

VOL. LXXI

OCTOBER 1967

# Prabuddha Bharata

OR  
AWAKENED INDIA



By Karma, Jnana, Bhakti, and Yoga, by one or more or  
all of these the vision of the Paramatman is obtained.

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# PRABUDDHA BHARATA

OCTOBER 1967

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## PRABUDDHA BHARATA

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# PRABUDDHA BHARATA

Vol. LXXII

OCTOBER 1967

No. 10



उत्तिष्ठत जाग्रत प्राप्य वरान्निबोधत

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

—:o:—

LETTERS OF SWAMI SHIVANANDA

( 130 )

Sri Ramakrishna Math  
Belur, Howrah  
19 August 1923

Dear Sriman —,

Received your long letter and learnt all. I am sending you the reply in brief.

Continue to do what you are doing now. I am very delighted to hear what—says. Verily those are the words which Swamiji had uttered from his heart. Very often he would be excited while thinking about the masses. The lowly and the poor were as though the very idols of his life. Know it for certain that any effort by any one who thinks of lifting them up is but the desired work of Swamiji. —cannot prescribe a different line for those who are doing their spiritual practices and work quite according to the direction and inspiration of the direct disciples of the Master such as Swami Premananda and others. Neither can he prevent them from doing the same for he has not acquired the requisite power as yet to do such. He has told you only that which he considered good for him. Of course, there are a few instructions such as, 'Work brings in attachment' and the like which are quite true. But this Order of the Master, the Holy Mother and Swamiji is of a different nature. It is not merely a place for exclusive spiritual practices and the practice of renunciation and austerities. It has a mission that will re-establish the religion of the Age. Here one is required to do work along with the spiritual practices. Those who will do work by our (i.e. intimate devotees of the Master) direction will never get

entangled in attachment. The Master Himself will remain responsible for that. Never will they get attached.

What to write you more? My heartfelt love and blessings to you and all. I do not feel so well in health. Uptill now the general health of the Math has not turned much bad. Only three or four had the attack of dengue fever and they all are recovering themselves gradually. Hope, through the Master's grace, you all are doing well.

Your well-wisher,  
Shivananda

## SWAMI BRAHMANANDA TO SISTER NIVEDITA

### AN UNPUBLISHED LETTER

[Sister Nivedita while she was still Miss Margaret Noble (in 1897), evinced keen interest in the development of the activities of the Ramakrishna Mission which her Master Swami Vivekananda had founded in May, 1897 on his return from the West. Swami Brahmananda, the brother disciple of the Swami, was made the first President of this newly founded Organization. Swami Brahmananda, in one of his letters to Margaret Noble written in 1897, gave her a broad outline of the ideal and the activities of the Mission describing at the same time the daily life of the monastic members who had gathered round the inspiring leadership of Swami Vivekananda at the then Baranagore Math. The letter, besides being a report of the Mission's activities, appears to be an important historical document that enables one to have a glimpse into the struggles and stresses through which the monastic brotherhood had to make its way till finally it emerged as one of the wonder creations of Ramakrishna-Vivekananda. We reproduce the letter here for our readers.—Ed.]

The Math  
Baranagor P.O. Calcutta  
17.9.97

To  
Miss Margaret E. Noble  
The Ruskin School  
Brantwood Worples  
Wimbledon, London S.W.

Dear Madam,

As promised in my previous letter I am sending you now the progress report of our work in India for the month of July 1897.

My first letter began with a short sketch about the Organization of the central training institution called the Math. I think it is necessary here to enter briefly into the question of the constitution of the Math, which I have not touched in my previous report. Shortly after our beloved Master Sri Ramakrishna Deva had departed this life, the few young men who gathered round him drawn by a passionate love for his holy self, formed themselves

into a brotherhood for realizing in their own lives, those principles which were the burden of his life-long teaching. Renunciation is the threshold through which man must enter into spiritual life. These men have renounced the world to follow in the footsteps of the Master. In the beginning they were eleven. Their number now has increased to twenty-three besides six young men who though have not formally accepted the vow of a *sannyāsin* are leading a life of physical, intellectual, moral and religious discipline. Life passes in the Math in meditation, devotion, intellectual culture, moral discipline and strict temperance in everything. Private study is much cultivated amongst the members, the books mostly read are the Vedānta and the other system of philosophy with *Gītā* and *Bhāgavata*—books which are the great exponents of *Bhakti-Yoga*. Everyday in the evening all the members congregate (referred to as the training class in my first letter) for hearing the sermons preached by one of the Swamis. The texts taken up for exposition deal either with *Jñāna*, *Bhakti-Yoga* or *Karma*. The weekly lecture classes proved very interesting. The subjects taken up in July were 1. Monastery by S. Trigunatita 2. Renunciation by S. Bimalananda 3. True religion by S. Suddhananda and 4. *Brahmacarya* by S. Prokasananda.

2. In my preceding letter to you I gave a brief outline of the principles and the method of work of the association formed by S. Vivekananda after his return to India. I propose in my present letter to give a few details respecting its scope, present position and future possibilities.

The fraternization of the various creeds of the world which to our belief it was the special mission of Sri Ramakrishna, our revered Master, to establish, is the primal end which our society will ever strive to reach. We have entered the arena not to fight over a dogma, not to add another sect to the already too numerous religious denominations, not to contend for the acceptance of Hinduism or any other religion of the world. Our motto is peace among 'the various creeds of the world knowing them to be the phases of one eternal universal religion'. This is the message which the Ramakrishna Mission believes to be its privilege to proclaim. But our present position is not at all assuring. Of course we are pledged for the truth and we would stand by the truth. Today we are mis-judged, misrepresented, looked suspiciously, few abuse us, while the people at large are unsympathetic. Our efforts get very feeble response, if they are not thought mischievous. But we have nothing to complain for all these. Never was the time so propitious, to declare to mankind that of whatever colour or creed we might be, however, separated by barriers physical or intellectual, racial or religious, the same Brahman shines in us all; that enmities in religion should now cease, that equality in heart should reign in spite of social inequalities and religious differences.

The weekly meetings of the members of the Ramakrishna Mission Calcutta Centre are held with the special object of bringing home and acting up to the principles which our beloved Master propounded and which he illustrated in his own life. For this purpose the personal experiences and the reminiscences of the Master are told by those of the members, who were very intimate and who have practically realized his teachings. Subjects for lectures

are sometimes selected for the members with the object of making them acquainted with the cardinal doctrines of religion. Lives of the saints, prophets and incarnations of Hinduism are made special subjects of study to illustrate faith, renunciation, worship &c. In July the reminiscences of Sri Ramakrishna by Babu G. C. Ghosh and Babu M. N. Gupta were as instructive as they were interesting and there was a valuable and charming contribution from the pen of Babu S. N. Bose on the life of Saint Haridas—a Mohammedan convert to Hinduism.

3. The Madras Centre had recently a very valuable acquisition in Mr. J. J. Goodwin, a disciple of S. Vivekananda and he has proved a great help to S. Ramakrishnananda. Besides the usual work at the Math, the following lectures were delivered at the Young Men's Hindu Association at Madras. 1. *Bhakti-Yoga* by S. Ramakrishnananda 2. Life and teachings of Śrī Caitanya by S. Ramakrishnananda and 3. *Karma* by Mr. J. J. Goodwin.

4. We have received a communication from S. Shivananda who has fairly begun his work at Colombo. With a few European ladies and gentlemen he has opened a lecture class and has commenced the teaching of *Rāja-yoga*. He is holding the classes thrice a week. On Sundays *Gītā* is read and explained. A *Gītā* class has also been opened and is attended by about a dozen educated native gentlemen of Colombo. We hope to receive shortly the details of the proceedings.

5. The services of S. Akhandananda in rendering timely help to the famine stricken people in the district of Murshidabad have been recognized by the Government officials of the locality and the Magistrate of Murshidabad Mr. Levinge who presided at the distribution of clothes to the people, spoke well of the Swami's benevolent work. S. Akhandananda has presently opened another relief centre in the subdivision Kandi of the same district where relief was urgently required. But in none of the districts of Bengal so affected was the distress so universal and severely felt as the district of Dinagepur. Both the official and the non-official reports pointed to the urgent necessity of opening reliefs in that part of the country. Consequently S. Trigunatita who was helping S. Akhandananda, proceeded to Dinagepur and in consultation with the Magistrate of the place, Mr. Bonhem Carter, has opened relief at Biral Station. Many kind hearted gentlemen have liberally responded to our appeal and we are very grateful to all of them and especially to a gentleman of Madras who though a man of moderate means had the noble heart to give away Rs. 1,500 for this benevolent cause.

Hoping to be excused for the delay in sending this report for July.

I remain,  
Yours very sincerely,  
S. Brahmananda

# SISTER NIVEDITA: OUR HOMAGE

[ EDITORIAL ]

*Sister Nivedita Birth Centenary:* The year 1967 will be remembered as the Birth Centenary year of Sister Nivedita, the forerunner of a new era in the realm of Indian national thoughts. Born in a far off country as Ireland, this great hearted Englishwoman made a voyage of discovery by her dedication to the cause of India and stood in our midst as an inspiration at whose voice we woke up from our sleep to run a career of virtuous emulation in everything great and good and as an insight that invited us all to behold our sacred traditions of the ages. Her advent in Indian history was an enthusiasm that kindled the rays of Indian genius and embellished Indian national life with a new spirit of self-sacrifice and patriotic zeal till it became a theatre of wonder and amazement. She was truly the heroic soul. 'Heroism', says Emerson, 'is an obedience to a secret impulse of an individual character... It speaks the truth, and it is just, generous, hospitable, temperate, scornful of petty calculations, and scornful of being scorned. It persists; it is of an undaunted boldness, and of a fortitude not to be wearied out.' And so, as Emerson avers again, 'The heroic cannot be the common, nor the common the heroic.' But what was the secret impulse which lay hidden in Nivedita's character to make her so uncommon, so heroic and so dedicated to her cause? The answer to this question lies in the message of her Master, in the hardihood of its suggestions to an understanding that was animated by ardour and enlightened by conviction. Sister Nivedita hastened the heralding of the Vivekananda Age in the national consciousness of India and ushered in a silent revolution in the thought-world of the educated *elite* of the

country. To remember Sister Nivedita therefore is to recount the story of an entire age and to retrace the panorama of a series of historic developments that ensued at her advent into the stage of Indian History.

*Sister Nivedita and Her Great Destiny:* Sister Nivedita, previously known by the name Miss Margaret Noble, came of Irish parentage and was born at Dungannon, Co. Tyrone on October 28, 1867. Brought up and bred as an Englishwoman and educated in a typical English way, she had developed an inquisitive mind from her very childhood days. She received her education at the Halifax College, had studied Pestalozzi and Froëbel deeply and was an ardent supporter of the New Education movement that was prevailing at the time in England. But there was another dimension of Margaret's personality where she had been experiencing a deep and desperate anguish with regard to her religious aspirations. She had inherited a religious temperament from her pious father and mother who were devoted Christians, but her questioning mind always hated the sanctimonious mimicry. She found no solace in any dogma that was stereotyped, mechanical and recitative. Many of the Christian doctrines appeared to her to be customary and trite and this made her audacious at times in her enquiries about God and Religion in general. Describing her early struggles she said later on in one of her lectures in Bombay in 1902: 'I was born and bred an Englishwoman and upto the age of eighteen I was trained and educated as English girls are. Christian religious doctrines were of course early instilled into me... But after the age of eighteen I began to harbour doubts as to



the truth of the Christian doctrines. Many of them began to seem to me false and incompatible with truth. These doubts grew stronger and stronger and at the same time my faith in Christianity tottered more and more'. But the doubter had within her heart a wondrous equanimity which could never think of exchanging the soul for world. So she said again, 'For seven years I was in this wavering state of mind, very unhappy and yet very, very, eager to seek the Truth.' Therefore to the tiresome many with their petty crosses and cares she preferred the society of the like-minded and the limited few. She opened a school of her own at Wimbledon and tried to remain absorbed in serious work.

It was at this hour of despair and disappointment that Margaret first met Swami Vivekananda who was then visiting London with his message of Vedānta in 1895. She heard a new gospel which was restated and reformed and which bore the stamp of burning realization for its countersign. It was the mark of this realization that she had so long been searching for. Margaret found 'the words of Swami Vivekananda' as 'living water to men perishing of thirst.' The new message animated her heart, illumined her mind and intoned her thoughts and she began to ponder over it again and again. The more she thought of the 'heroic fibre' of the great Vedāntist, the more she became overwhelmed by his 'character'. Soon she began addressing him as 'Master'.

The march of events gradually led Margaret to her pre-ordained destiny and at one point she stood face to face with it. It happened during the second visit of Swami Vivekananda to London in 1896. It was a question-class where the Swami was describing certain bold assertions of Vedānta before a number of eager enquirers including Margaret. 'Not the soul for Nature but Nature for the Soul', he was emphasizing again and again. A Hindu

sage was sitting amidst a group of Western listeners. Deep solitude had descended upon the environment. The enchanting presence and the enthralling voice of the great Eastern teacher filled the atmosphere of the place with new thoughts and feelings giving transports of wonder and exaltation to the entire audience. On one occasion the question came up, 'What the world wants today?' For a while the listeners wondered as to what the answer would be, for herein lay the quintessence of all Vedānta, the conclusion of all that they had so long been listening to: Truth must be realized. The freedom of the soul must be manifested in every movement of our life. Vedāntic reality is to be quickened and invigorated by vital contact with life and life's aspirations. So the great Vedāntist suddenly rose to his feet and, summing up all his teachings on Vedānta, thundered, 'What the world wants today is twenty men and women who can dare to stand in the street yonder, and say that they possess nothing but God. Who will go? Why should one fear? If this is true, what else could matter? If it is not true what do our lives matter?' It was a call for supreme self-dedication and perhaps nobody was ready for it. But Margaret took this thunder to be a voice of God and muttered within: 'If it is not true what do our lives matter?' She became impatient to follow the heroic lead of her Master and take the plunge. She informed the Swami about her determination to dedicate to the cause of Truth.

