of shooting them into it. India is abolishing untouchability with the consent of the touchables, making women equal with the help of the men, getting rid of landlords with their own resigned acceptance, emphasizing physics and economics rather than Sanskrit with hardly a murmur from the pundits.'[3]

The fact that India is going along slowly and steadily is noted with due respect. What then do Americans feel about India's future? That feeling is bound up with our reaction to Indian culture, and what we know of this culture is incredibly skimpy for a nation priding itself on an enlightened educational

[3] Quoted in C. A. Myers, *Labor Problems in the Industrialization of India*, p. 34.

system. Actually, we are just getting around to the recognition of a deep ignorance where India is concerned and the possible danger in consequence of it.

One of the most discouraging things in beginning a study of India is the very vastness of the subject, vast in time and in scope. This vastness is made more forbidding by an apparent heterogeneity of everything, the many strata and forms. It is this great variety of forms in all facets of Indian life that baffles a Western student while, at the same time, fascinating him.

Thinking of this variety in visual terms, I am, first of all, recollected of India's great temples—those enormous piles of undulating stone that, for generations, have awed and shocked Americans. These temples are fantastic in the true sense of that word. The architect-sculptors have given the imagination full play. Nothing is left out. The whole gamut of human emotions, postures, and actions can be found carved on those temple walls. They are compendiums of humanity in all its aspects, broad as life is broad, relating all of life's manifestations to the higher life of the spirit. None are excluded from entering onto the path of this higher life. All are bidden to do so from whatever point in human experience they happen to be. This inclusiveness, penetrating to the depths of the unconscious mind as it does, makes it easy to see why the arbitrary schism between purely secular and purely religious pursuits did not take place in India. One can also see how other religions and religious systems could be accommodated into Hinduism so effortlessly, accommodated and even absorbed.

It was this richness of an ancient religious tradition expressed in these architectural displays that made the early Protestant missionaries stand aghast before them. For what had these missionaries left behind in America ?—austere wooden-frame churches, barely adorned, sometimes without even an altar, and hardly ever with a sculptured figure, perhaps, a cross. Even if they had been sent from a large city where the church might be somewhat more elaborate, most likely an adaptation of the religious expression of some former time, they would probably remember and be identified emotionally with the stark church of a rural childhood. How they must have cringed inwardly at those myriad deities, when even the presentation of images from their own religious tradition in Roman Catholic churches was considered close to idolatry. What then when confronted with elephant-headed Gaṇeśa or any of the pantheon of multi-armed gods and goddesses of India ? The assault must have been as severe on their visual imaginations, as the hot curries were on their stomachs. This assualt was inevitable, for these missionaries were, in the main, provincial men, puritanical men, whose narrow religious emotions were as restricting and confining as their own clerical collars. It is no wonder that even with familiarity brought about by present-day dissemination of culture, an American with a Protestant heritage is bound to feel an outcaste in these architectural confrontations.

This reaction to the temples might well be a key reaction to other phases of Indian life. Not only does life proliferate on the temple walls, but in the streets of towns and villages as well. This life appears different from life in American towns. It is a more naked life in both the literal and figurative senses. As in Latin countries, so in many Asiatic countries including India, much living is done in the streets, necessitated somewhat by climate, but also because of poverty and lack of facilities. One is conscious of people eating, making ablutions, transacting business, praying, and carrying on the day to day activities of life that in America are carried on in specific places. American streets are to take a person from one of these specific places to another. Indian streets are for living itself. It naturally follows that Indian streets are more unkempt and with a greater variety of refuse than American streets. Also, there is

a pervading presence of animals of various kinds. At one end of the street is the *zamindār*'s house, a large house with a wall which surrounds a courtyard and allows the occupants to shut out street noises and smells. Being in this imagined Indian street is being in contact with life, with humanity, in a very physical sense. This contact carries us over on to the psychological plane. It is humanity in the act of living that dominates the street and not shop windows and commercialism. Street life in India thus provides a profound communion with life. One feels an exhilarating joy at being a part of the cosmic play. Untidy, it is nevertheless rich in human values and poetry of a kind that are becoming more and more de-emphasized in Western industrial culture. One can understand Gandhi's adherence to the spinning wheel culture and, at the same time, want to see poverty and disease eradicated by modern technology. That technology is coming to India inevitably. The airline advertisement is only one case in point.

Using temples and streets as arbitrarily chosen examples of the many areas of Indian culture, I have hoped to suggest that what Indian culture offers to Western traditions by way of stimulation and enrichment has been and will continue to be of telling importance in the years ahead. There is no doubt of this. But what of the effect of Western culture on India? We have seen that culture forced on India during the colonial period. In spite of Nehru's moderation, there are signs that many Indians would embrace it. I have heard Indians criticize other Indians for adopting English ways and dress. Having adopted their technologies, sciences, language, and governmental procedures, it is not too surprising that some Indians accept manners and costume also. This is for many the disconcerting part of India's new dynamism. India's history is one of keeping to herself, and if invaded by a foreign people or culture, of maintaining her identity by moral and social force. The continual and reflexive use of these forces was certain to develop a rigid pattern within the society and, being rigid within, it was impossible for the society to call up the needed flexibility for the repulsion of invaders from without. The price India paid for her social and moral traditions was foreign domination. The price she must pay for her freedom is the ending of her static society. From now on, India's future will be her own. What she takes from other cultures will be a matter of volition, not coercion.

