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MARCH 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

MARCH 1967

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## PRABUDDHA BHARATA

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# PRABUDDHA BHARATA

Vol. LXXII

MARCH 1967

No. 3



उत्तिष्ठत जाग्रत प्राप्य वरान्निबोधत

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

—:o:—

LETTERS OF SWAMI SHIVANANDA

( 117 )

Sri Ramakrishna Math  
Belur, Howrah  
31 July, 1922

Dear Sriman—,

I received your letter. You can well imagine the state of our mind through which we are now passing. The Master is ever present and it is the truth of all the truths; otherwise we could not have continued so long. This passing away of the devotees from this world and their merging themselves up in the Master—all these seem to be a play nowadays. Whenever the Master wills, one will have to play like this. I also reflect the same; there is nothing to worry. This is a kind of play and this does involve us. But so long He makes us stay in this world, we will have to carry on His mission and remain in this physical body of ours.

The extent of study as well as the spiritual practices that you are having at the Math is quite heartening. How is the school being run and the weaving work is being made? I have not heard of these for a long time. You also continue to do as before.

I feel delighted to know that *Śrī Rāmanāma* has been printed. Maharaj was very eager about the worship of Mahāvīra as also the popularization of *Śrī Rāmanāma-saṅkīrtana* in Bengal. Swami Vivekananda, too, seriously thought of the same. It has therefore been quite good. I am very happy to learn that the *Letters* of Swami Premananda are being printed. I have written one introduction for this and have sent the same to Mati. It has, however, been a brief one.

Very glad to know that all are keeping well. May Master make them develop spiritually; may you also make much advancement. This is the blessing of my heart to you all.

Your well-wisher,  
Shivananda

(118)

Sri Ramakrishna Math  
Belur, Howrah  
17 August 1922

Dear Mother—,

Many days back I received one letter from you. Hope you are keeping well both physically and mentally. I sincerely pray that you may become more and more steadfast in your faith, devotion and compassion and have the peace within. The more you will meditate on the Master, the more you will feel His presence and have the peace. Our Master is very kind hearted; verily He listens to sincere prayers.

It is quite true that the mind, while dealing with worldly minded people, gets polluted. I tell you one thing particularly: Do never criticize others or indulge in it while you deal with people. Even if you are made to witness such occasions, keep silent, you yourself should never do it. Be particularly alert about this. One criticizing others or listening to it becomes downgraded and dirty in one's mind and cannot attain to the devotion towards God.

Dear Mother, one who always remembers God can never have any fear in the mind. Maharaj passed away and there is no doubt that every one of us will pass away; all who have taken up body shall meet with the same end. Yet it is also equally true that God is there and He is all-kind, all-loving and all-compassionate to His devotees.

Master's devotees who passed away are all there in the divine domain of the Master with their respective divine forms. Know it for certain that by one's prayer and meditation one verily pleases the Master and with Him one pleases also the devotees by His side. What to write you more? My heartfelt love and blessings to you and all. By the Master's grace, my health goes somewhat well.

Your well-wisher,  
Shivananda

# THE GREAT ENQUIRY

[ EDITORIAL ]

*The New Question:* Does God really exist? It is an old question today but it was not the so when it was first voiced by the nineteenth century science. The wind of doubt had already been blowing hot and cold in Europe, according to a new materialist temper and gradually it rose to a hurricane strength that gave a severe jolt to the entire world of human thought. The historian in his silent study; the philosopher in his absorbing speculation; the worshipper in the temple, church and mosque; the spiritual aspirant in quest of salvation—all felt the shock and looked up in helpless wonder. Many deserted their old camps of faith and religion and avowed the vassalage of the new slogan and many experienced a grim tug of war between the Old and New in themselves. The question was new but not quite unjustified. How long can one subscribe to a doctrine of God or religion that makes a dangerous beguilement away from the necessary practice of recharging the life with the real promises, belittles man, disdains adventure, shelves negative metaphysics or obscure mythology and escapes in to a supine dependence on an other worldly salvation? Should anything old or traditional is to be upheld simply because of its being old? One must feel the warmth of God in one's heart to make oneself going on; one ought to make an attempt to understand Him in terms of comprehensible terms and conceivable therapies. But such a practice was a far cry where religion was to be accepted merely and not enjoined to the pulsations of an active life. The slogans of science were—verification and demonstration. 'Why does God hide Himself if He exists and is omnipotent?' But how could the concept of one rueful and lugubrious reality stand the test of scientific experiment and logical verification?

Hence a fateful struggle became inevitable between the new question and the traditional belief and that brought Science and Religion face to face each other.