Swami Vivekananda saw in Margaret 'a great future in the work for India'. His was a Vedānta that was different from any silent and self-introspective brooding on some sterile and unoriginal metaphysical dialectics. It was a dynamic religion whose sanctifying power would lift up the entire life with all its master *passions and dominant impulses* and give it a consecrating

touch. His was a mission that sought to initiate a commerce of ideas between the East and the West on equal and equitable terms. And above all he carried within his dilated heart the sobs and tears of entire India, his motherland which, notwithstanding its excellences of spiritual realizations of the ages, had been groaning under the mighty incubus of grinding poverty and abject degeneration. What he wanted was not any Western religion but Western virility and Western enthusiasm in exchange of Eastern spirituality. In the self-dedication of Margaret Noble, therefore, he saw a great future for India and more particularly Indian women. He wrote to Margaret:

'India cannot yet produce great women, she must borrow them from other nations. Your education, sincerity, purity, immense love, determination and above all, the Celtic blood make you just the woman wanted.' Yet the path of dedication was not a bed of roses. Dwelling upon the immensity of the task, he further wrote: 'Yet the difficulties are many. You cannot form any idea of the misery, the superstition and the slavery that are here. You will be in the midst of a mass of half-naked men and women, with quaint ideas of caste and isolation, shunning the white skin through fear or hatred and hated by them intensely. On the other hand, you will be looked upon by the white as a crank and every one of your movements will be watched with suspicion.' But no sacrifice is too heavy for one who seeks the truth. Margaret remained undeterred in her determination and unflinching in her faith. She left England and arrived at the feet of her Master in 1898 and was initiated into her life's ideal—the ideal of dedication and self-sacrifice that would create a new history for the posterity. The great Master named her as Nivedita or one who was dedicated. Margaret Noble of England

was sacrificed at the altar of God and was dedicated to the cause of suffering humanity. Awakened to the call of spirit what else she could do? And 'If this is true what else could matter?'

The tremendous store of energy and vitality pulsating in the breast of the West, must be infused into the Indian life to break its agelong slumber and inertia and galvanize its diffused potentialities to make it move forward to the path of freedom—political, economic and social. This was the vision of Swami Vivekananda. By initiating Sister Nivedita to the cause of India, he set in motion a new force that marked the beginning of that great task.

*The Cause of 'Women and the People':* Sister Nivedita attained a true spiritual rebirth on the soil of India, the land of her dreams. She had transcended all barriers of race and colour, pride and prejudice and her self-dedication was complete and total. She was no royal visitor who came over India from England to survey the stateliness of the temples and sumptuousness of the monuments or to make accurate measurements of the remains of India's ancient grandeur. She was on the other hand a self-immolating martyr who dived into the depth of sorrow and suffering, surveyed the mansions of agony and pain, gauged the dimensions of degeneration and misery, served the causes of the forgotten and the forsaken and shared the distresses and pangs of the people. She loved India from the innermost depth of her heart and became one with the Indian people. Invincible in resolution, firm in resolve, incorruptible in integrity, she was determined to galvanize the broken and dishonoured fragments of this once glorious national union and make them turn into the gorgeous ensign of a unified and resurgent nationhood. This love of India was the legacy of her Master. 'Spread of education, first among the women

and the masses', felt Swami Vivekananda, to be the crying need of the hour. 'The uplift of the women, the awakening of the masses', said he, 'must come first, and then only can any real good come about for the country, for India'. So the Swami said to Nivedita, 'Never forget! The word is "Women and the People"'. This was a crowning gospel that inspired his heroic disciple to embark on a mighty educational experiment which was inaugurated by the opening of a small school for girls at Bagbazar, Calcutta. In the divine character of the Holy Mother, Sri Sarada Devi, she saw the future ideal of Indian womanhood and she was eager to see the new generation of women cast in to the mould of that ideal. About the Holy Mother she wrote, 'She is Sri Ramakrishna's final word as to the ideal of Indian Womanhood.' Yet it was a difficult—one extremely difficult—task which Nivedita shouldered. There was no money, no help from any quarter; there were orthodox neighbours unwilling to send their children to the new school and there were superstitions, suspicions and pessimism around discouraging her in every step of her progress. But she stood alone battling against the odds single-handed. No martyr can be defeated or dishonoured. No sordid occurrences of ordinary life can reach the heroic soul. Nivedita's selfless love, pure heart, sincere efforts and manifold talents wielded every difficulty to her own advantage. Slowly and steadily the small school began to throb with new possibilities and it gradually started exerting considerable influence upon the *elite* of the city. It was no ordinary school where Sister Nivedita taught and trained her dear students. It was 'a centre of unfailing friendliness and succour' that touched every heart. She always reminded the girls that they were the daughters of Bharata, the land of the Sages, the cradle of the human civilization. While narrating

stories about the Rajput women to them, she would transport herself back to the days of Rajput chivalry and exhorting all to be brave she would say: 'Oh Daughters of Bharata! you all vow to be like the Kṣatriya women'. She would very often take them to the feet of the Holy Mother and make them familiar with the life and teachings of Swami Vivekananda and would proudly record her experiences later on, 'All these girls are learning certain ideas and impulses. They hold themselves under Swami and the Holy Mother. They are something of disciples and the pupils'. Her school thus came to stand as one of the pioneer national institutions of modern India breathing a new national spirit in every sphere of its life and it laid the foundation of a new order of Indian Womanhood which attempted to bridge the yawning gap of the ages that separated the glories of the past from the rapidly changing perspectives of the present. 'Nivedita Girls' School', wrote Sir Jadunath Sarkar, one of the illustrious contemporaries of Sister Nivedita, 'became a centre of light and example before us'.

Such a self-immolating dynamic spirit could not however remain confined within the limited campus of a small school. The slow progress of educational work made Nivedita impatient at times. True to her virile Celtic blood that had been flowing in her veins, she was eager for a new front of activities through which she could make herself a worthy champion of her Master's cause. Nivedita therefore plunged herself in a new thought—the thought of the political emancipation of India. She had been the witness to the British misrule in the country and she considered political freedom as precondition of all social and spiritual regeneration of the nation. If the new thought had been an emotion, it did colour thoughts of Nivedita, for she once remarked, 'Emotion should serve to

colour thought'. And the upsurge of the new thought soon brought her into the forefront of India's struggle for freedom. The youth and the patriots all over the country heard a new voice calling upon them to rally round a common banner—the banner of one united India. Nivedita moved from one end of the country to another and inspired the youth everywhere. She could be seen in the streets of Calcutta attired in the garb of a nun conducting relief work for the sick and again one could see her standing upon the public platforms of Bombay or Madras addressing the youth, the women and the masses and speaking before them the spiritual and cultural unity of the nation in glowing terms and compelling eloquence. Commenting upon this historic role of Sister Nivedita, Dr. Rashbehari Ghosh, the great Indian thinker observed later on:

'An India united in civic purposes, proud of its past achievements, proud of its contribution to the civilization of mankind, and destined to render still higher service to humanity was the ideal for which she worked. And who can say she worked in vain? Who can say she has not made the steps easier for those who will follow her? ... If we are conscious of a budding national life at the present day it is in no small measure due to the teaching of Sister Nivedita.'

The courses of history are often mysterious. At a time when Lord Curzon, the Governor General of India was trying to consolidate the foundation of the British rule in this country by sowing the seeds of division among the people, another member of the same royal race was actively thinking of the end of that pernicious British rule and was broadcasting the message of a new awakening and unity throughout the length and breadth of India.

The dynamic spirit of Sister Nivedita had been a positive intellectual force in

the firmament of Indian national history for over a full decade with its wonderful persistency and remarkable vitality. To echo the words of the great Indian leader G. K. Gokhale she 'exercised a profound and far-reaching influence on the thoughts and ideas of those around her.' All her dynamism ended in a championship of what her dynamic Master had stood for and thought of and the spirit found tangible expressions in her monumental literary works such as *The Master as I Saw Him*, *The Web of Indian Life*, *Kālī the Mother*, *An Indian Study of Love and Death*, *Cradle Tales of Hinduism* and others and in her numerous essays, articles and writings which she contributed to the various journals and especially to the columns of the *Prabuddha Bharata* for about fifteen years. Swami Vivekananda, while giving his blessings to the *Prabuddha Bharata* on the eve of the journal's first inauguration in 1896, wrote, 'Be obedient and faithful to the cause of Truth, Humanity and your country and you will move the world.' In this great mission of *Prabuddha Bharata* Sister Nivedita's loving care and rich contributions proved to be a source of un-failing inspiration and immense help. For example, *The Web of Indian Life* was the product of a wide historical research that highlighted significant facets of India's history and heritage and *The Master As I Saw Him* was one of the great religious classics which ever came to be written by any body anywhere. Prof. T. K. Cheyne of Oxford University, appreciating the true merit of this volume in the columns of the *Hibbert Journal* (January 1911) wrote, 'It may be placed among the choicest religious classics, below the various Scriptures, but on the same shelf with the *Confessions of Saint Augustine* and *Sabatier's Life of Saint Francis*'.

With her multicoloured life of manifold virtues, Sister Nivedita has left us, not in-

deed her mantle of inspiration but a name and an example which will continue to inspire thousands of the youth in India—a name which is India's pride, and an example of self-sacrifice which will continue to be our strength for the future. To quote the words of the poet Rabindranath Tagore, 'The life which Sister Nivedita gave for us was a very great life... She was in fact a Mother of People... When she uttered the word "Our People", the tone of absolute kinship which struck the ear, was not heard from any other among us... She is to be respected not because she was Hindu but because she was great. She is to be honoured not because she was like us, but because she was greater than us.'

Sister Nivedita passed away on the morning of October 13, 1911 in Darjeeling where she had gone for a short change. At her abrupt exit the whole country was immediately plunged into deep sorrow and disappointment. Paying tribute to the memory of the heroic soul *The Amrita Bazar Patrika* of November 11, 1911 wrote, 'She decidedly belongs to the illustrious band of active workers who have knit together the East and the West in closest bonds of sympathy and whose achievements are a standing refutation of the familiar epigram of Rudyard Kipling:

"East is East, West is West

And never the Twain shall meet."

Distinguished and great persons all over the world mourned her loss. A public meeting was held on March 23, 1912 at the Town Hall, Calcutta with Dr. Rashbehari Ghosh in the Chair to commemorate the hallowed memory of this great daughter of India. Eminent Indian leaders like Sir Surendranath Banerjee, Mr. Fraser Blair, the Hon'ble Mr. G. K. Gokhale, Abanindra Nath Tagore, The Hon'ble Pandit Madan Mohan Malavya, Mr. Wahed Hossein and The Hon'ble Babu Bhupendra Nath Basu

spoke on the occasion paying eloquent tributes and respects to the memory of the Sister. It was unanimously resolved at the meeting: 'That a suitable memorial be raised to perpetuate the memory of this illustrious soul and that funds be collected for that purpose.'

*Sister Nivedita, The Deathless*: Yet when everything will be told, one will feel like saying that dynamism is not the last word of Sister Nivedita's character. No doubt, she was dedicated to the cause of Indian women, she symbolized the aspirations of the Indian people, she was a scholar and she was a martyr of the martyrs but before everything she was Nivedita of Ramakrishna-Vivekananda. Herein lay the secret of her all inner impulse, the fountain-head of her all dynamism, versatility, self-sacrifice and virility. Like Jeanne D'arc of France, she drew her strength from God and God alone. When Jeanne was led to her death, she asked for a Cross and the nearby soldier gave her two pieces of stick tied together. There upon a Cross was brought from a Church and was held before her eyes. As flames gathered round her she kissed the Cross and cried out one word, 'Jesus'. That was her last word.

But nobody would ever know what the last thought of Sister Nivedita was as she passed away in silence. Perhaps the words of her Master were still ringing in her ears: 'What the world wants today is twenty men and women who can dare to stand in the street yonder, and say that they possess nothing but God... If this is true what else could matter? If it is not true what do our lives matter?' But it was no death for Sister Nivedita. Her life was a living flame of self-dedication. Only her body was left behind as she passed away. The flame had become an eternal beacon.

We offer our respectful homage to the memory of that immortal flame which perpetuates the spirit of Sister Nivedita.

## PASCAL'S IMAGE OF MAN

DR. S. SUBHASH CHANDRA

Blaise Pascal (1623-1662), a younger contemporary of Descartes, is one of the founders of the French philosophy in particular and the modern European philosophy in general. He was a profound personality. A mathematician, an inventor, one of the pioneers of experimental physics, an erudite theologian, a merciless opponent in controversy, a great writer, and a highly religious being, Pascal was a phenomenon. He was no abstract thinker lost into artificial categories of thought, no intellectualist thriving on a sterile pre-occupation with pseudo-problems. He was far too permeated by an awareness of the inner vacuum of all things to derive satisfaction from problems of speculative metaphysics. As Lucien Goldmann has pointed out, there are many basic affinities between Pascal and Goethe's Faust. (Lucien Goldmann *Le Dieu cache*, Paris, Gallimard, 1955, pp. 193-195) Both Pascal and Faust are imbued with a sense of meaninglessness of things and feel within themselves, as a highly personal life-long experience, all the despair that flows out of such an awareness. The French thinker no less than the hero of the German poet was all the time a restless seeker, a dedicated aspirant who recoils from self-deception. They both suffered due to inner conflicts, were victims of many a spiritual crisis. And they both tried in vain to gain access to the nature of reality by means of natural sciences. Finally, both of them came to see in man the key to the enigma of universe: 'know thyself' is the common watchword of the French philosopher and the German poet.

In a remarkable piece of self-avowal Pascal tells us: 'I spent a long time in the study of the abstract sciences... When I

began studying the nature of man, I saw that the abstract sciences were ill-suited to a human being and that I was more misled by devoting myself to them than others by ignoring them. I forgave other (scientists) for having so little knowledge of this. But I believed that I would at least be able to find many companions in the study of the nature of man... But I was mistaken: the number of those who study the nature of man is even smaller than those who study geometry'. (Blaise Pascal, Ed. by Brunschvicg: *Oeuvres*, Paris, Hachette, les Grands Ecrivains de la France, 1925, Vol. XIII, pp. 70-71. All references in the present article are based on this edition of Pascal's writings.) This crucial passage testifies to a basic change in Pascal's approach to reality. We witness here a transition from the abstract to the concrete, from the impersonal to the personal, from the non-living to the humanly living. Hitherto he dealt with the abstract problems of geometry and mechanics. Now he is concerned with human life in all its manifold aspects. Thanks to this development, Pascal is today widely regarded as the father of the contemporary existentialism.

Pascal's approach to human nature is primarily embodied in his *Pensées*, a unique work of French language. It is an incomplete work. Indeed, Pascal never reached a point where he could even delineate the outlines of his planned great work. He left a heap of fragmentary thoughts scribbled in a hopelessly illegible handwriting upon small scraps of paper. We, therefore, do not know what final form his thoughts would have acquired, if he had been able to complete his immortal work. We, however, learn from

Etienne Périer, the nephew of Pascal, that the philosopher once delivered an informal lecture of 'two or three hours' before a select gathering summarizing the trend of his book. In this lecture, Etienne Périer informs us, Pascal 'began first of all by a portrait of the nature of man'. (ibid., Vol. XII, p. CLXXXIII) If Etienne Périer is to be relied upon for the authenticity of this information, then it would appear that Pascal had already become fully conscious of the preponderant role that his interpretation of human nature was to play in his *Pensées*. It is legitimate to hold that no matter what final shape his thoughts would have assumed, the reflections related to human nature would certainly have occupied a pivotal position in his philosophy.