There is certain to be a segment of Indian society that will see every innovation as a threat. Such people will look upon change as a betrayal of Indian values. The future for them will no doubt be a disappointment. On the other hand, for youth, those whose part in the new India is being assured by ever-increasing education, there is a great challenge. That challenge is the adaptation of technological and sociological growth to the best in the Indian heritage. There are sure to be clumsy trials and errors in this adaptation. The English manners and clothes may be ill-fitting and ludicrous on an Indian's back, but it was Vivekananda's reminder that a rock never makes a mistake, and it remains a rock.

I have mentioned above the challenge for Indian youth with its new education. What is likely to be the effect of this education on Indian life? I can only gauge this by a comparison with America's own experience. As public education spread in America, a spirit of individual independence asserted itself. If, in the past, the son tended to follow the occupation of his father and, in many cases, to be trained by him, he was now encouraged to strike out into the new fields of science and industry which were then opening up. That new spirit had a tremendous effect on American family structure. Blood relationships became less important as other relationships developed. These new relationships were based not on birth or locale but on other common interests. The members of a genera-

tion came to have more ideas in common than those of a family. Therefore, the generations were often strangers to one another, not understanding each other's motivations. This was a painful phase of industrialization, but it is passing. Those who have matured outside of an authoritarian family system give evidence of placing a more sympathetic emphasis on trying to understand filial aims rather than expecting unquestioning obedience. That there has been a swing too far in the opposite direction, producing a too indulgent and unconcerned parent, is a current problem in American life which is demanding attention.

This American pattern, as outlined above, must almost certainly be India's. Of course, there will be variations, and it is hoped that India will profit from American mistakes. But the general pattern seems unavoidable. If Indian family structure is more rigid than that of America in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the process may, perhaps, be more painful, but nonetheless certain.

Should this new future necessarily mean a loss of the precious Indian heritage? I prefer to think it will mean a continuation of it. Encrustations come and go; the part that is elemental remains. As Vivekananda himself has said with such brave and stirring beauty: 'We must always keep the wealth of our own home before our eyes, so that everyone down to the masses may know and see what his ancestral wealth is, we must exert ourselves to do that; and side by side, we should be brave to open our doors to receive all available light from outside. Let rays of light come in, in sharp-driving showers, from the four quarters of the earth; let the intense flood of light flow in from the West—what of that? Whatever is weak and corrupt is liable to die—what are we to do with it? If it goes, let it go, what harm does it do us? What is strong and invigorating is immortal. Who can destroy that?'[4]

[4] Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda, Vol. IV, pp. 406-7.

MAHARANI AHALYABAI HOLKAR

By Sri S. N. Qanungo

To read the life story of Ahalyabai Holkar is to make contact with a great soul. She is one of those rare historical characters, whom one finds it easy to admire through all the ages. The biography of Ahalyabai cannot be only a diplomatic or political history of eventful years of Maratha power, though her life does not so obscure the political picture of the time as to render it meaningless. As the head of an important house of Maratha rulers, she had enough of politics to handle. But, undoubtedly, what is most striking in her career is the persistent strength of her inner characteristics. To the challenge that faced her life, after a frustrated struggle for domestic happiness, Ahalyabai responded with an attitude of defiance and fortitude.

Ahalyabai was born in the year 1725 in Ahmednagar district, in the house of her father, Mankoji Shinde, a scion of a Dhangar family. Brought up in the midst of opulence and careful training by her parents, she, while still a child of eight, was married with pomp and show to Khande Rao, the only son of Malhar Rao, the illustrious founder of the house of Holkars of Indore. Her mother-in-law, Gautamabai, was very affectionate towards her, and she did all that she could to impress upon her daughter-in-law the need to live a life of piety and nobleness. Days were

passing on happily, but a bolt from the blue came when Khande Rao was accidentally killed by a cannon ball in the battle of Kuhmer, against Surajmal of Bharatpur in 1754. This calamity was a great blow to the whole family, as old Malhar Rao had all his plans shattered with this incident. But still he pinned down his hope on his grandson Malle Rao, who was very young at the time. But his hopes were belied, as we shall see later. Therefore, with the death of Malhar Rao Holkar on the 20th May 1766, it appeared as if the glory of the Holkars had come to an end. But, in fact, it was only the beginning of a new chapter. Nothing much was expected from Malhar Rao's grandson Malle Rao, who had grown up ill-equipped and who sat uneasily upon his throne, at this time. His temperament, affected by insanity, led him into every extreme of fantastic tomfoolery and sullen gloom. Utterly callous to his duties as a king, he found a malicious pleasure in placing scorpions in clothes and slippers of Brāhmaṇas and in putting venomous reptiles in pots filled with money meant for the mendicants. To the relief of the people, and to cut a possibly long tenure of misrule short, he died nine months after his accession to the throne. No doubt, this was a great shock to the heart of a loving mother that Ahalyabai was; still, the situation brought forth the courage and composure that was expected of her, and for a whole generation, the Holkar State enjoyed a profound calm under her benevolent rule, disturbed at times by a ripple here and a bubble there on the surface.

Ahalyabai's sublime piety, pious munificence, simple, dutiful, and puritanical life, and her sharp understanding had endeared her greatly to her father-in-law. So, when at the premature and sad death of her husband Khande Rao, Ahalyabai expressed the desire to burn herself to death with her deceased husband, she was dissuaded from the action by Malhar Rao, her father-in-law, who wished her to grasp the helm of affairs after his death and guide her unwise son to carry on the work of administration. He had found in her daughter-in-law an able administrator. But, so far, she had not developed any taste for public affairs, much less for administration. All the same, when occasion demanded, she took them all up as a sacred trust and deemed herself 'answerable to God for every exercise of power'.