The question was not only not old but was positively unfamiliar. Never before in the history of the religious thoughts such a demand for scientific verification of the ultimate truth was heard. There were the negative hypothesis of the Cārvākas, the complex polemics of the Mīmāṃsakas and Buddhists but all those were more or less abstract questions of abstruse philosophy having nothing to do with any sort of positive verification and demonstration. Also there was the disputation of form and formlessness of God among the Hindus, Christians and Mohammedans but the hypothesis, God, was common for all. The new cry was for a convincing testimony commensurate with a positive verification that would prove the existence of the Reality, if there was any, which was really real, tangible, perceptible, redolent with the richness of colour and sound, computable in motion and regularity and identifiable by shape and form. No concept of divinity which was sterile, pallid and barren, could evidently be a meaningful reply to such a new demand. So the more the new light of enquiry was thrown into the dark caverns of the dead values, the more it ferreted out the dilemmas that had been generating only a terrible crescendo of indignity and repulsiveness against God and religion. The initial hypothesis of science thus proved to be all-conclusive providing the final proof of a purposeful human life. But the question also opened another vista of thought, another face of religion which in turn added another dimension to the speculations of sciences.

*The Invisible Equilibrium:* The voice of science was not the only voice to predict the course of events and the quantum of European history was not all to make the history of the humanity move forward. Nature implants both thesis and antithesis of thoughts simultaneously at the one and same time. Faith with knowledge, false presumption with sagacious foresight, unwary credulity with right intention, unwieldiness and confusion with stable resolution always make a balanced equilibrium. Orthodoxy and liberalism, God-intoxication and material madness ever remain the same when they are viewed in a broader perspective of totality. Fanaticism of the Pharisees, mockeries of Pilate, passions of Caesar, Judas's treacherous kiss and Peters' denial—all become balanced by the forgiveness of Christ. Craven surrender of thousands to the ignominious heartlessness and euphonious greed stood well matched with the Enlightenment and piety of Buddha's great heart. Humes are succeeded by Whiteheads and Hitlers are counterbalanced by Schweitzers. Doubts incite to unbelief and unbelief makes the belief more distinct. By our doubts we often renew our taste for any truth. Belief like unbelief is also made to serve base and fanatic ends and so the two supplement each other to push us forward upon the path we tread.

*The New Experiments:* The storms often make the earth invisible for a while but for that reason the earth does not disappear altogether. It remains all the same. Truth also remains what it is even though the meaningless jargons of human mind may make it appear different for some time. Almost equally at the same time another Master Enquirer in another part of the world embarked on a historic experiment for the purpose of having a scientific verification of the existence of God and the utility of the Religions. Like any scientist he too had his definite hypothesis, determined zeal, tre-

mendous faith and a discriminating mind that could detect the truth with every perfection and precision. Like many great seekers of truth he remained unknown from the public eye, was ridiculed for his uncommon hypothesis, and despised for his unbending resolve to unravel such an age old mystery. In an age where dogmatism reigned supreme, where there was more a game of religion than the religion itself how could one think of seeing God face to face? God is to be worshipped in temples and Churches but how could one dare to verify His existence? How should one aspire after that attainment which was actualized by the few sages of the obscure past, or by the prophets like Christ or Buddha? These were therefore the popular reactions against this new venture. But the faith of a true scientist does never recoil back at any such saddistic stupidity of a lying euthansia that always cuts down the chord of all ardent aspirations and adventure. Archimedes was misunderstood, Galileo was ridiculed, Copernicus's discovery—'Earth moves round the sun'—was accepted only when he was dying. But did they ever abandon their experiments? 'A new scientific truth', said Marx Planck, 'does not triumph by convincing its opponents and making them see the light, but rather because its opponents eventually die, and a new generation grows up that is familiar with it.' (*Scientific Autobiography and Other Papers*, Philosophical Library, New York, 1949) The inventive urge of the scientist is irresistible. No sacrifice, no privation, no ignominy would be too much for him. So the zeal of the Master Enquirer remained undimmed for months and years together till the magic lens of his uncommon genius could penetrate, enlarge and intensify a living God and verify His presence with every possible empirical test.

Sri Ramakrishna, the God-man of modern India, is that enquirer in whom Religion makes a meteoric encounter with Science.

In him the robustness of a spiritual adventurer becomes combined with a true scientific temper to which neither the quantitative rubble of material values nor the dubious and devious variants of superstitious practices ever appeared as odds insurmountable to make his pursuit of God-realization a baffling and obscure subject. He thought: 'Devotees like Ramaprasad had Mother's vision. So it is certain that the Mother of the Universe is realizable; why can I not then be blessed with Her vision?'