Pascal's understanding of human nature is rooted in the Christian doctrine of the fall of man from a higher state. An early follower of Cornelius Jansen (1585-1638), whose doctrines he has so brilliantly espoused in his famous *Lettres Provinciales*, Pascal was convinced that human being is in a unique sense corrupt, for he has strayed away from his originally higher state. (According to Henri Lefebvre: 'Pascal was no more than a translator in beautiful language, in diplomatic language of Jansen'. Henri Lefebvre: *Pascal*, Paris, Les Editions Nagel, 1949, Vol. I. p. 47) He avers: 'The human being is at a loss concerning his status. He has obviously deviated away, fallen from his original place and is incapable of regaining it. Full of worry, he is everywhere, in the impenetrable darkness that engulfs him, in quest of it but without success'. (Pascal, op. cit., Vol. XIII, p. 326. The same thought recurs on Vol. XIII, p. 339.) Pascal draws our attention to the fact that all men without exception yearn to be happy and holds that this universal urge is a proof of the human being having once possessed

real happiness. For, if man had never known the state of perfect happiness, then he would not all the time strive to be perfectly happy. We do not have here just one of the many goals that could interest human beings, but the driving impulse of all human motivation. The desire to be happy, maintains Pascal, 'is the motive of all actions of all men including those who hang themselves'. (ibid., Vol. XIII, pp. 321-322) Hence, this overriding urge to be happy may be taken as the residue of the original state of perfect happiness that was once natural to man.

The outstanding feature of this fall is that man has moved away from God, that an infinite chasm separates the human being from his divine source. All human suffering is rooted in this basic estrangement of the human from the divine. The human being is an uprooted phenomenon, something bereft of its own roots, divorced from its own origins. This lack of roots is not just one of the many features of the human being, not just a trait of his personality, but constitutes the very nature of the human being. Indeed, all other aspects of human life stem in some or the other manner from this underlying vacuum of human existence. This awareness of the essential emptiness of human existence was not the result of any speculative preoccupation with problems of philosophy on the part of Pascal. Pascal had felt deep within him this inner vacuum, had suffered all his life due to it and had, by virtue of an agonizing appraisal of things, realized that this sense of meaninglessness of existence was no 'illness' peculiar to him alone but was the common lot of all human beings. As Jacques Chevalier has put it: 'Within him and without him, he (Pascal) experiences a vacuum that he is incapable of filling up by his own effort, that the entire nature is incapable of filling up, a vacuum that

remains a gaping chasm even after all things are put into it'. (Jacques Chevalier: *Pascal*, Paris, E. Flammarion, 1936, p. 120)

The inanity of existence is vouched for by the ignorance of the human being concerning the purpose of life. We find ourselves sort of stranded in the universe. We do not know where from we come, nor what we are to accomplish during our lives, nor what is to become of us after death. Pascal compares human lot with that of 'some one carried away to a deserted and frightful island while he is sleeping: upon waking up, he does not know where he is and has no means of getting away from the island'. (Pascal: *op. cit.*, Vol. XIV, pp. 133-134) We are in a peculiar sense of the word 'thrown' into the world. We do not choose to be born: we happen to be born, just happen to find ourselves at a certain point in the infinite stretches of time and space. There is no reason why we should be born at the place where we are born. After all, space is so infinitely vast that we might have been born elsewhere in it. In the same manner, why should Blaise Pascal have been born in the seventeenth century and why not in some other century? Here too infinite spans of time that have preceded the seventeenth century and that are going to follow it render it just as possible for Pascal to have been born in some other century. Furthermore, even the dot of time and space whereupon we are thrown is devoid of stability. We find ourselves in a whirlpool of things, swept by powerful currents and are at the mercy of unpredictable winds. 'We sail upon a vast area, full of uncertainty and flux, pushed from one extremity to the other . . . Nothing waits for us. . . We yearn to find a stable platform, a final and firm base whereupon we could construct a tower that would stretch to-

wards the infinite, but all our foundation cracks and the earth reveals abysses within itself'. (*ibid.*, Vol. XII, pp. 85-86)

The inevitability of death is yet another proof of the senselessness of existence. All men are doomed to die. 'No matter how pleasant the other parts of the drama be, the last act is a bloody one: one throws a part of the earth upon the head and one is buried for ever'. (*ibid.*, Vol. XIII, pp. 128-129) Death is the great nihilator of life and, being inevitable, it mocks at all human efforts to escape it. We have no choice in this respect. And in that we are denied any option concerning death, we are chained to it for all our lives. No matter where we may flee, we can never escape death, can never throw off this chain that is going to strangulate us some day. 'Just imagine a number of men in chains, all condemned to death. Everyday some of them are butchered in the presence of others: those who survive see their own fate in what has happened to their slaughtered fellow beings and, looking at each other in sorrow and without hope, wait for their turn. Here you have a portrait of human lot'. (*ibid.*, Vol. XIII, p. 124) As if that were not enough, the horror of death is further enhanced by the fact that we all are doomed to die alone, unaccompanied by anybody, in total loneliness. No matter what relationships we may forge in the course of our life, regardless of how many friends we may have, we have to die alone: death annuls all ties. Lest one should forget it, let it be stressed that we human beings have no say in these issues. No body asks us whether we would like to be born or not. There is no court of appeal as far as death is concerned: no matter how much we may shout and lament, we cannot get our death revoked. It is in the light of this basic absence of any say concerning



our birth and death that Pascal has evolved his view that we human beings are essentially 'dumb': 'My hands are tied and my mouth is sealed ... and I have no freedom'. (ibid., Vol. XIII, p. 153)

The human void can be further appreciated with reference to the vastness of the universe wherein we find ourselves. The universe, holds Pascal, is infinite. We cannot conceive its having an end. No matter how far we may stretch its outer extremities, we would always find that there is still more of it. 'The visible world is not more than an imperceptible hyphen in the vast breast of nature. No imagination can approximate it... It is an infinite sphere whose centre is everywhere and circumference nowhere'. (ibid., Vol. XII, pp. 72-73) The endless stretches of astronomical space are, however, but one aspect of the limitless vastness of the universe. We ought not to forget that the tiny atom is itself a universe containing within itself its own planets, sun, earth, etc., that we have to microscopically traverse no less endless distances in reaching the end of the atom than in trying to ascertain the circumference of the astronomical cosmos. We cannot but tremble in contemplating these two forms of the infinite, become sensible of our insignificance in comparison with them, and admire these marvels of creation in respectful silence instead of making presumptuous enquiries related to them. We are merely a passing wave in the ocean of the universe. 'What is man in the universe? A nothing compared to the infinite, a something compared to the nothing, a middle between nothing and everything'. (ibid., Vol. XII, p. 78)

As if all this were not enough, we find ourselves thrown into, enveloped by an essentially dead universe, a universe consisting of lifeless planets, vast systems of burning stars bereft of life. Further, all these planets are separated from one

another by immense distances that are just empty stretches of space, entirely uninhabited by any living thing. This overwhelming preponderance of dead matter and empty spaces—indicative as it is of the universe being mainly lifeless—in the cosmos is one of the sources of a profoundly human dread that accompanied Pascal during his entire life. Pascal avows: 'The eternal silence of the infinite spaces frightens me.' (ibid., Vol. XIII, p. 127) These dead spaces do not respond to the cry of a frightened soul, they render no echo. We are immersed in a 'dumb universe'. These stupendous stretches of dumb space remind us constantly by their very silence that our world is but an insignificant speck of life imperceptibly lost in the mass of the dead universe that encases it. We are utterly lonely in the universe. Our world is but an island of life in the surrounding ocean of lifelessness. In the wake of an awareness of this primacy of death in the universe, we are seized by an elemental dread. We become prey to a perpetual despair.

We are afraid of these dead spaces, for they remind us of the inevitability of our own death. We are always surrounded by death either in the form of the lifeless universe wherein we are situated or in the form of the inevitability of our personal death. In other words, even the flicker of life that the human world represents is doomed to be extinguished in a relatively short time. Human beings have the unique privilege of knowing that they are bound to die. But precisely this knowledge of the inescapable certainty of our death renders us accessible to the elemental dread of being annihilated for ever.

The ultimate root of the phenomenon of dread is to be located neither in the fear that the silent spaces instil in us nor in the frightful inevitability of our own death, but in the human anxiety lest one should be

forsaken by God. According to Gilberte Périer, a sister of Pascal, the last words that the philosopher uttered before his death consisted of the prayer: 'May God never abandon me!' (ibid., Vol. I, p. 114) We further learn from Gilberte Périer that everytime her brother talked of death, he used to refer to Jesus Christ as the solace of death and used to maintain that without Christ death is 'horrible'. Now if we remember that for Pascal Christ is the sole link between man and God, then it is palpable that the consoling presence of Christ at the time of one's death becomes an assurance that one has not been forsaken by Almighty. Indeed, quite apart from the primeval dread that death inspires in us, Pascal was wont to distinguish between two basic categories of fear, viz. 'good fear' and 'bad fear'. The faithful suffer due to good fear, for their fear is relieved by hope of divine grace. On the other hand, those who are plagued by doubt concerning the existence of God suffer due to bad fear: it is fear worsened by despair, unaccompanied by hope. (ibid., Vol. XIII, pp. 192-193) In other words, all human beings, regardless of whether they believe in God or not, are subservient to the phenomenon of fear (*crainte*). However, the faithful have the consolation of hope; the sceptics are condemned to despair. Hence, the former are subject to good fear and the latter are slaves of bad fear. Of course, the omnipresence of the phenomenon of fear among human beings emanates out of the original fall of man, stems from his primeval deviation from the divine source. In that man deviated from God, he has rendered himself constantly open to the possibility of being abandoned by the Almighty in turn. As Jean Mesnard has put it: 'What one has taken for his (Pascal's) personal dread is nothing but the dread of humanity divorced from God'. (Jean Mesnard:

*Pascal: L'homme et l'oeuvre*, Paris, Boivin et Cie, 1951, p. 169) Pascal himself participated in this universal human dread (*angoisse*), refused to falsify or belittle it in any manner.

All men have to come to terms with this underlying dread of human existence. As a rule, human beings seek to evade this dread. They make use of thousand forms of self-deception in order to escape this dread, inculcate all kinds of illusions so that they do not have to feel their own vacuum. Antoine Adam assures us: 'Pascal's human being is not interested in happiness: he is verily involved in a state of flight. He would like to flee from his own self, run away from the impossibility of bearing his own existence. The mere consciousness of his existence suffices to render his life a hell. He can bear his own being only to the extent that he flees away from himself and ceases to contemplate himself'. (Antoine Adam: *Histoire de la Littérature française au XVIIe Siècle*, Paris, Domat, 1951, Vol. II, p. 284) All human conventions are meant to facilitate this all too human need to run away from the void of life. One of the compelling proofs of all men being involved in a state of flight from their own inner emptiness is that, as a rule, no human being can remain long in a state of loneliness. We are afraid of loneliness, for in this state we are confronted with our own being, are forced to look into the dark hollows of our existence. We have no means of self-evasion, when we are forced to be all alone with ourselves: we cannot divert our attention from our own being by gossiping with friends or in playing time-killing games or in forgetting ourselves in routine work. We stand alone and suffer our own inanity of existence. No wonder, then, that man is a social animal. In the company of others we try to forget our own being and help others

in forgetting their own void of life. None of us can eliminate death, disease, sorrow, ignorance, etc. We, therefore, try to obtain an illusory freedom from all these and other manifestations of the senselessness of things by the simple means of just not thinking about them. We help others in forgetting these unhappy aspects of life and expect from them a similar aid. Indeed, all social intercourse, asserts Pascal, consists of this reciprocal self-deception. 'All human life is nothing but a perpetual illusion: one does nothing save deceive and flatter one another... Human ties are founded upon this mutual deception... Man is, therefore, nothing but a mask, an untruth and a hypocrisy'. (Pascal: op. cit., Vol. XIII, p. 31)

All dread, the entire sense of meaninglessness of things and the flight from his own chasm of being on the part of man stem from his original deviation from his divine origins. Such a fall would, however, presuppose that once man lived in a state of perfection. In this state of perfection, man is 'elevated above all nature, rendered akin to God and participates in his divinity'. (ibid., Vol. XIII, pp. 188-189. Reference may be made to Henri Gouhier's elucidation of Pascalian typology of men among Pagans, Jews, and Christians. Henri Gouhier: *Blaise Pascal: Commentaires*, Paris, Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin, 1966, pp. 236-237) Needless to say, no matter how much man may degenerate, how much he may come to approximate animals, he always retains a spark of his godliness within himself. His corruption does not nihilate his divine nature, but only makes him blind to it. However, even in this state of blindness, man is always, be it in a vague manner and full of ambivalence, aware of his originally divine nature. We find, therefore, that, on the one hand, man is involved in all forms of self-deception that

would enable him to run away from his own vacuum, on the other hand, he carries within himself a trace of his godliness. According to Pascal, man is torn between these two sides of his being, involved in a perpetual civil war with himself. His basic corruption pulls him in the direction of sin, self-conceit, spiritual inertia, and total misery. His godliness draws him towards a state of being where he could become a worthy recipient of divine grace. Thanks to this dichotomy of aspirations, man is prey to inner conflicts. Indeed, some times it would even appear as if man possessed two souls.

Pascal himself of course does not hold that we have two souls. He is rather of the viewpoint that we have one soul that is split by its own diverging aspirations. However, in view of these two basic trends of being Pascal expounded an interesting human typology. He writes: 'There are only three types of men: those who serve God after having found him, those who devote themselves to the search of God, for they have not found him; others who live having neither found him nor search for him. The first (type of men) are reasonable and happy, the last ones are mad and unhappy, those who belong to the middle (type) are unhappy but reasonable'. (ibid., Vol. XIII, p. 350) One can even hold, as Pascal himself too did, that we have only two types of men, viz. the aspirants and the non-aspirants. That among aspirants some have already reached their goal and have undone their deviation from God but others are still groping in darkness would not mean that the latter are for that less of seekers: they both, the successful ones and the not-yet successful ones, are devotees, conscientious seekers who eschew flight from their own spiritual emptiness, yearn to cure their blindness and regain the kingdom of God that they have lost. The sole difference between

the two being that the former, having already found God, are happy; the latter, being still far off from their goal, are unhappy. The non-aspirants, hardened sceptics as they are, are mad and unreasonable: they justify their indifference with the help of clever platitudes, lack earnestness and are devoid of a due understanding of the crucial issues involved in belief or non-belief in God.