A strong determination was the keynote of Ahalyabai's personality. With Malhar Rao Holkar had ended the predominance of the Holkar family in Mālva region. The situation was made worse by the short period of misrule that preceded Ahalyabai's taking charge of the state of affairs. But, even then, she tried hard to retrieve the lost ground. After her accession, such powerful men as Raghunath Rao, Nana Fadnavis, and Gangadhar Yashwant, the Dewan of the Holkar State, attempted to reduce her to a cipher, by trying to persuade her to adopt a son of their choice. She saw through their scheme and admonished the Dewan; even the threatenings of Raghunath Rao failed to compel her into compliance.[1]

In her, Ahalyabai exemplified a type of ruler not frequently found among the Maratha chiefs. Many of them were unfit to govern and took not the slightest interest in the welfare of the country. But Ahalyabai promoted the ends of social justice and gave her people a sense of administrative method. Malhar Rao Holkar had tact, ability, and courage; but, guided by feudal ideas, he had not introduced any regular system of administration in the State. Money had run through his fingers like water. Taxation was no better than State brigandage; the army in the province was of rudimentary standard, justice was rough and hasty—in short, the administration was essentially a military regime. Ahalyabai tried her best to rule well; it was not a feeble or incapable best. She set about introducing reforms with

[1] Malcolm, *Memoirs of Central India*, Vol. I, p. 161.

an earnest goodwill and familiarized herself with the intricacies of administration. Suppressing the turbulent Bhils and Gonds of Vindhya region by building several forts and maintaining a small force independent of the territorial militia, she established peace and order in the Holkar territory. Ahalyabai had great solicitude for the welfare of the peasantry. She reorganized the system of revenue collection and gave standing orders to officers to be lenient at the time of assessment. She took care to protect the agriculturists and recognized the rights of *watandars* (proprietors of lands). The accounts of receipts and disbursements were kept with scrupulous exactness and the channels of wastage and extravagance were plugged. As a result, the wealth of the house of Holkar was immensely increased.

Though particular about financial affairs, Ahalyabai had no greed for money. She appropriated the treasures of Holkar, after performing a religious ceremony. She was against all unfair means of acquiring wealth and declined to confiscate the heirless property of rich bankers like Devi Chand, Topee Das, and Banarsi Das. Art and literature benefited from her patronage; trade and industry flourished in her time. The city of Maheshwar was developed enormously, and Indore was raised from a village to a wealthy city. The most important trait in Ahalyabai's character was her love of justice. She sat for a considerable period in open durbar, referred cases to courts, and invariably administered evenhanded justice. She divided her time between religious observances and public duties. She daily fed the poor, as also the beasts, the birds, and the fishes; and during particular festivals, she arranged entertainments for the lower classes and poorer people of her State. Thus Ahalyabai's indefatigable industry, devotion to duty, and positive contribution for the welfare of the people have secured for her a place of distinction in Indian history.

Hinduism received an added impetus from the patronage of Ahalyabai. By trying to infuse more of the religious spirit into the Brāhmaṇas of Mālva, she was, in fact, carrying on the policy of the Peshwas to completion. She built numerous temples, ghats, *dharmaśālas* (rest-houses), and wells throughout the Holkar possessions in Mālva and sent support to holy establishments in various parts of India, specially to the holy shrines of Varanasi, Puri, Dvaraka, Kedarnath, and Rameshwaram. At great cost, she made arrangements for the regular supply of Gaṅgā water to many temples in southern regions, and once, made arrangements for the North Indian tour of ten thousand pilgrims from the Deccan. She spent as much as sixteen crores of rupees on all this. Ahalyabai was looked upon almost as a saint by the Hindus on account of her extensive and pious donations to religious establishments, and they prayed for her long life and prosperity.

According to Sardesai, who is regarded as an authority on Maratha history, Ahalyabai, in the midst of her devotional occupations, failed to realize the strength of the British pressure on the Maratha States and did not think of co-operating with Mahadaji Sindhia in his wars and measures for consolidating Maratha power. One is, indeed, painfully aware all the time of Ahalyabai's aspirations and the limitations imposed upon her by her nature and upbringing. It must, however, be stated in all fairness to her that she never under-rated the strength of British power in India, like most of the carpet-knights of the Poona durbar. In a letter dated 28th September 1793, Ahalyabai correctly describes the uncertain political situation in India, with special reference to Tipu Sultan, the French, and the English.[2] She had no personal grudge against Mahadaji Sindhia. In fact, she was grateful to him for his refusal to unite with Raghunath Rao and Gangadhar Yashwant Chandrachuda to

[2] *Selections from Chandrachuda Records*, p. 27.