He cried in doubt: 'Art Thou true Mother, or is it all fiction—mere poetry without reality? If Thou dost exist, why do I not see Thee? Is religion a mere fantasy and art Thou only a figment of man's imagination?'

He realized: 'God alone is real.'

And he found the same to be a verifiable and demonstrable reality for every sincere seeker who desired it.

All these may sound fantastic but, then, these came to happen under the full blaze of modern science just about one hundred years ago. By his unique discovery Sri Ramakrishna has outrun all the men of sciences and he stands truly larger than any of his contemporaries even before there has been any accretion of any legend to magnify his stature.

*The Great Discovery:* 'Some faces', said Goethe, 'have but a date,—others a history.' One can read the definite marks of a long history inscribed in the tranquil demeanour of this Scientist-Saint of nineteenth century India. His entire life span (1836-1886) with its stamp of conviction, splendid imagery, cosmic scope, the thrilling experiments, the uncommon methodology and the superhuman findings bears a special meaning for this uncertain and troubled age of ours. Mysterious was the inner core of this life which might be compared to a long contemplation and reflection whose

transverse undulations were vibrant with the loftiest of the secrets yet compelling testimonies to the glories and grandeurs of having a human birth. It was not merely religious, it was religion itself. It had atmosphere, but no airs. It was a flow, a flight and a flame! Yet it had a rare scientific breadth that would doubt at any irrationality at the first and reject the same to the last. The mind that always gravitated towards the realm of supersensuous truth would remain unbent before any convention that sought to make a meritless division of high and low among men. The heart that bubbled with piety and love for all would become merciless to discard any sentimental credulity that had no logical tie with its fundamental hypothesis, the pursuit of God and God alone.

Morning shows the day; the early events and episodes of the life of this great seeker of truth foreshadowed his later supreme role as a prophet of the harmony of all the religions. During the time of the ceremony of the investiture of sacred thread the nine-year-old boy startled his relatives by accepting alms from his old nurse, a devoted blacksmith woman to whom he had made a promise beforehand. Although such a practice was against the conventions of an orthodox brahmin family in those days, the boy refused to take the social convention as more important than the sincere devotion of a pious heart. Unlike all other persons around he would find no interest in the customary 'bread winning education' that would not help him to realize God. Asked by his elder brother to take more care of his studies he did not hesitate to reply, 'Brother, what shall I do with this bread winning education? I would rather acquire that knowledge which will illumine my heart and give me satisfaction for ever.' Thus he renounced learning a little of almost everything in order to learn everything of one great thing.

With his arrival at the temple garden of Dakshineswar as the young worshipper of



the Divine Mother in the temple, Sri Ramakrishna's God-intoxication which was inborn in him, increased thousand-fold. In the serene solitude of the surrounding he found out his much needed solitary workshop where he could carry on with his experiments silently. Great discoveries and inventions were all made in solitude. In solitude Archimedes found the key to his problem lock; Thomas Edison invented the construction of electric bulb; and Michaelangelo painted the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel. Beethoven composed his best music when he was deaf and the sounds of the world were dead to him; Milton wrote his poetry of paradise when the world was blind to his eyes. Sri Ramakrishna, too, became completely lost in his solitude. He forgot the world, the men around, his sleep and his comforts. While worshipping the Divine Mother Kālī he would like to see Her living presence, speak to Her, verify whether She actually was breathing like us or not, and seek Her guidance in every aspect and feel the pangs of separation from Her. People around could not but become confounded to see this madness that longed to witness a living deity in a temple and practise purity and piety at such unimaginable length and they thought all these to be the signs of a maniac. How would any ordinary man guess the intensity of a cyclone that was wrenching the mind of such a seeker of God? As he had no pride of dress and disposition, so he did not disguise his thoughts by any false trick. He was unconventional and so he seemed inconsistent.

One must be desireless to see God and so he adopted a novel method to root out the *desire for wealth from the mind*. He would take several coins in one hand and a handful of earth on the other and discriminate that money was no better than dust and then throw both into the Ganges. God dwells in every being; he would therefore identify himself with the lowliest of the

lowly and look upon even the fallen women as the living images of the Divine Mother. Taken over by a terrible frenzy to see God he would find no peace anywhere, no joy in anything and at the end of each day as the sun would gradually go down he would break up in bitter cry of agony and disappointment for the loss of one more day without God realization. For years together such experiments were continued with patience and perseverance. Even in the midst of the bitterest of the disappointments and despair the faith remained unshaken. This faith is the prompter and precursor of all sciences and the same faith led Sri Ramakrishna to the amazement of his wonderful discovery, seeing God face to face. Still one day in a moment of intolerable anguish and desperation he resolved to put an end to his life. As he rushed to seize the sword of the Divine Mother hung in the wall of the temple, he saw the vast presence of the Mother engulfing him from all sides. He felt one great luminosity pulsating everywhere, in every molecule and particle. He saw it, felt it and became lost in it.