That we have two essential types of men, that men are at once custodians of the divine spark within them as well as capable of being utterly blind to their godliness is a profound truth. Man is a 'paradox', for he is a deeply self-contradictory being, afflicted by his own inconsistency of existence. 'What a chimera is man! What an innovation, what a monster, what a chaos, what a theme of contradiction, what a prodigy! Judge of all things, an imbecile worm of earth; guardian of truth, sewer of incertitude and error; glory and scum of the universe'. (ibid., Vol. XIII, p. 346) Man is a rational animal, for he is endowed with the capacity to think. Thanks to this capacity, man is capable of pondering on his own being, reflecting both on his godliness as well as on the diverse forms of self-degradation that he is guilty of. And precisely this capacity to become aware of his own abject nature distinguishes man from other forms of life. Neither plants nor animals can become conscious of their lowly nature. Man alone is invested with this self-introspective capacity. Now to be aware of one's own baseness is already a big step in the direction of regaining one's lost kingdom of God. Hence, the capacity to become aware of one's fall from the state of perfection essentially coincides with possessing the capacity to seek God, to strive to undo one's deviation from him. In view of all these considerations, Pascal observes: 'Man is . . . capable of a little and a lot, of everything and a nothing:

he is neither angel nor beast but man'. (ibid., Vol. XIII, p. 67)

Pascal, as we have already pointed out, was a staunch adherent of the doctrines of Cornelius Jansen. Jansen had proclaimed the supremacy of divine grace vis-a-vis human effort for redemption. Salvation cannot be attained by human effort alone. It is essential that divine grace draw human being towards itself and thereby lead to his liberation from sin. According to Pascal, divine grace is perpetually in struggle against vice, which is 'natural' to human beings. He compares God to a 'mother' who pulls her 'child' (i.e. human soul) by one arm to herself while 'thieves' (i.e. sins of life) pull it by the other arm towards themselves. Man is torn by this conflict between the redeeming divine grace and the forces of corruption. (ibid., Vol. XIII, p. 398) Man is free in that he has the capacity to resist this grace. However, if and when it pleases God to redeem some one, then He directs his grace towards him in such a manner that the concerned human being, voluntarily and joyfully, acts in consonance with divine will and is redeemed. In this manner Pascal tries to reconcile the sovereignty of divine grace with the need for letting man have the freedom of will without which he cannot be made accountable for his deeds. (ibid., Vol. VII, pp. 28-30)

Finally, it may be stated that, as far as Pascal is concerned, Jesus Christ is the unique mediator between man and God. It is simply impossible for man to forge any link whatsoever with God without taking Christ as the indispensable intermediary. 'We know God only through Jesus Christ. Without this Mediator, all communication with God is impossible'. (ibid., Vol. XIII, p. 429) Indeed, Pascal is convinced that one cannot prove the

existence of God without referring to Christ as the Mediator: all proofs of God that bypass Christ as an indispensable link are 'feeble'. No wonder, then, that Pascal was not much impressed by the metaphysical proofs of God propounded by his great contemporary Descartes.

These are the outstanding features of Pascal's understanding of human nature. As we have pointed out at the outset of the present article, Pascal could not complete his projected great work. He left scattered thoughts, just a big bundle of scraps of paper containing hastily scribbled points. He died at the early age of thirty-nine years. Besides, even these thirty-nine years were full of many prolonged crises of conscience that brought in their wake great mental anguish and spells of serious illness. Hence, there are many

gaps in his thoughts and we do not know what final form Pascal would have given to them. Nevertheless, we have tried to link all his thoughts in such a manner as to evoke a reasonably connected picture of the humanism of the French philosopher. Pascal was a seer, a man who felt within himself the truths that he proclaimed. He did not philosophize with his brain but with his heart. He did not write with ink but with his own blood. As Victor Cousin has so aptly put it: 'The thoughts of Pascal are not at all a pastime of his brain: they represent the painful effort of his soul: they penetrate him, consume him; they constitute the burning arrow embedded in his breast: he obtains relief from his pain in articulating his thoughts'. (Victor Cousin: *Etudes sur Pascal*, Paris, Didier et Ce, 1876, Sixth edition, p. 4)

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## SWAMI VIVEKANANDA'S PHILOSOPHY: VEDĀNTA IN THEORY AND PRACTICE

DR. SANAT KUMAR RAICHOUDHURY

The centre round which revolve varied facets of Swami Vivekananda's spiritual world is the concept of 'Divinity of Man' of deified humanity. It is not mere intellectual Deity composed of bloodless categories but the perennial spring from which flow love and compassion ceaselessly to elevate, transform, nay spiritualize all service rendered either for the betterment or alleviating the sufferings, weal or woe of the humanity as modes of worship. Sri Ramakrishna's realization of divinity in the phenomenal world and spiritual realization of fundamental unity opened the eyes of his disciple Swami Vivekananda to the fact that unity in variety was a law good not only so far as religious creeds

were concerned but it also operated behind the entire panorama of nature and governed even the social customs of man. He realized the Divine Mother and this world of suffering humanity as phases of the same reality. He did not altogether reject the world as *Māyā* or cosmic illusion, rather towards all these manifold, varied appearances of *Vidyā-māyā* he maintained the same attitude of unbounded love. In this aspect he was widely different from the traditional *jñānins* or Advaitins. Those who are followers of the Advaitavāda can not but remain totally indifferent to the world. To them compassion for agonized humanity or sympathy for a sufferer would also amount to an affirmation of reality of

the illusory appearance. Sri Ramakrishna by his unique *sādhana* imparted to the monistic Vedānta a practical shape by emphasizing its positive aspect—that all is Brahman, that *jīva* is no other than Śiva, and that every creature is God Himself in a particular garb of name and form. Therefore service of man as form of God is divine worship. The ethics of love is here based upon monism of Vedānta. Swami Vivekananda followed the traditional endeavour of saints and seers of India to raise mankind as a whole to higher and still higher levels of existence by gradual spiritualization of the vital plane, sanctification of the empirical, deification of the material. This is how the Swami made a bold attempt to convert metaphysical abstraction of Vedānta to a live force which would galvanize the world, generate a new kind of humanity and awaken the divinity dormant within us to manifest in full splendour. This is his bringing the Vedānta of forest and caves to din and bustle of the market place, the larger horizon of the world, the battlefield of life, the veritable Kurukṣetra. Two-fold missions, Swami Vivekananda carried in his short yet majestic and colourful life. First, he was primarily and deeply concerned with finding a practical and radical solution of the manifold problems facing the world. Second, being God-inspired he was equally zealous to propagate the ideals of his Master and become a living commentary of Vedānta in pristine and complete form.

In Vivekananda's metaphysics, there lies no distinction between the spiritual and the secular, as whatever exists is spiritual. Yet in the ultimate analysis phenomenon is not real in the sense Brahman is. A question may be raised here if the world were in the final analysis an illusion, a vain image, *Māyā* being considered as the expression of this cosmic illusion, then it seems

erroneous to remodel the vain fiction, or to try fruitlessly to reform the world which bears no reality. Wherein lies the significance to extend love towards the world, which is unreal, devoid of any substantiality?

In Advaita Vedānta, Brahman stands for the undifferentiated, immutable and eternal as against the differentiated, evanescent and temporal. Śaṅkara's position is: '*brahma satyaṁ jagat mithyā jīvo Brahma-iva nāparaḥ*—Brahman is only Reality, the world is an illusion or a false appearance, the individual soul is identical with Brahman'. Brahman, the indeterminate, pure consciousness, is the only reality, everything else is unreal. The Absolute is reached in transcendental consciousness which marks the culmination of the process of negating the empirical levels of being as unreal. The metaphysical structure of the Advaita Vedānta rests on the logical principle of the law of contradiction or upon the same thing, the law of identity, where Brahman alone shines forth. This is why the Advaitavādin affirms Brahman, which is self-identical and self-existent and discards the rest i.e. all other phenomena as illusory or eternally negated in undifferentiated Brahman. The Advaitavāda of Śaṅkara 'definitely denies that there can be any relation at all between such disparate entities as spirit and matter'.

Sri Ramakrishna exhorts us that 'first, by process of negation one comes to feel that God alone is true and all else false. But one finds eventually that God Himself has become the *Māyā*, the individual, the world and everything. A *bael* (wood apple) fruit, for instance, is made of kernel, seeds and shell; when you want the kernel, you remove the seeds and the shell, but if you seek to determine its total weight you cannot leave them out of count.' (*Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*)

Similarly, one who seeks to realize God,

eliminates by analysis the multiplicity and when one has reached Him, one finds that God Himself has become manifest in the individuals and the world. Sri Ramakrishna thus draws his fundamental philosophical conclusion that in the realm of transcendental consciousness, the undivided *Sat-cit-ānanda* is alone realized as real and the rest, the world and individuals bear no meaning there. But 'when we descend in relative consciousness and apprehend phenomenal world we would perceive the multiplicity as His manifestation'. (ibid)

## II

Brahman is *Sat-cit-ānanda*, Being-Consciousness-Bliss, and all-pervading. The entire universe consisting of finite beings and nature is, basically, identical with Brahman. In other words, Brahman, which is one without a second, becomes many, that is to say, the world of multiplicity. But how can the one, the undifferentiated and unchangeable be changed into that which is changeable and perishable? To answer the question the Advaitin takes the aid of the theory of *vivartavāda* or apparent manifestation. The celebrated illustration used is that of the illusory appearance of a snake in the locus of a rope. When one sees snake under the spell of illusion when there is only a piece of rope, it cannot be said that the rope has been transformed into a snake. The rope is changed into snake only apparently; when the spell of illusion ceases to function, the snake disappears. This is known as *vivartavāda* distinguished from Sāṅkhya theory of evolution known as *pariṇāma-vāda* (real modification). Rāmānuja also holds that the unconscious element in God really changes into the world. *Vivartavāda* and *pariṇāma-vāda* both however agree so far in holding that the effect is already contained in existence (*Sat*) somehow in its

material cause and, therefore, both come under *satkāryavāda*.

According to Advaita Vedānta the Absolute or Brahman does not really change into the universe. When we are in ignorance, we see the world of multiplicity, where, truly speaking, there exists only the Absolute, Brahman, One without second, and none else. The imaginary attribution of snake on the rope and the world on Brahman, or projection (*adhyāsa*) of something to where it does not exist is illusion. One cannot be the other, yet it is the inherent nature of man to identify truth with falsehood. Contradiction, as we know, can never be reconciled. *Māyā* is therefore the principle that mysteriously unites contradictions and is as such inexplicable and indefinable (*anirvacanīya*). Although it is indefinable, yet it is no abstraction and has a most concrete existence so far as the phenomenal world is concerned. From the standpoint of Brahman, or metaphysical reality, *Māyā* is *tuccha*, eternally negated—the question of its existence or non-existence does not arise, from the standpoint of logic, *Māyā* is *anirvacanīya* (inexplicable) i.e. it logically fails to establish any relationship between unobjective pure consciousness, Brahman and the objective world, and from the standpoint of empirical world or common experience *Māyā* is *vāstava* (real), the stuff of the world.

*Māyā* may be characterized as the manifold *nāma-rūpa*; the name-and-form which has no identity and yet is undeniable. Brahman has, however, no necessary reference to *Māyā*. It can be, but need not be, understood as what is not *Māyā*. Creation is understood as manifestation in the soil of *Māyā*. Brahman in a sense becomes the world without losing Its transcendence. Brahman conceived as the possessor of the undifferentiated *Māyā* is *Saguṇa* Brahman or *Īśvara* with the attri-

butes of omnipotence and omniscience. Īśvara has a dual form as wielding *Māyā-śakti* and this immanent in the world and as dissociated from it, standing transcendent (*trigunātīta*) and merging back into Brahman. This creative power of *Māyā*, does not affect Brahman, just as the magical powers do not affect a magician. It is merely accidental (*taṭastha-lakṣana*) and does not reflect the *svarūpa-lakṣana* of Brahman. From the cosmological view point, *Māyā* is a power or *śakti* by virtue of which Īśvara creates the world of names and forms. It is the finitizing principle that brings in differences and relations where no differences and relations exist. It is not only unreal, in this sense, but it is most real. The world appearance and Īśvara as its creator can be explained from the empirical or *vyāvahārika* stand point. From the absolute transcendental point of view Brahman is indeterminate or *nirguṇa*. Vivekananda did not accept totally impersonal indeterminate or transcendent Brahman as the only reasonable conception or metaphysics. The positive aspect of Brahman, the all-pervading character of the Absolute was emphasized by Swami Vivekananda. Being or *Sat* manifests itself into universe, man and soul. Divinity pervades from the highest human being to the lowest insects, 'where shall you go to seek Brahman?' once said Swami Vivekananda to his companions. 'He is immanent in all beings. Here, here is the visible Brahman! shame to those who, neglecting the visible Brahman, set their minds on other things.' The critical mind may raise a question: How can I explain away the world as unreal since it appears, since it is a fact, a positive point of my perception? Nor can I assert the existence of world real in the ultimate analysis, for as soon as I realize my identity with Brahman on the universal consciousness the world ceases to have a separate reality.

This manifold world can therefore only be apparent; it cannot be ultimately real. Hence the Vedāntin calls *Māyā anirvacanīya* or indescribable. In the metaphysical aspect, the Vedānta teaches that Reality or Brahman alone is real and not Brahman endowed with *Māyā*. Let us now see how Vivekananda faces the central problem of Vedānta. He never attempted to build up a system of metaphysics with the aid of niceties of logical analysis. Direct realization to him can alone reveal Reality and stand as embodiment of supreme truth. Himself a man of supreme realization in true sense, he only pointed out his own spiritual experiences in different levels of his dynamic life. But throughout his spiritual journey he was firmly settled in one basic truth that the supreme Reality is Brahman, one and undivided underlying reality of all that is. Unlike orthodox Vedāntins, he did not subscribe to the Advaita view of *Māyā*, without certain modification. Advaitism holds that *Māyā*, the source of relativity, concept of time space and causality; the framework of empirical consciousness does not exist at all from the standpoint of Absolute Brahman. According to orthodox Vedānta, as stated before, it is only *Māyā* that explains dualism, the world of appearance or multiplicity and solves the problem as to how the 'One' appears as many—for Vivekananda *Māyā* is the principle of individuation, the finitizing principle. The world is riddled with contradiction. *Māyā* is nothing but simple statement of fact as it stands. Vivekananda does not go far to regard the world as real or unreal. He only pointed out that the phenomenal world has a relative not absolute existence and he did neither minimize nor overlook the empirical reality. Rather he fully recognized it and gave it its due place. The world is not dominated by appearance or illusion but in



essence spiritual. Illusion works in relative consciousness whereas in universal consciousness reality alone exists and nothing else. So Swami Vivekananda says: 'Man never progresses from error to truth, but from truth to truth, from lesser truth to higher truth.'

According to orthodox Advaita, unity as well as multiplicity, is devoid of all determination and differences. It is pure, homogenous consciousness. Vivekananda did neither totally accept this conception of transcendent or impersonal Brahman as the only reasonable conception nor like some Western exponents did look upon Advaita Vedānta as pantheism. Being or *Sat* manifests itself into the universe, man and soul. The all-pervading Brahman or the universal spirit is immanent in all that exist but not in equal measure. There is gradation or hierarchy of being. The moth and the star, the lowest worm and the highest man are lower and higher forms of manifestation of divinity. Here we find that non-dualism does not altogether contradict world appearance rather it can be placed on a firm ground only when the world is first affirmed in the Absolute empirically and subsequently denied transcendently. The self, as identified with any stage, feels the stage below it to be illusory. The final duality of Brahman is no duality of positives. There is no dualism at all, because Brahman and Māyā, noumenal and phenomenal, are not reals belonging to same order. One of them is the underlying substratum, in the language of Hegel the 'truth of the other', and hence, there is no possibility of their duality or independent reality, far less of antagonism. The reality of the one is merged in that of the other and the two are not simultaneously real or rather are not reals belonging to the same plane. From the stand-point of the Absolute or Brahman,

nothing else is, from the standpoint of the world of Māyā again, everything is real. As Śaṅkara beautifully puts it, consciousness is itself Māyā in its limited scope and in its fullest or true nature Brahman.