'subvert the independence of the Holkar family'. She had befriended Mahadaji Sindhia with a loan of thirty lakhs of rupees and wrote congratulatory letters to him at the capture of Gwalior and bringing about the treaty of Salbai.[3] But Ahalyabai could not forget that the rise of Mahadaji Sindhia indirectly meant that the house of Holkars would have to play a second fiddle to the house of Sindhias. It is unfortunate that, in her last days, Ahalyabai yielded to the advice of ever-tipsy braggarts of Holkar statesmen and dignatories and constantly egged on Tukoji Holkar, her commander, to assert his individuality on equal terms with Mahadaji Sindhia, the rupture with whom had already begun after his treaty with the Rāṇā of Udaipur in November 1791, according to which the fort of Chittor was restored to the Rāṇā. Ahalyabai considered the affair as a danger to the house of Holkars and her relations with the Sindhias became further strained. The growing jealousy between the two houses resulted in the clash at Surauli on 8th October 1792, and ultimately, in the complete discomfiture and humiliation of the Holkars at the Battle of Lakher on 1st June 1792. At last, the grandiose plan for the swift and total destruction of Mahadaji Sindhia appeared to the Holkars as chimerical; and, as a result, Ahalyabai also lost much of her influence as a factor in the politics of the time.

However, the personal respect which Ahalyabai commanded remained unimpaired. Her mind was, above all, given to God, and she was essentially religious. She tried hard to transcend what was accidental or ephemeral in her life. Ahalyabai died on the 13th August 1795. To call her 'merely the banker of the family', as Sir J. N. Sarkar has described her, no doubt, appears to be an underestimation. What she achieved was, doubtless, remarkable. She accepted obedience to God's will as a means to human fulfilment. She never wanted that splendour should be confined to her palace, while misery pervaded the streets of her State. The task which she took upon herself was not a light one; it meant transforming a robber chief's sphere of influence into an orderly principality with a regular government. The great value of her work lies in making the State of Indore a model of good government in Mālva in those days. She created a benevolent environment of peace and plenty, of hope and creativity. Her work was throughout illumined by a passion for truth which seemed, at times, superhuman. 'In the most sober view that can be taken of her character,' writes Malcolm, 'she certainly appears, within her limited sphere, to have been one of the purest and most exemplary rulers that ever existed.' It is interesting to find so appreciative a tribute from a near-contemporary, who is generally critical of Maratha governments and administration. Ahalyabai was, indeed, the *'mātuśrī'* (mother), as she was called, of her people, and the healer of troubles. 'The peasant near Mhysar used, in hot days, to see his yoke of oxen stopped during their labour to be refreshed with water, brought by a servant of Ahalyabai.'[4] There cannot be a better example of a gentle maturity of feeling and tenderness in any welfare State. Ahalyabai's is a character which stands out sharply against a background of tragic anachronisms of warfare and confusion that prevailed in Central India of eighteenth century. Historian Kincaid has rightly observed: 'She left a name almost as revered as that of Sītā or Draupadī, the legendary princess of ancient India.'

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 57.

[4] Malcolm, *Memoirs of Central India*, Vol. I, p. 188.

ĀCĀRYA ŚAṄKARA AND HIS MESSAGE

By Brahmachari Sarada Chaitanya

Ācārya Śaṅkara is, perhaps, the most outstanding figure among Indian philosophers, but about his life, we know but little. This is so because there is no authentic account from which we can get a full picture of his life; nor is there any possibility of getting such information about his life from the vast mass of writings that he has left behind. For, like a true Vedāntin who attaches no importance to name and form, Śaṅkara was satisfied just to say that he was a disciple of Śrī Govinda Bhagavatpāda. The only sources to which we can turn, however, for knowing anything about Śaṅkara the man, are those books known as the *Śaṅkara-vijayas*. Unfortunately, these books give us such contradictory accounts about the main points of his life that scholars, both of the East and the West, have rejected them as unauthentic. Yet, in the absence of anything better from which we can form an idea of his life, one cannot but take the help of these books. True, there are many occult stories which have been grafted to Śaṅkara's life by the authors of these *vijayas* in order to deify him; but, in and through these stories can we not get a view of the real man behind? Certainly, we can. As Swami Vivekananda has very aptly observed, whenever someone who is unique in personality appears, all sorts of legends are invented about him. But all the fables and stories which come to be built around such a person have to be recast in the mould of his character and the truth found out. If we read between the lines, the stories that are found in the *vijayas* can offer a fair glimpse of the personality shining behind.

Thus we come to know that Ācārya Śaṅkara was born in a Nambūdri Brāhmaṇa family at Kaladi in modern Kerala on *vaiśakhī-śukla-pañcamī*. But, as Mr. Telang writes, we are unfortunately without the necessary data to enable us to precisely fix the epoch in which this great teacher flourished. Some ascribe him to the second century before Christ, while some others would fix his date as the tenth century A.D. Most modern scholars, however, agree in ascribing him to the eighth century A.D.; and, since we have for this opinion the concurrent authority of Wilson, Colebrooke, Ram Mohan Roy, Yajnesvara Sastri, and Professor Jayanarayana Tarka Panchanan, the Bengali editor of Ānandagiri's *Śaṅkara-vijaya*, and as it is, after all, less important to know when he taught than what he taught and did, we may as well accept the decision without debate and proceed to have a glimpse into his life and teachings.

It is said that the parents of Śaṅkara—Śivaguru and Āryāmbā—prayed to Lord Śiva for a son. And as a boon from Him, Śaṅkara was born to them. Not only that; the extraordinary effulgence of the body of the child led them to believe that Lord Śiva himself had incarnated himself as their son.