From metaphysical point of view reality is Brahman alone and not Brahman endowed with Māyā. In the final stage, we know Māyā is *tuccha*, altogether unreal. At this state (i.e. the highest stage of realization), it is seen that the finite never was, and there never will be any finite. All finitude and limitation, with their sources, disappear altogether, never to appear again. While we miss the blessed stage of realization, we fall back upon the realm of duality and limitation and the Māyā as the primal cause of *śakti* of all that shine is regarded as real. The nescient principle, Māyā which, again is an appearance, is an empirical counterpart of pure consciousness which is the ultimate absolute principle.

How this absolute being becomes mingled with the finite world, the mind, the relative? Vivekananda replies: It has never been mingled. You are this absolute Being, you have never changed. All that changes is Māyā, the screen held between the real me and you. The end, the very object of life, of all human evolution of the unceasing ascension of nature from the lowest order of existence is the gradual elimination of the screen. When the screen will be removed by virtue of true insight, sacrifice and renunciation we know our true self and nothing remains but the Absolute or Brahman as we are. Swami-Vivekananda tells us that all human beings are potentially divine and perfect.

By affirming the trans-empirical oneness of divinity upon which the doctrine of pure identity is ultimately based, Sri Rama-krishna stood with Śaṅkara to acclaim identity as the fundamental stuff of reality. Yet he was not content to be ever absorbed

in the transcendental consciousness in the realm of undifferentiated pure identity; rather his spiritual life demonstrated perpetual transition from the unity of the Absolute to the cosmic plurality and *vice versa*. Having reached the meeting ground of the undifferentiated Absolute and divine immanence in the cosmic whole, Sri Ramakrishna never ascribed the latter to be a lower level in relation to its undifferentiated absolute background. He attempts to bring home this unique metaphysical phenomenon by the simple analogy of a *bael* fruit as stated before. The substance of the fruit undoubtedly, he tells us, is constituted by its essence, viz, the pulp which we consume. But that does not mean that by rejecting the shell and seeds, the total reality or full weight of the fruit can be determined. Swami Vivekananda re-echoed the same note as his Master that appearances have no reality whatsoever besides that of their substratum just as the rays of the sun have no reality of their own apart from that of the sun. But yet the appearances are of the reality much as the rays are of the sun.

Strictly speaking, rigid monism which utters a profound truth in proclaiming the unity of existence commits the rationalistic fallacy of identifying the status of the universe with that of the multiverse. The position of macrocosm of God or the cosmic whole in non-relational absolutism appears, therefore, to be a bit ill-defined. We found out repeated attempts at explaining away the existence of the cosmic whole as an ethical necessity which ceases to operate as soon as the individual self transcends the realm of empirical plurality and merges itself in the trans-empirical unity. The finite self labouring under the veil of *Māyā* superimposes the world of plurality upon the undifferentiated Absolute and finally rejects the plurality in the stage of liberation. Swami Viveka-

nanda recognized the extra-subjective character of the cosmic whole consistent with the undifferentiated character of the Absolute which is the ultimate stuff of all that exists. How God can be both just and benevolent? How the goodness of God can be reconciled with the existence in the world? Human mind due to its inherent limitations fails to grasp how the seeming contradictions in the divine life can possibly be transcended in its apparent background, to the indeterminate Absolute. Vivekananda maintains that our attempts at limiting the infinite cannot escape contradiction. Our moral conception and logical method cannot but be transcended to realize the essence of infinitude of God who is verily super-moral and super-rational.

The contradictory forces inherent in the macrocosm make it dynamic and perpetually moving-God in the equipoise of its indeterminate background represented as an eternal process, a ceaseless flow which resembles the *elan vital* of Bergson. The perpetual dance of the *elan vital* in endless directions is neither mechanically caused by past nor teleologically drawn by end to be achieved in future. Bergson, of course, was not prepared to accept 'the final truth of creative evolution of the *elan vital* in a static absolute, yet by making it identical with love he has brought it much closer to the concept of God in Vivekananda and through that, of Vedānta rightly understood and rightly viewed'. Vivekananda conceived of God or *Saguṇa Brahman* as the ground of world appearance and possessor of *Māyā* or wielder of *Māyā Śakti*. The determining and dynamic aspect of God stands out in the indeterminate background of the changeless static Absolute.

Swami Vivekananda did not hold the world of experience as an illusion. From his eloquent message and speeches which

he had delivered in course of his long pilgrimage we may bring out certain broad lines in which we find the ultimate stuff of the world is the indeterminate Absolute. It emanates itself into the shape of the primal energy, the universal intelligence to which it applies the Sāṅkhya appellation, 'Mahat'. From this arises *prāṇa* and *ākāśa* whose scientific equivalents are force and matter respectively. Swami Vivekananda replaces blind Prakṛti of Sāṅkhya by the concept of universal intelligence which has directly been connected with the indeterminate Absolute. Swami Vivekananda like modern scientists Eddington or Jeans endeavoured to build up metaphysical world on the foundation of science without explaining away as subjective fiction. The demand is for the absolute and not for unqualified rejection of the reality of the relative. Swami Vivekananda contemplated a book to be written by himself to reinterpret Vedānta in the light of modern science or establish Vedāntic truth on the basis of scientific theories. Swami Vivekananda's own words will give us the glimpses of his metaphysical concept.

'Now, as each individual can only see his own universe, that universe is created with his bondage and goes away with his liberation, although it remains for others who are in bondage. Now name and form constitute the universe. A wave in the ocean is a wave, only in so far it is bound by name and form. If the wave subsides, it is the ocean but that name-and-form has immediately vanished for ever. So that the name and form of wave could never be without the water that was fashioned into the wave by them, yet the name and form themselves were not the wave. They die as soon as ever it returns to water. But other names and forms live on in relation to other waves. This name-and-form is called Māyā, and the

water is Brahman. The wave was nothing but water all the time, yet as a wave it had the name and form. Again, this name-and-form can not remain for one moment separated from the wave, although the wave, as water, can remain eternally separate from name and form. But because the name and form can never be separated they can never be said to exist. Yet they are not zero. This is called Māyā'. (*The Complete Works*, Vol. VIII, pp. 277-278)

'Sins are very low degrees of manifestation.' 'The difference between weakness and strength is one of degree; the difference between virtue and vice is one of degree; the difference between heaven and hell is one of degree; the difference between life and death is one of degree, all differences in the world are of degrees and not of kind because oneness is the secret of everything.' (ibid., Vol. II, pp. 299-300) Swami Vivekananda here, almost recalls the words of Spinoza coming nearer to him than Śaṅkara's Advaitavāda. Sin is only a lesser reality than virtue, Spinoza would rather suggest, evil is lesser good, good and bad, activity and passivity, power and weakness are merely distinctions in degree. 'To those who ask why God did not so create all men that they should be governed only by reason, I reply only: because matter was not lacking to him for the creation of every degree of perfection from highest to lowest, or more strictly, because the laws of his nature were so ample as to suffice for the production of everything by an infinite intellect.' (Spinoza)

The universe forms chain of degrees of perfection, of which none must be wanting: particular cases of defect are justified by the perfection of the whole, which would be incomplete without the lowest degree of perfection, vice and wickedness.

## III

'If we are Advaitists', says Swami Vivekananda, 'we must think from this moment that our old self is dead and gone ... they were mere superstition and what remains is the ever-free, the ever-strong, the almighty, the all-knowing—that alone remains for us, and then all fear vanishes from us.' The mystic formula of Advaita is 'That thou art' and not 'thou will become that'. So, says he again, 'Build up your character, and manifest your real nature the Effulgent, the Resplendent, the Ever Pure and call It up in everyone that you see. I wish that everyone of us had come to such a state that even in the vilest of human beings we could see the Real Self within ...' (ibid., pp. 357-358) The sublime message of Vedānta, the inherent divinity of man is not mere theory or abstract idea but a truth verified and practised by saints and seers of all times and climes. Swami Vivekananda as a true Vedāntin attempted to restore our lost spiritual heritage, elevate our earthly existence. Spiritualism does not signify running away from hazards of life's battle and taking in other worldliness. It does not mean to running away into mountain caves or monastery cells to practise renunciation. We are to uproot our false ego, the root cause of ignorance and this can alone lead us to recover our inner balance and integrity, strength and vision to face trials and ordeals of life with heroic calm and determination. When spiritual consciousness which is the mind in its integrity, is at work, men become possessed with deathless longing for all that is great and divine. It is not shunning the world as an unreal objective but the emphasis on a return to active life after realizing the ultimate truth as the all-pervading Divinity, and to posit the truth of spiritual reality to all events in the historical process.

The spiritual aspirant thus makes every bit of human life meaningful with reference to the Divinity within and transforms his active life in the society into a life devoted to the service of God. Life gradually expands and becomes transfigured in universal plane. 'He who sees everyone in himself, and himself in everyone, thus seeing the same God living in all, he the sage, no more kills the self by the self.' (*Gītā*) The truth revealed in *Gītā* speaks out the essence of spiritualism, the Advaitic realization. The Advaita *sādhanā* prescribes that one should realize one's own self in others, and it is the surest way of removing hatred between man and man and suffusing the world, nay all that exists with love. Our false identification with body and mind breeds attachment and fear. Once we realize our true nature, the birthless, deathless soul, all mortal fear vanishes. Knowledge is the foundation of inner strength and power. The greatest strength comes from the knowledge of the Ātman. Says the *Kena Upaniṣad* (II. 4): '*Ātmanā vindate vīryam*—Strength comes from the knowledge of the Ātman.' The full integration of human personality demands the transcendental visions of Kṛṣṇa, and the dynamism or Promethean fire of Arjuna. In a grim battle front surrounded by enemies and deadly weapon, Kṛṣṇa delivers his highest spiritual message imparting soul-vision to bewildered Arjuna wavering in mortal conflict and cast in grief and blind ignorance. Arjuna was the fighter, the man of action, in the battle field but that action became effective when Arjuna had the strength of Kṛṣṇa's vision behind it. Our common actions are blind, self-cancelling, prompted by ego-desires. Action becomes a snare of bondage bringing in its train defect and fruitless end. Action guided by the illumined *buddhi*, enlightened by true self which is the self of all, becomes steady, purposeful and

worthy. Every true action finds its consummation in illumination.

Following the pathway treaded by his Master, Swami Vivekananda seized the essence of religion, the oneness, nay, the nature of Reality, Advaita. The supreme realization of oneness and divine harmony of the nature dissolves so-called breach between the spiritual and the secular, self repose of the soul and the active service of deified man, perfect detachment and disinterested activity guided by noblest vision and ideals. Spiritual Ideal is for life and this must be lived in all its spheres private, social and international. The eternal faith must become dynamic and living to fight out root and branch mental inertia, fear and dull obedience to the dictates of the brute power.

Swami Vivekananda truly imbibed from his great Master Sri Ramakrishna, the essence of spirituality that transforms and transfigures the individual into a self-enlightened, ever blissful universal plane. The end of spiritual evolution is to eliminate the false ego caged in narrow frame of body and mind and elevate it to vastness of universal spirit. 'The limited is a mere fiction. The Infinite has been covered up, as it were, and a little of It is manifesting as the I. Limitation can never come upon the unlimited, it is a fiction'. (ibid., Vol. II, p. 305) 'This pursuit of the Infinite, this struggle to grasp the Infinite, this effort to get beyond the limitations of the senses—out of matter, as it were, and to evolve the spiritual man, this striving day and night to make the Infinite one with our being—this struggle itself is the grandest and most glorious that man can make'. (ibid., p. 66)

Let us die in our individual I to be reborn in the Real self, which is one and infinite. Swami Vivekananda exhorts us: 'Here is the world, and it is full of misery. Go out into it as Buddha did, and struggle

to lessen it or die in the attempt. Forget yourselves; this is the first lesson to be learnt, whether you are a theist or an atheist, whether you are an agnostic or a Vedāntic, a Christian or a Mohammedan. The one lesson obvious to all is the destruction of the little self and the building up of the Real Self'. (ibid., p. 353) The self, really, is unlimited consciousness and bliss. When the self can realize what it really is, namely, pure consciousness which is infinite (being free from all particularity), it is one with the essence or Self of the universe.

'We are not dry monks' said Swami Vivekananda, 'What do you think that because a man is a *Sannyāsin*, he has no heart?' His heart must throb, vibrate in love and compassion with all aching hearts like that of a Buddha offering his head to save the life of a goat, a Christ courting the cross with no malice or vengeance rather love and blessing for the perverted tyrants. But here we should not miss to point out the subtle difference lying between the idea of service as worship and the concept of Christian charity or Buddhist humanitarianism. From the objective stand point, we scarcely find any difference as each of them tries to eliminate human sufferings by individual or social aids. As regards subjective standpoint whereas Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda emphasize on service of suffering humanity itself as divine worship, a complete programme of religious or spiritual practice, Christian or Buddhist attitude of service is only a phase of the right conduct of a spiritual aspirant, merely a part of an auxiliary course of moral training.

Ethical value reveals no finally intelligible and self-established principle to the real elsewhere, by transcending the level of morality. The freedom we enjoy in the relative plane of moral existence has value not in itself but as indicating the possibility of realizing the true freedom of our

being, which is absolute. Morality is thus emptied of its finite contents, and at the same time filled by the supreme end which is the infinite spirit. Swami Vivekananda's message of apotheosizing suffering humanity or dedication of life in service of them as a mode of supreme worship was neither a mere ethical value a workable principle of the practical reason, tending towards spiritualism for its final consummation nor abstract Humanism as conceived by Comte in his Positive philosophy. We have pointed out before that the spiritual level contains the final truth and proper fulfilment of the demands made in the moralistic stage. Vivekananda's outlook in this respect was far more profound and radical than the Buddhistic or the Christian outlook. Again, from the positivist standpoint of Comte, we read, 'A man should serve Humanity as a substitute for God, he should meditate upon Humanity with the image of the woman who has meant most to him in his life before his mind in place of the Virgin Mary'. Vivekananda's cosmic humanism as we tried to understand before does not correspond to either of the above view-points. It rests solely on spiritual basis and deification of men. The worship of downtrodden as embodiment of God is in itself a programme of spiritual practice which, if observed with selfless devotion, can alone lead on to the goal of self-realization. The process of purification of the mind and heart lay in disinterested service to the fallen and downtrodden. Swami Vivekananda boldly accepts the world, the bed of contradiction, discords as real, even faces the so-called evil, dark force as manifestation of Divinity. What is essentially good appears as evil and discordant from the limited point of view. A humanist Swami Vivekananda is, but unlike Comte or Schiller since he does not regard the physical, vital

or mental man as the ultimate stage of evolution nor the basic truth in man. Every soul, creature, nay all that exists is divine. He was rather a spiritual humanist. Comte's abstract idea of Humanity represents the ideal type or all that is good, highest aspects of humanity. Swami Vivekananda's spiritual world scheme excludes none, even the monstrous evil force appears in the disguise of good.

'It is all a manifestation of that Ātman; He is being manifested in everything; only, when the manifestation is very thick we call it evil; and when it is very thin, we call it good'. 'There is evil and there is good; and the apex, the centre, is the Reality'. (ibid., p. 420) Therefore the Vedantist insists upon that oneness.

The supreme realization of one Divinity in all beings, that all is Brahman lays down the fundamental basis of positive or practical Vedānta formulated by Swami Vivekananda.

One of the tenets of the Advaita realization which is well emphasized by Vivekananda is the unshakable optimism based on the rock of self confidence. The Advaita realization alone can rouse potential divinity within us and make us strong fearless, steady and pure. Though finite we become 'infinite dreamer', the Advaita gives hope of infinite progress to every man, however degraded and lowly he may be.

Swami Vivekananda's mission is to bring out the gems of spirituality that are stored up in our books and in the possession of a few only, hidden as it were, in monasteries and in forest sanctuaries to the broad arena of the world and let them be the common property of all, of every man. 'The abstract Advaita', he urged, 'must become living poetic in every day life.'

In another place, the Swami tells us :

'Do you feel for others? . . . If you do not feel for others, you may be the most intellectual giant ever born, but you will be nothing; you are but dry intellect, and you will remain so. And if you feel, even if you cannot read any book, and do not know any language, you are in the right way. The Lord is yours.' (ibid., p. 307) Knowledge cannot be attained by treading on a dry desert path, killing out the tender heart. Our intellect needs the grace of heart, the aid of the wonderful humanizing power of the Buddha for its fruition. A Bodhisattva, an enlightened soul, in order to put an end to pain and suffering, both for himself and all other beings of the world makes his faith (*śraddhā*) firm and fixes his mind on *bodhi*, praying 'May I become Buddha to effect the good and happiness of all other beings of the world, and to put to end to all their sufferings'. A cosmic humanist is never content with his own salvation but would wait, till the world as such is redeemed and the last individual of the universe is liberated from sufferings and bondage of *samsāra*. 'May I be a lamp to those who want it, a bed for those who require it, a servant of all. May I have the power to dispose myself in various ways, so that all living beings in space may live upon me until they are liberated.' Until every living being is delivered he does not desire his own deliverance. He does not want to cross the ocean of existence only for himself, but wants to make others also cross it.

Kumārila in his *Tantravārtika* quotes Buddha as saying 'Let all the sins of the world fall on me and let the world be saved'. The all-enfolding tenderness, the universal compassion, the resolve to work for the liberation of creature from sorrow—these gleanings from Buddha's life are the fruits of a great enlightenment coming from both heart and supreme illumination.

Swami Vivekananda reached the same heroic sentiments, the outpourings from the heart of the enlightened throbbing in universal compassion, when he said, 'The good live for others alone' . . . 'The wise man should sacrifice himself for others' . . . 'It may be that I shall find it good to get outside of my body—to cast it off like a disused garment. But I shall not cease to work! I shall inspire men everywhere, until the world shall know that it is one with God'. (ibid., Vol. VI, p. 318; Vol. V, p. 414)

Where lies significance and impact of our religions to preach their noble sermons to the mass of humanity when they are perishing in the under world under the pressure of dire poverty, exploitation and dehumanizing process of modern society? Do we feel in us flash of spiritual freedom drawing us from mad hunger of power and lust of wealth and wretched animal-livelihood to silent corner of inner repose and sublimity? Are we breathing freely in healthy air in the hellish surroundings? Have we not turned man to a slave, degenerated to a beast and built up thousands of temples and mosques, cathedrals and churches worshipping soulless deity and pushing back and neglecting the living God, the impoverished downtrodden man? What right we have to speak on God when we treat many of our brothers as heathen, untouchables or not shudder to kill the neighbour in a communal frenzy? What mockery and shameful pretension they; the priests and churchmen play when they in one end come out to bless the war-mongers to victory and pray for peace in other end. The so called religion is frozen in cold dead letters of wornout scriptures. The religion that is destined to survive is the religion of man whose structure would rest upon the massive pillar of human values, the fraternity, of men and world-fellowship, and spiritual free-

dom—freedom from all sorts of fear and blind superstitions, mental enslavement and social bondage. 'Religion, if it is a true religion', said Swami Vivekananda, 'must be practical'. 'Where shall you go to seek Brahman? He is immanent in all being. Here, here is the visible Brahman. Shame to those who, neglecting the visible Brahman set their minds on other things!' Religion in its true sense in the eyes of Swami Vivekananda is to see Śiva represented in living men, and specially in the poor.

It was Sri Ramakrishna who baptized the young flaming soul and urged him to see every creature in the image of God and persuaded the soaring eagle once bound for stillness of *nirvāṇa* to come down to the din and bustle of the struggling world, to the valley of despair spreading wide wings over the torn and tormented humanity with the message of hope and heroic resistance. Narendranath so ardent and eager to merge his soul in a transcendental union with the Absolute Reality, perpetual rest in luminous calm, prayed to Sri Ramakrishna: 'Master I was happy in *samādhi*. In my infinite joy I had forgotten the world. I beseech you to let me remain in that state.' The Master sharply retorted: 'I thought you were a vast receptacle of life, and here you wish to stay absorbed in personal joy like an ordinary man..., you will do great things in the world; you will bring spiritual consciousness to men and assuage the misery of the humble and the poor'. These words opened the eyes of the young rebel and a new horizon was unfurled before him. He clearly saw the radiant goal of his life's mission steadily transforming him into a giant frame of Swami Vivekananda. From a lone pilgrim in quest of personal salvation he was changed into a cosmic humanist moving for world redemption: '*Ātmano mokṣārtham jagaddhitāya ca*—For one's own

liberation and welfare of the world.' This life giving ideal is the essence of Advaita Vedānta. This is the motto Swami Vivekananda placed before all spiritual aspirants who would dedicate their lives to carry the torch of freedom to every dark corner of the world, to inflame every soul, wretched and poor, to regain its lost glory, nay its inherent divinity. One of the cardinal points of *Bhakti-Yoga* is to shower mercy upon the sufferer. Śrī Caitanya the great Prophet of *Bhakti-Yoga* preached compassion for mankind. On one occasion, Sri Ramakrishna addressing Narendranath and some other disciples said, '... they talk of mercy to the creatures. How audacious it is to think of showering mercy on the *jīva*, who is none other than Śiva! Compassion—no not compassion but service!' The idea of mercy though noble and sublime cannot fit well in the deified world conceived by Sri Ramakrishna. Humanism is to be spiritualized, ethical life is to be elevated to the realm of spirit. It is a sacrilege to think of oneself taking a privileged position to help others. Rather one has to give up his vanity of relative superiority and serve suffering humanity with all humility and devotion, paying one's own blood if that be necessary. Narendranath fully understood the great import and significance of this profound spiritual message delivered by Sri Ramakrishna. Turning to one of his brother disciples he said, 'I have heard today a saying of unparalleled significance. Time permitting, I shall communicate to the world the profound import of this marvellous utterance.' And Swami Vivekananda lived upto his last to give concrete shape to these words by introducing varied missionary activities to serve the lowly, poor, neglected and the oppressed as worship of God: *Jīva* is Śiva, work is worship.

Work is inevitable for all human beings.



To live is to work as our very existence is dependent on certain type of activity. But where lies the secret of work? Most of us work being prompted by selfish desires. Swami Vivekananda brings out the essence of true work done in the spirit of dedication, service or non-attachment. We generally work as slaves either dictated by a master or by our selfish-motive. Nowhere we are free agents. Work done for money, fame, or security or power fritters away our energy and leads us to inefficiency. On the other hand when by good deal of self-effort we develop a detached, unselfish attitude towards work, we are able to work for work's sake expecting nothing in return. Swami Vivekananda always exhorts us to take the secret of work from the *Gītā*, viz 'to work you have the right and not to the fruits thereof'. This spirit of non-attachment which we may gain by long spiritual effort develops in us the right attitude towards work. We are no more overwhelmed either by success or by failure. We remain indifferent and work for work's sake. Even no categorical imperative nor sense of duty prevails on us to work. We do our work freely and joyously. Work performed merely for worldly gain not backed by purity and strength of character becomes the *pursui* of the ego and therefore of darkness and bondage. On the other hand, non-attachment does not mean negation or abstaining from action; it rather makes us master of situation revealing the true secret of work. To renounce activities masquerading in the name of negation of worldliness or indulging in certain mystical other-worldly religions makes us inert, weak and easy victim of death. Thus comes the warning uttered by the *Gītā* (III. 4):

'Man does not achieve the state of actionlessness by merely abstaining from action, nor by mere renouncing of actions does he attain spiritual perfection.'

Work done in the true spirit of non-attachment is a purifying and educational process, positive and strengthening leading to broadening and deepening of character. So says Swami Vivekananda, 'Him I call a *mahātman* (high soul) whose heart bleeds for the poor, otherwise he is a *dūrātman*.'

Swami Vivekananda wrote from America to his brother monks and disciples, exhorting them to devote themselves to the service of man: 'If you want any good to come, just throw your ceremonials overboard and worship the Living God, the Man-God—every being that wears a human form—God in His universal as well as individual aspect. The universal aspect of God means this world and worshipping it means serving it—this indeed is work, not indulging in ceremonials. . . . Whoever will be ready to serve him—no, not him but his children—the poor and the downtrodden, the sinful and the afflicted—down to the very worm—who will be ready to serve these, in them he will manifest himself.' (ibid., Vol. VI, pp. 265 and 295)

One of his prayers was: 'Let me be born again and again, even in the form of a dog, if by so I can be of use to one single being.' This striking note once eloquently voiced from the key-board of his giant frame, was dedicated to the altar of humanity.

Noblest of all is he, who for his realization leads himself to unite with the one Self in all, and seeking no selfish gain, he rejects not the bitter waters of sorrow but rather seeks to sweeten them in service of man. He who sees in this world of manifoldness that One running through all, one light and knowledge—unto him belongs peace and joy of freedom. This *brahmānu-bhūti*, the universal consciousness, the highest spiritual realization prescribed by the Advaitavāda was carried home in letter and spirit by Swami Vivekananda in his dynamic religion and practical Vedānta.

His grand message is a call of awakening to the totality of our Manhood, to liberation from the trammels of narrow individual self.

## AŚOKA MAURYA AS A HINDU MONARCH

DR. APARNA CHATTOPADHYAY

The inscriptions of Aśoka are considered to be the most authentic records of his reign. A study of the Aśokan edicts in the light of Hindu political theories and in the perspective of a Hindu monarch's ideals and duties will show that not only Aśoka fulfilled the requisite conditions of an ideal Hindu monarch, but he made valued contributions to Hindu polity.

After the horrors of the Kalinga war made him realize with great pains the ideals and duties before him, as a paramount sovereign of the far-flung Maurya empire, Aśoka gave his famous declaration (Rock Edicts : Dhauli I ; Jaugada II) 'Saba munise pajā mamā—All subjects are my children'. This paternal aspect of his kingship is the key-note of Aśoka's ideals and achievements as a ruler. He declared himself the father of his subjects. Like a father he considered himself responsible for the material, moral and spiritual upliftment of his subjects. His subsequent activities—his administrative reforms, benevolent deeds, repeated efforts to teach 'sadācāra' to his subjects by his edicts, through his officers, by social reforms and dramatic shows in which people were shown how good deeds were rewarded in heaven, are outcome of his paternal feelings for his subjects. (Rock Edicts : IV, Girnar ; IX, Kalsi ; I, XI & XIII Shahbazgarhi) The proper perspective for these activities of Aśoka can be searched nowhere but in the already existing Hindu ideals for a king. It has been significantly observed by an

eminent scholar that all-round welfare of the public was clearly regarded as the chief aim of the state during the Vedic and Upaniṣadic ages. (A. S. Altakar : *State and Government in Ancient India*, Motilal Banarasidas, Delhi, 1958, p. 48) Thus, while the Vedic king was like god Varuṇa, upholder of law and order (*dhr̥tavrata*), the kingdom of king Parīkṣit, the ideal ruler, flowed with milk and honey as described in the *Atharvaveda*. (XX. 127) In the *Brāhmaṇa* period, we find that during the coronation ceremony the state is given to the king with explicit declaration made by the priest that it is given to him for its all-round development 'for agriculture, for prosperity, for development'. (*Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*, V. 2 ; I. 25) By the Upaniṣadic period the king is the moral, material and intellectual guardian of his people. Thus in the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* (V. xi. 5) a king proudly declares that in his realm there is no man of vicious habits, no drunkard, no illiterate person and no adulterer. And as there is no man of immoral character how can a woman be bad? The idea that a king is the moral guardian of his subjects is noticed in *Manu*. (VIII. 386)

Thus while the Upaniṣadic king was a guardian of his subjects, Aśoka added the fatherly element to the already existing guardian-hood of the king. Aśoka clearly states his responsibilities as a father of his subjects for their material, moral and spiritual welfare in Kalinga Edict I

(Dhauri). Thus he says: 'All men are as my children. As on behalf of my own children, I desire that they may be provided with complete welfare and happiness both in this world and the next, the same I desire also for (all) men.'

Further it is to be noted that in Kauṭilya paternal character of kingship is noticed in connexion with rules regarding the settlement of countryside. (*Arthaśāstra*, II. i. 18). The idea noticed in Kauṭilya in a narrow scale got broadened when idealized and sincerely pursued by Aśoka. In the *Mahābhārata* (*Śāntiparvan*), in the *Rāmāyaṇa* (II. ii. 28-47 & XXXV. ix. 9-14), in *Manu* (XII. 80), in *Yājñavalkya* (I. 334) this paternal ideal for a king is noticed. No doubt, Aśokan ideal of paternal kingship added a new dimension to the subsequent thoughts on polity in general.