When Śaṅkara was a boy of eight, Śivaguru died. Perhaps, this incident made a deep impress on his mind about the impermanence of the world. He left home in search of a *guru* from whom he could learn *brahmavidyā*—supreme knowledge—and reached the *āśrama* of Śrī Govinda Bhagavatpāda on the Narmada. There he studied the scriptures of the Vedānta, for how many years no one knows, but in all probability for a very short time, and became the foremost exponent of the philosophy of non-duality. Now a question might be asked: Is it possible for a boy of eight to give up home and hearth and go out in search of a *guru* for learning *brahmavidyā*? Certainly, to any rational mind it would seem impossible. But, if we consider what Ācārya Śaṅkara accomplished within the short span of thirty-

two years, then, however miraculous it might appear, one has to believe this as true.

From Narmada, at the behest of his *guru* Śaṅkara went to Varanasi for preaching the message of Vedānta. Here, at Varanasi, the Ācārya wrote commentaries on the three *prasthānas*—the Upaniṣads, *Brahma-Sūtra*, and the *Gītā*—and gave the philosophy of Advaita Vedānta a firm footing, so much so that this school of Vedānta is known today as Śaṅkara Vedānta. Thereupon, he covered on foot the vast distance from the Himalayas to Kanyakumari and from Puri to Dwaraka proclaiming the quintessence of Vedānta : Brahman alone is real ; this world is unreal ; the embodied soul is nothing but Brahman.

During his tour throughout India, Śaṅkara could see for himself what nefarious and futile acts were being performed in the name of religion. In the name of religion some were satisfying their senses, some were sacrificing human beings for acquiring occult powers, while some others were pouring oblations into the sacrificial fire for securing a heaven after death. People forgot the true import of religion. They forgot the famous dictum of the Upaniṣads : 'Not by wealth, nor by progeny, but by renunciation alone immortality is reached.' It all pained Śaṅkara very much and made him restless. For it was too much for him to witness this degeneration of Sanātana Dharma. He waged war, so to say, against those who were making a mockery of religion. Sometimes by argument, sometimes by persuasion, and sometimes by a mere touch of his supra-divine personality, the Ācārya vanquished the charlatans from the soil of India. Once again the banner of true religion was hoisted in the firmament of India.

Though a doyen of Vedānta, Śaṅkara, in his effort to bring about a reform in the religious life of India, was never over-zealous to get converts to his own way of life or philosophy. If he wanted, he could do so, perhaps, without the least opposition from any quarter. But this he did not. Why ? Because he knew that it would be a folly to prescribe a common path for one and all irrespective of their mental make up and capabilities. As men vary in temperament, so they need different paths to follow in reaching the summit of Truth. That is why we see Śaṅkara, an *advaitin* out and out, not playing the role of an iconoclast by destroying all the temples dedicated to the worship of personal gods and goddesses. Nay, on the contrary, he himself visited as many temples as he could, composed beautiful hymns in the praise of deities, and showed the true spirit of worship which would, in course of time, lead the aspirant, through the purification of mind, to the pinnacle of realization. This shows how catholic Śaṅkara was in his approach to faiths other than his own.

As the life of Śaṅkara was unique, so was the philosophy he preached. The main theme of his philosophy is the identity of *jīva* and Brahman—the embodied self and the Absolute Spirit. As such, according to Śaṅkara, *mukti* or final release from *saṁsāra* lies in one's being aware of this identity with Brahman. But, this does not mean that he would attain something new. Then what happens ? He becomes conscious of what he really was all the time. For example, ten friends went to a distant place for a picnic. Picnic over, they came to the railway station. Before purchasing tickets, the leader of the party made a count to see whether anybody was left behind. And each time he counted, he omitted himself, and always there was one less. This worried them all very much. Just then, one of the members of the party pointed out to him : 'You are the tenth man—*daśamastvamasi*.' And this made him happy. Now, the tenth man, who was thought to be lost, was never lost. He was always there with the party. Only the leader was not aware of his existence. Similarly, man is ever one with Brahman. He is ever

free. Only he is not aware of it. The moment he becomes aware of this truth—he realizes that there was never a time when he was in bondage. So says the Ācārya in a verse of his work, *Vivekacūḍāmaṇi* (*The Crest-jewel of Discrimination*): 'There is neither death nor birth, neither a bound nor a struggling soul, neither a seeker after liberation nor a liberated one—this is the ultimate truth.'

Now comes the question: If man is really one with Brahman and ever-free, then why does he remain oblivious of his true nature? In reply to this question, Ācārya Śaṅkara would say: Because he is under the spell of Māyā or cosmic ignorance. Māyā has two powers—*āvaraṇa-śakti* and *vikṣepa-śakti*. By *āvaraṇa-śakti* or the power of concealment, it hides the truth, and by the *vikṣepa-śakti* or the power of projection, it projects something else in its place. Thus Māyā makes man forget his divine nature and leads him to believe that he is a mortal being. How Māyā deludes a man can be very nicely expressed in the words of Rūmi, the famous poet and mystic of Persia. Rūmi writes:

'One who has lived many years in a city,
so soon as he goes to sleep,
Beholds another city full of good and evil,
and his own city vanishes from his mind,
He does not say to himself: "This is a new
city: I am a stranger here." ...
Nay, he thinks he has always lived in this
city and was born and bred in it.
What wonder, then, if the soul does not
remember her ancient abode and birth-
place,
Since she is wrapt in the slumber of this
world, like a star covered by clouds?
Especially as she has trodden so many cities
and the dust that darkens her vision is
not yet swept away. (Nicholson,
Rūmi, Poet and Mystic, p. 36).