As a ruler Aśoka wanted to rule with utmost efforts to do good to his subjects. According to *Viṣṇu Dharmasūtra* a king was to find his own happiness in the happiness of his subjects. The ideal is noticed in the *Arthaśāstra* (I. xiv. 34); we find it also in the *Mahābhārata*. (*Śāntiparvan*)

Aśoka increased the power of the *Rājukas*, the officers-in-charge of districts or provinces. (H. C. Ray Chaudhuri: *Political History of Ancient India*, University of Calcutta, 1932, p. 216; V. A. Smith: *Aśoka*, p. 94) Aśoka says that he is as happy and contented by entrusting his subjects to the hands of *Rājukas* as a mother feels happy by entrusting her child to the care of a skilful nurse. (Pillar Edict IV) Here Aśoka had more of motherly feelings for his subjects. Spirit of self-sacrifice and extreme and anxious care for children are implied in motherly spirit. According to *Agnipurāṇa*, a king should care for his subjects as a mother cares for her children. The same idea is noticed in the *Mahābhārata* too.

Aśoka created the post of *Dharma-*

*mahāmātras*. (Rock Edict V, Mansehra). The special duty of the *Dharmamahāmātras* was to see that people were not oppressed or ill-treated by Maurya officials, that unjust punishment was not inflicted on persons condemned as criminals. (ibid) Regarding the judicial function of the *Dharmamahāmātras* Aśoka clearly states that they are employed for taking steps against imprisonment, for freedom from molestation and for granting release on the ground that one has numerous offsprings or is overwhelmed by misfortune or afflicted by age. The appointment of *Dharmamahāmātras* for this purpose is in conformity with Aśoka's efforts to rule with justice and righteousness. In Kalinga Rock Edict (Dhauri) Aśoka emphasizes specially on justice and just punishment and gives special warning against severe punishment and also arbitrary and unjust imprisonment and punishment. The great importance for a king to inflict right and just punishment is noticed in *Manu*. (VII. 16, 20, 26) Thus *Manu* says that having fully considered the time and the place (of the offence) the strength and the knowledge (of the offender) let him justly inflict that (punishment) on men who act unjustly.

Aśoka's appointment of spies or secret agents to keep watch on the activities of government officials, introduction of the system of quinquennial and triennial tours of the high officials, his own personal exertions, all testify to his efforts to do justice to his subjects. (Rock Edict VI, Girnar)

Aśoka did not abolish capital punishment but introduced a system of granting respite for three days to criminals condemned to death. (Pillar Edict IV) It is worth-quoting what an eminent author says regarding the purpose and motive of the emperor behind this period of three days granted to criminals condemned to death. '... to secure that no mistakes

should occur and opportunity may be found by *Rājukas* either on their own initiative or as a result of persuasion by the relatives of the condemned man to revise the order, a respite of three days was granted in all cases of capital punishment'. (K. A. Nilakanta : *Age of the Nandas and Mauryas*, Motilal Banarasidas, 1952, p. 224) Aśoka has been criticized for such mild relaxation of the penal code. (V. A. Smith : *Early History of India*, Oxford, 1924, p. 185) But it is to be noted that three days' time to seek release, was not very short. We have already noted that Aśoka created the post of the *Dharmamahāmātras* to help people against wrong or too severe punishments or for release of criminals on certain grounds. (Rock Edict V, Mansehra) The opportunity for final appeal for retrial or release on payment of a ransom is noticed in *Arthasāstras* too. (II. 36 & 45) Aśoka's policy in the above-noted subject of granting three days' respite to criminals condemned to death when considered with due notice of the fact that *Rājukas* and specially *Dharmamahāmātras* were there to help them if they wanted rejudgement of their cases, will show that Aśoka's policy was in perfect conformity with Hindu ideal laid down by Kauṭilya that *daṇḍa* should be neither too harsh nor too mild. That Aśoka was fully aware of this principle of moderation in matter of inflicting punishment is noticed in his Kalinga Rock Edict I, in which Aśoka addressing high officers of Tosālī in-charge of the administration says: '... In administration, it happens that some individual undergoes imprisonment or torture, which accidentally becomes the cause of his death, and many other persons are deeply aggrieved over it. There you must demand that The Middle Path (i.e., moderation in justice) be observed.' (R. K. Mookerji : *Aśoka*, Motilal Banarasidas, 1962, pp. 121 & 219) The royal sceptre if

misused or wrongly used will strike the wielder with severe force, says *Manu*. (VII. 28) The origin of disorder was the unrighteous rule of a king according to the *Mahābhārata*. (*Śāntiparvan*) In *Manu* we are told repeatedly that it is *daṇḍa* which enforces law and order in the country. Where *daṇḍa*, i.e., punishment, with a black hue and red eyes stalks about, destroying sinners, there the subjects are not disturbed, provided that he who inflicts it, discerns well. (VII. 25) There are repeated warnings in Hindu polity against inflicting wrong or undue punishments, or for not protecting the subjects by punishing the wicked. In the *Mahābhārata*, king Pṛthu was created to protect the people against the wrongdoers and the wicked, and to rule with justice and righteousness. 'Do thou punish with thy own hands the man, whoever he may be, that deviates from the path of duty'—these are the words spoken by great ṛṣis who made Pṛthu, the king, for restoring law and order. (*Śāntiparvan*)

Aśoka has been described as combining in himself monkish piety with kingly wisdom. (V. A. Smith : *Early History of India*, p. 200) But respite of three days granted to criminals does not reflect his monkish piety. It reflects his just and noble spirit as a ruler to do justice and to give scope to the criminals to seek justice. That he neither abolished capital punishment nor abolished or relaxed already existing severe Maurya penal code, in spite of his great love for peace and fellow-feeling, reflects his spirit of a true Hindu king who had to sacrifice his own personal likings and dislikings in the altar of the wider and higher interest of the state. Aśoka himself points out the fact that though it pains him very much to cause the least suffering to his subjects, he had to punish a wrong-doer and so his earnest appeal to the people was not to do any

crime so that he would be spared from doing the most unpleasant task of punishing his subjects. (Rock Edict XIII, Shahbazgarhi) So one should admire the ruler, whose tender care and love were extended to the dumb creatures of the realm, did not hesitate to pronounce death sentence on criminals in the interest of the safety and well-being of the state. Aśoka as a Hindu monarch certainly could not dispense with existing laws of the country; he was to rule according to law. It is *daṇḍa*, i.e., Law, which rules the country. The ideal already existed in the country as in the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* we notice it. The essence of rulership lies in *dharma*, i.e., Law. The king should realize that there is nothing higher than *dharma* and he should always abide by it. *Daṇḍa* is the real ruler of the country according to Hindu political theories. (*Manu* VII. 17) A king is only the enforcer of law. (*Arthaśāstra*, I. iv. 3) He can neither violate the law nor he can dispense with law. The prosperity and all-round development of the realm depended on the proper use of law, i.e., *daṇḍa* according to Kauṭilya. (ibid) The same principle is noticed in the *Mahābhārata* too. Aśoka's creation of the post of *Dharmamahāmātras* with special judicial power to hang the criminals, is a significant contribution made by Aśoka to Hindu polity.

Aśoka gave up going on hunting. Hunting is one of the vices for a king according to Kauṭilya and Manu. Kauṭilya has classed it along with gambling, drinking and women. (*Arthaśāstra*, VIII. iii. 21) He quotes the opinion of a predecessor and says that according to Piśuna, of hunting and gambling, hunting is worse. (ibid) Though Kauṭilya himself points out the good effects of hunting as bodily exercise and makes gambling a worse vice than hunting, hunting is nevertheless a vice recognized by Kauṭilya.

According to Manu, hunting is one of the ten vices which a king should always avoid. (VII. 45-47) Like Kauṭilya he classes hunting, gambling, drinking and women together. And those are the most pernicious of all the ten vices springing from the love of pleasure, according to Manu. In the *Mahābhārata* too hunting is one of the seven principal vices. (*Sabhāparvan*)

So Aśoka by giving up hunting, no doubt, acted according to the dictates of the law-givers. By doing so, he no doubt set an example before the kings of India. In the *Kāmandakīya-Nīṭisāra*, a later work on polity, the hunting is condemned as a vice and the calamities that befell *Pāṇḍu* due to his addiction to the vice of hunting, are pointed out. (XIV. 57-58; I. 54)

That Aśoka's prohibitory edict (Pillar Edict V) for animal killing was largely in conformity with the already existing prohibition noticed in Kauṭilya and in the *Dharmaśāstras* for killing certain types of animals, has been rightly noticed by eminent scholars. Further Aśoka in his love for dumb creatures and for his desire to make every animate being happy in this world set an ideal before the posterity. In the *Mahābhārata* every living being is happy in the realm of a righteous monarch. (*Ādīparvan*) *Ahimsā* is a great virtue according to *Manu*. (V. 45-51)

Aśoka has been criticized that in spite of his great love for living beings including lower animals he did not abolish capital punishment. (V. A. Smith: *Early History of India*, pp. 184-85) There is no anomaly in the above two aspects of Aśoka's rulership. The kingship according to Hindu political theories originated when there was lawlessness, that is *Mātsyanyāya* prevailing in the world. The strong was devouring the weak. There was none to protect the weak from the aggressors. The king was created to perform the difficult

task of protecting the weak from the aggressions of the strong. So the weak innocent dumb creatures of the realm, no doubt, needed the strong hand of a king to protect them from the hands of cruel molesters. The fact that ever *Dharmaśāstric* rules had failed to check the people from molesting innocent birds and animals means that stringent laws were needed for their protection. Aśoka's laws came to the assistance of *Dharmaśāstric* writers in protecting innocent and auspicious birds and animals of the country.

Aśoka's love for the animal world is in perfect conformity with the ideal of *Sarva-bhūtānukampā*, compassion for all animate beings, set before a Hindu monarch in the *Mahābhārata*.

Aśoka's personal exertions to make his people happy and to rule with justice are in perfect conformity with the Hindu ideal that a king was to identify himself completely with his subjects and that in the happiness and well-being of his subjects lay his own happiness and well-being. Further, Aśoka made a lasting and glorious contribution to Hindu political thoughts by making it obligatory for a king to see that his subjects were happy here and that they should attain heaven hereafter by good deeds. (Rock Edict VI, Girnar) He thus declared that by performing that duty as a king he would pay his debts to all animate beings. It is a fourth debt for a Hindu king, the other already existing debts being, those to forefathers, ṛṣis and gods. (ibid.)

It is worth noting that in matter of taxation he made no relaxation or concession. According to the *Dharmasūtras*, king was ordinarily entitled to one-sixth of the soil. (*Baudhāyana*, I. x. 6) The same rate is noticed in the *Mahābhārata* (*Śāntiparvan*) and also in *Nārada-smṛti*. (XVIII. 48) The Mauryas used to take one-fourth, which of course had the sanc-

tion in Kauṭilya (*Arthaśāstra* V. 2), *Manu* (X. 118) and *Mahābhārata* (*Śāntiparvan*). Aśoka continued to take one-fourth and did not make any concession or relaxation in the usual Maurya rate. The Lumbinī Pillar Edict stated that Aśoka made a reduction to half of the usual due, for the people of Lumbinī in consideration of the fact that the Buddha was born there. It is noteworthy that in spite of his ardent faith in the Buddha, Aśoka could not make any greater concession for the people of Lumbinī. He built hospitals for men and beasts and did many other works of public utility. Perhaps the Maurya treasury was best utilized in the hands of Aśoka ; he used to make gifts to Brāhmaṇas and Śramaṇas on his pious tours. (Rock Edict VIII, Shahbazgarhi) But so far as taxes were concerned he was quite firm. He knew the value of a rich treasury and he made the best use of it. From the point of view of Hindu polity he was right in his attitude. Treasury is one of the seven constituents of the state according to Hindu political thinkers. (*Arthaśāstra*, VI. i. 1) And the importance of treasury was great. It was the duty of a king to try his best to augment the treasury. The fact that Aśoka did not make concession or relaxation in Maurya system of taxation shows that his love for his subjects and his generosity did not prevent him from realizing and practising this hard truth pointed out by Hindu political thinkers.

Aśoka used to make gifts to Brāhmaṇas and Śramaṇas on his *Dharmayātrā* that is tours of piety. (Rock Edict VIII, Shahbazgarhi) In his edict we find him asking his people again and again to show respect to Brāhmaṇas and Śramaṇas. (Rock Edicts : XI and XIII Shahbazgarhi ; Pillar Edict VII) It is to be noted in this connexion that Śramaṇas were not exclusively monks of Buddhist order. It was a term used for non-Buddhist ascetics too in Indian

literature. (Rapson: *Cambridge History of India*, Vol. I, 1922, p. 420) Aśoka's respect for Brāhmaṇas again points to the fact that he acted according to the ideals set by Hindu political thinkers. The first king Pṛthu Vaina was called Kṣatriya, because he saved the Brāhmaṇas from wounds (*Mahābhārata, Śāntiparvan*). It is further to be noted that Aśoka did not make any distinction between learned and worthy Brāhmaṇas and those Brāhmaṇas who took to low avocations and were Brāhmaṇas only by birth. In the *Dīgha Nikāya* we are told that Brāhmaṇas had fallen low from the high moral and spiritual standard which the Brāhmaṇas of the Vedic and post-Vedic period had. Even Manu the great upholder of Brāhmaṇical superiority vehemently condemns those Brāhmaṇas who did not live the life of study, teaching and contemplation. (I. 109, II. 103) Want of state support and financial problems might have been the causes of such degeneration as noticed in *Dīgha Nikāya* and *Manu*. A hint of the social degeneration of the Brāhmaṇas is noticed in the *Mahābhārata (Ādiparvan)*. That Brāhmaṇas by Maurya period had lost their high social status is pointed out in an authoritative work on the period. It is noteworthy that Aśoka sincerely tried to raise the social status of the Brāhmaṇas. While during the unrighteous rule of the Nandas the Brāhmaṇas had lost their honoured status, we have no information if the first Maurya, busy in consolidating his empire and the second Maurya who had led a somewhat easy life of comfort and luxury made any effort to raise the status of the foremost community of the country. Aśoka's efforts in that direction, no doubt, make him an ideal Hindu monarch.

[Bindusāra wrote to Antiochus, the Greek king of Syria, to send him dried figs, sweet wine and a sophist. The latter wrote back that he would send wine and figs,

but in Greek laws forbade a sophist to be sold. (H. C. Raychaudhuri: *Political History of Ancient India*, op. cit., p. 202) Such a picture of the life of a king, about whose achievements in peace and war we have hardly any information, leads on to the conclusion that the king had a life of comfort and little serious activity.]

It is interesting to note that in none of his edicts we find Aśoka teaching or preaching Buddhistic principles to his subjects. We do not find him teaching his subjects even *Pañcaśīla*, the first five principles of Buddhism. What he teaches again and again in his edicts is worth noting. He says 'commendable is the service of father and mother, commendable is liberality to friends, acquaintances, relations, Brāhmaṇas and Śramaṇas; commendable is abstention from the slaughter of living creatures,....' (Rock Edict III, Girnar) The same moral teachings are noticed in several other edicts. (Rock Edicts: IV & IX, Kalsi; XI, Shahbazgarhi; Minor Rock Edicts II and XIII; Pillar Edicts VII Delhi-Topra) Aśoka's teachings are in conformity with principles of *sadācāra* that is good conduct on which great emphasis is laid in Hindu *Dharmaśāstra*. Aśoka attached great importance to showing respect to all sects. (Rock Edicts XII, R. K. Mookerji: *Aśoka* pp. 159-60 and 232-33; V. A. Smith: *Early History of India*, p. 187; H. C. Raychaudhuri: *Political History of Ancient India*, pp. 234-35) Whatever might have been his personal faith, he had no need, as a king, to preach Buddhist doctrines to his subjects. He wanted to teach them good and wholesome principles of human life so that 'they might attain heaven hereafter'. (Rock Edicts: II, Jaugada; VI, Girnar)

Finally it should be noted that Aśoka's ideal of *Dharmavijaya* has nothing much to do with Buddhism. According to

Buddhist ideals of a Kṣatriya, it is the foremost and most natural duty of a Kṣatriya to glow in battle-array just as it is the duty of the sun to shine by day and for the moon to shine by night. Thus in the *Dhammapada* the Buddha says :

*Divā tapati ādicco ;  
rattiṅ ābhāti candimā ;  
sannaddho khattiyo tapati ;  
jhāyī tapati Brāhmaṇo.  
Atha sabbam ahorattaṅ  
Buddho tapati tejasā.*

Aśoka's ideal of *Dharmavijaya* or conquest by righteousness, is a new and fourth kind of conquest added to the already existing theories of three kinds of conquests in Hindu polity of which the best and ideal one was *Dharmavijaya*. A *Dharmavijayī* king will replace the vanquished or his nearest relation on the throne and will remain satisfied with nominal submission of the latter to him. (*Arthaśāstra*, XI. 1, 10-16) Aśoka, no doubt, by his new ideal of *Dharmavijaya*, presented before a paramount sovereign like himself a noble way of making alliance and fellowship with less powerful neighbours.

Aśoka was the master of the greatest and mightiest empire of India, with no powerful rival to challenge his might after the fall of the proud and powerful Kalingas, who had maintained their independence even during the rule of the first Maurya who had repulsed the Greeks and defeated the forces of Seleucos. Aśoka took pity on the weak kingdoms all around shuddering in fear of the mighty Maurya empire with its huge standing army. Lion was the favourite emblem of Aśoka. And we can very well imagine Aśoka with the glory and might of a lion reigning supreme in the arena of the international politics of Asia. He surveyed his empire from north to

south and east to west and found trembling neighbours. He extended his hand of love and friendship to them. He gave assurance to his weak neighbours that he would not molest them, he would love and cherish them. (Rock Edicts : XIII, Shahbazgarhi ; II, Girnar ; II, Jaugada) Thus while his ideal of *Dharmavijaya* is a unique contribution to humanity and world politics, it is an ideal added to Hindu polity, an ideal set before a powerful sovereign not to molest and scare his less powerful neighbours but to care for them and to win them by friendly gestures and love.

In Hindu polity ally that is *mitra* is one of the seven constituents of a state. (*Arthaśāstra*, VI. i. 1) A state is incomplete without ally in the chessboard of international politics. And it is a gesture of a wise politician to maintain friendly relation with kingdoms situated on the frontier of his own realm. In later period Harṣa, thus, made the kings of eastern and western boundaries of his empire, the kings of Assam and Valabhī, his allies. (R. S. Tripathi : *History of Ancient India*, Motilal Banarasidas, Delhi, 1960, pp. 301-302) Instead of annexing the kingdoms on the borders it was a wise policy to maintain friendship with them, so that they would act as bulwarks against any external menace. Aśoka was already a master of the largest empire that any ruler of Hindu India, ever ruled. It was out of the question to think of further conquest of border tribes and kingdoms. From the point of view of a statesman the policy in establishing cordial friendly relations with kingdoms situated on the borders of his vast empire, was the wisest policy adopted by Aśoka, in the interest of the safety of his realm.



## NOTES AND COMMENTS

### IN THIS NUMBER

S. Subhash Chandra, M.A. (Osmania), Dr. Phil. (Cologne) is at present carrying on his research study in Sorbonne, Paris. A writer of noted academic standing Dr. Chandra presents us here his another beautiful article 'Pascal's Image of Man' in which he has collated a good deal of material regarding Pascal's thoughts and ideas drawn from different original sources. We offer our thanks to him for the article which he has written specially for the columns of *Prabuddha Bharata*.

Sanat Kumar Raichoudhury, M.A.,

D.Phil., is the Lecturer in the Department of Philosophy, University of Burdwan, West Bengal. Dr. Raichoudhury's study on 'Swami Vivekananda's Philosophy: Vedānta in Theory and Practice' is deep as well as broad-based.

(Miss) Aparna Chattopadhyay, M.A. (First class First), Ph.D., F.R.A.S., is a Senior U.G.C. Research Fellow as well as Lecturer in the Post-Graduate Department of History, Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi. In the article 'Aśoka Maurya as a Hindu Monarch' Dr. Chattopadhyay puts forward some vital historical facts relating to the political thoughts of Aśoka.

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## REVIEWS AND NOTICES

ŚRĪMAD BHĀGAVATA. CONDENSED BY S. S. COHEN. Chinmaya Publication Trust, Basappa Chetty Street, Madras 3. 1965. Pages 361. Price Rs. 3.

The *Bhāgavata* is a book both for the seeker and the layman. It contains guidance on matters like Renunciation, *Siddhis*, *Kriyās*, Heaven, *Bhakti* as the means and the goal—matters of moment to every awakened soul. Equally it contains elaborate instructions to the common man in order that he may prepare himself for his next step in spiritual evolution. The scripture contains twelve books and reaches its climax in Books 10 and 11 celebrating the glory of Lord Kṛṣṇa.

The chief merit of this competent translation is that repetitions, lists of names, detailed accounts of creation, etc. etc., have been deleted and the narrative is presented in a compact form. Sri Cohen has added explanatory notes wherever necessary and has made the work useful, interesting and elevating. It is a commendable effort.

M. P. PANDIT

LIFE BEHIND LIFE. BY SRI M. P. PANDIT. Sri Aurobindo Mandal, Ahmedabad. 1965. Pages 142. Price Rs. 5.

The enlightened reader is familiar with the numerous elevating writings of Sri M. P. Pandit. Here is a collection of essays at the same high level meant to give the reader a glimpse of the life behind life. The essays cover a wide range—The New Age, Man and Animal Truth, Suffering, Yoga, Astrology, Prayer, Mantra, Dreams, *Sādhana* etc. But running through all of them is the purpose of the author to let us have a glimpse of the forces operating behind the apparent and the visible in human life. Starting with the material, passing to the physical in man and thence to the mental, and the different levels of the mental, from the lowest still in bondage to matter to the highest which has links with the immortal, Sri Pandit reveals how the invisible forces operate. Numerous instances, both personal and from heresay, are given, occult events are drawn upon—all with the purpose of making the sceptical and 'scientific' realize that the imperceptible is *not* non-existent. Safe advice on spiritual practices

is given. Everything seems to point to the last essay where certain features of integral *yoga* are delineated and these in turn point to the first two essays which reveal that this earth is being prepared for the coming of a race of a highly dedicated and developed men. If we put ourselves in tune with the forces operating to realize their great purpose in evolution, we shall benefit ourselves and also help in a humble way to further the course of evolution.

The discerning reader going through the essays will have his vision steadily broadened and perhaps catch a glimpse of what the author wants us to see. Let us all be profoundly thankful to Sri Pandit for this valuable booklet.

PROFESSOR P. S. NAIDU

THE ŚŪRANGAMA SŪTRA (LENG YEN CHING). TRANSLATED BY CHARLES LUKE. Rider & Company, London. 1966. Pages 262. Price 40 sh. net, in U.K. only.

Charles Luke who now lives in Hong Kong has admirably translated the above book from Chinese into English; the translation is based on the explanation and commentary written by Master Han Shan of the Ming dynasty after his own enlightenment. Charles Luke's ambition is, to quote his own words, 'to present as many Chinese Buddhist texts as possible so that Buddhism can be preserved at least in the West, should it be fated to disappear in the East as it seems to be'.

The book is mainly intended for Western readers; to what extent this will be appreciated by them I do not know, because the *sūtras* are quite profound and cannot be fully understood by materialistic commentators. Yet the attempt made by Charles Luke is bold enough and is bound to draw attention of the Western thinkers who are supposed to be students of Buddhism.

To the Eastern readers, the book will be found quite stimulating. *Śūrangama Samādhi*, as we know, is the gateway to perfect enlightenment, as it involves the process of transmutation of the ordinary mind, resulting immediately in the revelation of the nature of the *Tathāgata* store of *one Reality*.

The pure and clean True mind of the *one Reality* is passionless and unperturbed. In it there is neither ego-sense, nor the outer world; but when it is stirred and screened by the first thought, the illusory ego-sense is produced which, in turn, creates the illusory distinction of the subject and the object.

Under the spell of ignorance we generally cling

to the illusory body and mind made of five *skandhas* as an ego which seems to have its field of activity in the outer world and which is constantly supplying us with various kinds of sense-data. This is a gross attachment to ego and things which arise from discrimination. There is also a subtle attachment to ego which is inborn. If one seeks to attain enlightenment he has got to wipe out both the forms of attachment. The three meditative studies, namely, the meditative study of all as void; the meditative study of all as unreal and the meditative study of the Mean, are to be adhered to so as to be able to destroy both gross and subtle clingings to the ego. The breaking up of these two forms of attachment is the teaching in this *Sūtra* under discussion. Objects contemplated in meditative studies, practice of meditation for self-enlightenment, main instructions on the three meditative studies of the one Mind—these have been fully discussed in the text.

Charles Luke's scholarship is impressive. He has indeed done a valuable service to all English knowing scholars who are sincerely interested in the study of Buddhism. Footnotes supplemented to the book reveal his profound erudition.

DR. ANIMA SEN GUPTA.

## BENGALI

VEDĀNTA SANJNĀ MĀLIKĀ. BY SWAMI DHIRESHANANDA, Udbodhan Karyalaya, Calcutta. 1966-67 (Bengali era 1373). Pages 143 with index. Price Rs. 2.

The book is a collection of the choicest wisdom of Vedānta which is the surest means to elevate mankind. This book is the gist of two books published before—*Vedāntasañjñā-prakaranam* by Swami Devi Giriji Maharaja of Uttarakashi and *Ārya-Sañjñāvalih* by Swami Swarupananda.

The book has sixteen chapters dealing on sixteen *sañjñās* (consciousness) covering almost every branch of knowledge. It is a store-house of wisdom and is a great help to a correct understanding of an ethically justifiable behaviour-pattern. The *summum bonum* of good and moral life is neatly put in these few pages.

Sanskrit verses are followed by Bengali translation as well as explanation which is a real masterpiece. Considerable hard-work and scholarship are put in these few pages which make the book not only extremely readable but also useful.

We hope that in future edition a proper 'contents' will be added. This will surely add to the value of this otherwise very valuable book.

DR. P. N. MUKHERJEE

## NEWS AND REPORTS

### THE RAMAKRISHNA VEDANTA CENTRE, LONDON

REPORT FOR 1966

The Centre continued its activities as usual at 68 Dukes Avenue, Muswell Hill, London N. 10 and 54 Holland Park, London W. 11, and in the provinces and on the Continent.

Swami Ghanananda conducted the Hindu part in a multi-religious service on Commonwealth Day (June 11th) at St. Martin-in-the-Fields near Trafalgar Square before a meeting of a thousand people attended by the Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh. Like other representatives of religions he was presented to the Queen and the Duke, and attended a special reception at Marlborough House to which they were also invited. Representing the Hindu faith on Human Rights Day (December 10th) at Westminster Abbey, by invitation of the Dean of Westminster, he read out quotations from the scriptures.

The Swami visited Zurich, Athens, and the Centre Vedantique Ramakrishna at Gretz, 22 miles from Paris and gave a lecture and two discourses. He also spoke on Hinduism at a school in East London answering questions as usual.

Swami Parahitananda conducted Sunday service at 54 Holland Park on 34 Sundays. He also delivered 13 lectures at Leicester and several other places including Southampton University. He answered questions wherever and whenever they were asked.

*Vedanta For East and West* entered its 16th year in September 1966. The Centre sold over £1000 worth of books: some of the customers were in different countries of Europe, U.S.A., New Zealand, Australia, North and South America and Africa.

The Centre was visited by four Swamis of the Order namely, Swamis Sambuddhananda, Ritajananda, Vandanananda and Vidyatmananda. They gave six lectures, two of which were lantern lectures by the last named Swami.

The birthdays of Sri Ramakrishna, the Holy Mother, Swami Vivekananda, Swami Brahmananda and Swami Shivananda were observed as usual, as also *Śrī Kṛṣṇa Jayantī*, *Durgāṣṭamī* and Christmas Eve.

The total number of those who were served through lectures and discourses, interviews, festivals of spiritual value, celebrations of the birthdays of Sri Ramakrishna and other teachers and received other help, at the Centre, 68 Dukes Avenue, London

N. 10 was 5,716; the number of those who received similar help at the Ashrama at 54 Holland Park, London W. 11, was 2,500. The grand total was 8,216.

The Management thanks all those who have helped with their generous contributions and those who have assisted in the work with devotion.

### RAMAKRISHNA MISSION TUBERCULOSIS SANATORIUM, RANCHI

REPORT FOR THE YEAR 1965-66

The Ramakrishna Mission T. B. Sanatorium was started in 1951 with only 32 beds. It has now grown into a well-equipped Sanatorium of 240 beds, having all facilities necessary for the diagnosis and treatment of Tuberculosis patients including major chest surgery. There is also a Rehabilitation Centre where ex-patients are given training in various departments of the Sanatorium, such as Laboratory, X-Ray Department, Nursing, Stores, Office, Power House, Water Works, Poultry Farm, Tailoring Department etc.

During the year 1965-66, 541 patients were treated, of these 330 were discharged. 106 surgical operations were performed, including 3 Pneumnectomy, 3 Lobectomy, 89 Thoracoplasty, 6 Thoracoscopy. 81 poor T.B. patients were treated free of all charges and 24 at concession rates in the In-patients Department, with the help of the donations, subscriptions and the income derived from the endowments and estates at Calcutta and Patna. 10 of these T. B. patients belonged to Scheduled Castes and Tribes. 457 T. B. cases and 839 general cases were also given free medical advice and assistance in the Out-patients Department. 147 beds were maintained free by different organizations and agencies. 40 ex-patients were accommodated in the After-care Colony & Rehabilitation Centre. Most of them were employed in the Sanatorium after the completion of their training in various departments.

During the year 1965-66, the income was Rs. 6,67,311-54 P. and the expenditure Rs. 7,74,392-07 P. resulting in deficit of Rs. 1,07,080-53 P. The yearly per capita expenditure which had been Rs. 2,512 in 1958 rose to Rs. 3,469-19 P. in 1965-66. The Management of the Sanatorium appeals to the charitably disposed people of our country and the Government to help this institution, dedicated to the service of humanity.