Though Rūmi did not use the word Māyā in his poem, yet, it represents the true spirit in which Śaṅkara used the word. According to Śaṅkara, the phenomenal world around us has no independent existence. For it is the creation of Māyā. And, in the words of Swami Vivekananda, we are born in this Māyā, we live in it, we dream in it, we are philosophers in it, we are spiritual men in it, nay, we are devils in this Māyā, and we are gods in this Māyā. When, at the dawn of enlightenment, the veil of Māyā is lifted, man would realize his folly that he took the world to be real and laugh at all the prizes and curses he earned in it. Therefore, Ācārya Śaṅkara exhorts man to cut asunder the knots of Māyā and be free here and now. Śaṅkara, unlike many others, does not 'draw a bill of exchange payable after death in an uncertain future'. He gives man a religion following which one can realize Truth in this very world and become free while living.

NOTES AND COMMENTS

TO OUR READERS

Walt Whitman, though an American in full stature, has become a citizen of the world by his universal outlook and democratic philosophy of life. He was above all those narrow concepts and stagnant conservatism which hinder the growth of man as a universal being and obstruct his vision of a wider horizon. He, in a mysterious way, comes very near to the Vedāntic conception of oneness, in the expression of his feelings and realizations. Sri P. Sama Rao, B.A., B.L., of Bellary, with whom our readers are well acquainted, ably deals with this aspect of Whitman's life and philosophy in his learned and thought-provoking study of 'Walt Whitman and Vedānta'. We hope this interest-

ing and informative article, to be published in three instalments, will be appreciated by our readers. . . .

Sri Paras Mal Mehta, M.A., B.Ed., a research student, working under Professor P. S. Naidu, at Udaipur Vidya Bhawan, tries to explain in his article how the concept of non-violence as held by Gandhiji is not contradictory to the teachings of the *Gītā*, as it is generally held to be. He says that it is wrong to see conflict between Gandhi and the *Gītā* in respect of violence and non-violence. . . .

Mr. Eric Johns, an artist by profession, is a member of the Vedanta Society of New York. He has recently completed a sculpture of Swami Vivekananda, for the Society. In his article 'India from a Distance', he has dealt with some of the wrong notions held by foreigners about India and has shown how they are products of wrong understanding of Indian life and culture. He says that there are some Indians also, who view every innovation and improvement on their conservative ways with alarm, which is equally undesirable. . . .

Maharani Ahalyabai's name is uttered with affection and esteem by the Hindus all over India. Apart from being an able ruler of the State of Indore, in which capacity, she had to handle a lot of delicate work and face difficult problems, she was a great patron of Hindu religion. Her munificient charities and assistance to temples and religious establishments all over the country have given her a distinction hardly enjoyed by others of her kind. The article on her, though brief, by Sri S. N. Qanungo, M.A., Lecturer, Christian College, Lucknow, will, we hope, be read with delight and profit. . . .

Brahmachari Sarada Chaitanya of the Ramakrishna Order offers in his brief article a glimpse into the life and message of Ācārya Śaṅkara.

THE HINDI CONTROVERSY

Recently, there is a strong controversy going on in the country, specially in the Hindi speaking regions, on a recent statement of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, and its subsequent echo by Sri Gopala Reddy, the Minister for Information and Broadcasting, to the effect that the Hindi used by the All India Radio should be 'simplified'. What this 'simplification' connotes has not been explained precisely, but to all intents and purposes, it means substitution of *'tatsama'* (near Sanskrit) words by *'tatbhava'* (near Persian or Urdu) words. It is also stated that the process of 'simplification' has already started, and it is to be speeded up in the near future.

As is evident from newspaper reports, this move on the part of the All India Radio is being strongly opposed, except by a few. The form of Hindi to be used by the A.I.R. and other Government departments was determined by a statutory commission, duly appointed by the Government of India, and the suggestions of the Commission, which is, in all fairness, the opinion of experts, is being followed for all these years by the All India Radio. We do not remember that there has ever been, during all these years, any public demand for change in the pattern and form of this Hindi. The Government, on its own behalf, has started giving Urdu news bulletins for the benefit of those, who, if really, found it inconvenient to follow the Hindi news bulletins. Why then, again, should the established form of Hindi, in use for so many years, need a change is beyond common understanding.

Hindi has been accepted as the lingua franca of India on its own merits, after thorough examination and mature deliberation by the constitution makers of independent India. It is, after all, not a curious baby which has been given birth to yesterday, for any specific purpose, and which can be painted and dressed to look

pretty to the eyes of some one or the other. It has a long history of about one thousand years behind it, during which period, it has gone through a natural evolution and acquired a definite structure, form, and style. In the process, it has adopted words and phrases of many other languages, which, by way of natural adaptation, it has made its own. This process is still going on and will continue as is everywhere the case with all living languages. As such, this artificial infliction on Hindi of a 'simplification' is difficult to understand. And, since the next generation is already studying traditional Hindi and will be thorough at it, who, if any, will be benefited by this 'simplification', except a few people of our present passing generation, who claim to be the inhabitants of the so-called 'Urdu regions'? Should the temporary advantage of the few overweigh in merit the vital and lasting interest of the whole nation ?

Hindi is, definitely, a language derived from Sanskrit which rightfully claims the motherhood of most of the Indian regional languages. Even the Dravidian languages, which are excluded from the Sanskrit group, have a large number of Sanskrit words which are as common with them in South India, as they are here in North India. If, therefore, Hindi which is our national language is to be made acceptable to all people, speaking different languages, it is only meet that it should contain, and make use of, as many Sanskrit words as possible, since they are common to the national language as well as all other regional languages. The form of language is a fact that cannot be changed at will and convenience. It is unfortunate for Hindi language that, in spite of all the place of honour that is being given to it, it is supposed to be so frail and shapeless a thing today that it can be pressed to new forms and patterns, time and again, to meet the temporarily imagined need for change. If this process goes on, Hindi will meet the same fate as that hat, which was pressed and battered to fit any head that temporarily possessed it and which, ultimately, lost all shape of its own.

We fervently hope that, when already there is considerable opposition towards the acceptance of Hindi, in spite of the stamp of official recognition on it, better judgement will play its role in this particular matter, which is very important. Thus alone Hindi can really take the form which will be endearingly welcomed and accepted by all people and it will be a factor of true national integration instead of being otherwise, as it threatens to become now.

REVIEWS AND NOTICES

YOGA PSYCHOLOGY. By Swami Abhedananda. *Published by Ramakrishna Vedanta Math, 19-B, Raja Rajkrishna Street, Calcutta-6, 1960. Pages xxiv+408. Price Rs. 10.*

The present volume comprising the sixteen lectures on *yoga* psychology, delivered by Swami Abhedananda before august gatherings in America, in 1900, is now available for the first time, thanks to the painstaking efforts of Swami Prajnanananda, who spared no pains to bring together all the relevant materials and elucidate them wherever necessary. There is a brief and illuminating Preface by the editor, who introduces the subject of *yoga* in his own inimitable way; the reading of the Preface itself forms a rich and rewarding experience.

The book has sixteen chapters dealing with various aspects of *yoga* psychology, with an appendix on 'Ego and Egoism'. In every chapter, the editor has provided detailed page references for each topic dealt with; to the reviewer, this system of providing references for each topic in the table of contents itself appears particularly striking and very useful for a quick glance. The editor deserves our gratitude for taking so much trouble to make the contents so easy of reference.

It would be presumptuous to say anything on what

has been uttered or written by Swami Abhedananda; to us, who are acquainted with his life and work as a direct disciple of the great Master, he was a profound scholar gifted with rare brilliance, oratorial talents, and was a very striking and charming personality. Over and above these, he was a great soul according to every authority. This book is a valuable addition to his other masterly works dealing with the intricate and difficult subject of *yoga*. The present volume, though covering the familiar ground of Patañjali's *Yoga-Sūtra*, has the imprint of the Swami's own mind and approach and makes a very refreshing and soul-elevating reading.

The word '*yoga*' is often misunderstood, particularly by the Western-educated minds. '*Yoga*' is derived from the root-word '*Yuj*' which means to 'rejoin', i.e. the rejoining of our narrow petty selves with the higher cosmic or universal Self. The main function of *yoga* psychology is, therefore, essentially to prepare the mind for manifesting the resplendent Ātman which is ever in us. It discloses the secret of bringing under control all the vibrations (modifications or *vṛttis*) of the mind and thus helps us to concentrate and meditate upon the transcendental Ātman which is the fountain-head of Knowledge, Intelligence, and Bliss.

Undoubtedly, this book is intended for a *sādhaka;* for a mere intellectual understanding of *yoga*, this book certainly does not make a very easy reading. Every word or sentence that has come out from the mouth of the great Swami needs some reflection and contemplation. His audience being completely Western, the Swami had to cover the entire ground from the fundamentals, in more or less a 'popular' way. Nevertheless, there are many passages in it worth contemplating by every student of *yoga*. Often, there is a repetition of ideas; perhaps, it was inevitable due to the reason that they were expressed on different occasions to different people.

In spite of the Errata provided at the end, there are many printing errors, and it is hoped that they will be rectified in the next edition. The general get-up of the book is good, considering the fact that it is moderately priced. The editor and publishers deserve our gratitude for bringing out this highly practical and beautiful compendium on *yoga*, as expressed by a great *yogin*.

DR. C. K. RAMESH

SADGURU SREE RAMA DEVI GOLDEN JUBILEE SOUVENIR. *Published by Sree Rama Devi Golden Jubilee Celebration Committee, Car Street, Mangalore-1. 1961. Pages 353. Price Rs. 12.50.*

This is a commemoration volume which has been brought out by the devotees of Sree Rama Devi to mark her fiftieth birth anniversary. Apart from the biographical sketch of Sree Rama Devi, the volume contains messages that have been received from leading personalities in the country. Many of her devotees also give their personal reminiscences and narrate how her life and teachings have inspired them in their own lives. The publication will be welcomed by the devotees of Sree Rama Devi, and will acquaint the general public with the life and activities of one who has been instrumental in helping many souls go Godward.

All the pages of this Souvenir are printed on art paper. The numerous picture plates at the end, depicting the various aspects of Sree Rama Devi's life, would be valued by her devotees. The get-up and printing are praiseworthy.

S. S.

WHAT VEDĀNTA MEANS TO ME: A SYMPOSIUM. EDITED BY JOHN YALE. *Published in U.S.A. by Doubleday & Company Inc., Garden City. New York, 1960. Pages 215. Price $ 3.95. Published in England by Rider & Co., 178-202 Great Portland Street, London W-1. 1961. Pages 176. Price 21s.*

Although the Vedāntic thoughts and ideas were truthfully interpreted to the Western world by Max Müller, Paul Deussen, and a host of other scholars during the earlier part of the nineteenth century, yet these ideas were confined only within the intellectual orbit of a few people of the West. It was Swami Vivekananda, the foremost disciple of Sri Ramakrishna, who first accomplished the difficult task of making Vedānta a living faith in the West. His zeal, combined with his deep spiritual personality, enabled Vedānta to take permanent roots in the soil of the West. After his most successful preaching tour of America and Europe during the latter part of the nineteenth century, a few Vedānta centres sprang up there for intensifying the propagation of the message of Vedānta in the West. Thenceforth, the Ramakrishna Order of India has been sending monks to the West for carrying on the Vedānta work initiated by the great Swami. Thus, after years of strenuous efforts, it has been possible for Vedānta, as exemplified in the life of Sri Ramakrishna, to bring about a slow but steady inner transformation in the lives of many people in the West, in recent times. One of the Vedānta centres of U.S.A., established by Swami Prabhavananda at Hollywood, has succeeded in attracting some distinguished people to Vedānta. These friends as well as some members of this and other centres of the Ramakrishna Order contributed a few illuminating articles under the caption 'What Vedānta Means to Me', in the journal *Vedānta and the West*, published by the Hollywood centre. The book under review is a collection of these articles. All the contributors are either Americans or Europeans. A study of the articles clearly reveals how Vedānta can best appeal to the critical and scientific temper of the Western mind. Almost all the articles bear the stamp of the courage of conviction and warmth of personal experience of the

contributors, who have accepted the universal message of the Vedānta more or less seriously. Moreover, the articles point out that Vedānta is not only capable of satisfying the intellect of the people, but also of filling up the vacuum of their souls by the perennial flow of divine peace and bliss. It seems that Vedānta is bound to be accepted by the thinking people of the West, sooner or later.

The Foreword by Vincent Sheean and the Introduction by the editor have enhanced the value of the book. We recommend this book to all the people who complain about religion being dogmatic and unscientific.

SWAMI NIRGUNANANDA

MARATHI

BHAGINI NIVEDITA. By K. V. KULKARNI. *Published by the author, Hardaswadi, Kalyan, Dt. Thana, Bombay State. Pages 131. Price Rs. 3.50.*

This beautiful, brief, and illuminating biography of Sister Nivedita, one of the earliest associates and devout disciples of Swami Vivekananda, fulfils a long-felt need of Marathi biographical literature. Sister Nivedita was one of those rare souls who, though born and brought up in alien lands, were endowed with the magnanimous quality of easily identifying themselves with the spiritual and cultural aspirations of this country. It was given to a few gifted personalities like Andrews, Besant, and others to realize India's true genius and greatness through intimate personal communion with her great spiritual and social leaders, though they hailed from the very country which was then leaving no stone unturned to crush India's aspirations. Sister Nivedita is foremost among these personalities.

The book under review gives a simple, lucid, and fascinating account of the multifarious activities of this noble lady. This account is interspersed with important and precious extracts from the varied writings of the Sister, as well as from the occasional sayings of Swami Vivekananda, thus immensely adding to the value of the book. However, the book does not seem to be quite biographical in the current sense of the word, for the reader does not get much here in the nature of intimate glimpses into the personal life of Nivedita. The book rather provides a sort of running commentary on the life and activities of the Sister, and kindles a desire in the reader to know more about one whose life was a dedication and a sacrifice at the altar of Mother India. On the whole, the author deserves our congratulation in that he has achieved his purpose of bringing into vivid relief a nearly forgotten chapter in the history of renascent India.

PROFESSOR N. S. DRAVID

NEWS AND REPORTS

VIVEKANANDA UNIVERSITY AT BELUR

A PRINCELY DONATION

In spontaneous response to an appeal made by the Ramakrishna Mission for the proposed Vivekananda University at Belur, Sri Balaram Roy, son of the late Kumar Pramatha Nath Roy of Bhagyakul (now in East Pakistan), has created a Trust called "The Ramakrishna Mission Vivekananda University Trust" to help the establishment and maintenance of the proposed Vivekananda University at Belur. The Hon'ble Sri P. C. Sen has been made the President of the Trust and the Hon'ble Sri Saila Kumar Mukherjee, Sri Birendra Kumar Bose, Solicitor, and two senior monks of the Ramakrishna Mission are its trustees. The donor has bequeathed a portion of his immovable properties to create the trust, which is likely to fetch an annual income of rupees one lac and fifty thousand.

Those of our countrymen who entertain a genuine love for the proper education of our youths will heartily join the Ramakrishna Mission in offering their most sincere thanks to the magnanimous donor for his princely gift.

The proposed Vivekananda University, besides being a fitting memorial to the great Swami, will in itself be an event of great historic importance. The Swami wanted to impart to his countrymen man-making and character-building education that would not only uphold the universal spiritual traditions of India, but would also integrate into its comprehensive scheme of education the best elements of Western thought and culture, and thereby bring about a healthy synthesis of the Vedānta of the East and the science and technology of the West.

A scheme of the proposed University is under preparation for an early submission to the Government of West Bengal for taking proper steps towards its implementation. Rupees two crores will be required to give a start to the University. The authorities of the Mission fervently hope that the generous public will readily respond to their appeal for further funds so that the scheme may be given a reasonable shape during the birth centenary year of Swami Vivekananda. It is also expected that both the Central and the State Governments will adequately help the proposed University to maintain it in a proper way.

SWAMI VIRESWARANANDA
General Secretary
Ramakrishna Math and Mission