Every true scientist, it has been said, is a strange admixture of an adventurer and a pedant. As the adventurer he goes far beyond the known frontier of knowledge and collects data, confronts new facts and thoughts and gathers new experiences but the pedant in scientist looks to these collections with his accustomed and conventional scales of judgement and experiences a crisis with their usefulness, identity and genuineness. The onrush of the new facts often proves to be too overwhelming for the mind disciplined to a particular set of thoughts. So the pedant in scientist cries in doubt till all those newly conquered frontiers of facts are verified, assimilated, elaborated and extended towards a stable and satisfactory synthesis. So doubts overtook the mind of Sri Ramakrishna. He did not follow any preconceived plan; neither did he adopt any predetermined

process formulated by any school of philosophy to arrive at his truth. The intuition and the concept, the two fundamental requisities of his scientific search were solely his own. The doubts became further intensified when even the intimate people around also began to ascribe his new vision to the illusions of a mentally sick person. All in the temple garden including Mathur, his devoted caretaker began to look to his realizations as abnormal thoughts which were taken to be consequent upon his observance of rigid spiritual disciplines and acute austerities. Therefore, with fearful eyes Sri Ramakrishna prayed to the Divine Mother: 'Can'st Thou have a heart to deceive me like this because I am a fool?'

*Further Explorations:* It is not enough that a truth has been discovered or realized through some experiments. Experimented truth gains meaning and certitude only when one finds new circumstances to examine its inexorability. Whether it is a synthesis or integration, it must be verified before it could be termed as a scientific generalization. Sri Ramakrishna, therefore, plunged himself in one difficult spiritual adventure extending over a period of twelve years for further exploration of new truths as well as for the verification of his initial realizations.

By a mysterious command great spiritual guides, and champions of the different branches of spiritual sciences began to pour in to the temple garden where Sri Ramakrishna was passing his anxious days. They ranged from the adventurers in the Tantra, Vaiṣṇava and Vedānta philosophies of Hinduism to the great teachers of Islam and Christianity. Under their loving guidance he practised all the sixty-four phases of Tantra, passed through the different stages of realizations prescribed by the Vaiṣṇava doctrines and reached the all-pervading Brahman, the supreme goal of Vedānta. Everywhere,

whether in the Dynamic Brahman of the Tantra, the Deities of the Dualists or in the unqualified Brahman of the Nondualists he saw the same one God, one vast Reality. Whether as an ardent aspirant of Islam or as the devout worshipper of Christ he visualized the same cosmic presence reigning supreme—the same transcendental Reality reflecting itself in the immanent universe of stocks and stones, the same one God being worshipped by different religions; the same divinity beaming through every eye. It was no fantasy of imagination that Sri Ramakrishna had such a sweep of dynamic vision. In each phase of spiritual discipline he made a total plunge, achieved complete transformation of his being into the ideal he took up and viewed the spectrum of his realizations through the pores of his entire existence. When practising Islam he would not even feel like entering into the temple of the Divine Mother; while remaining in the intoxication of Brahman he would have blisters in his breast to see anybody trampling down even the leaves of the grasses before him. Such was his perfect identification with truth, such was his soulful realization of God.

Such an uncommon crystallization of spiritual experiences could not but appear to be astonishing to the galaxy of teachers who visited Sri Ramakrishna. Bhairavi Brahmani, an adept in the Tantras became so much wonder struck to see these manifestations that she considered all these to be the decisive evidences of a phase of God-intoxication which was attainable only by the incarnations of God. She felt so confident that she convened two learned assemblies of erudite Vaiṣṇava and Tāntrika scholars and devotees at the temple garden with the help of Mathur, the proprietor of the garden and proved before all the scientific merit of her presumptions with relevant references to the great scriptures. The gravity of such conferences could

be well imagined from the fact that these were attended by no mean celebrities than Vaisnavacharan, the renowned Vaiṣṇava scholar and Gourikanta, the erudite Tāntrika devotee of the time and others. Even Totapuri, the celebrated teacher of the Vedānta school would make no reservation to express his unhesitating amazement to see the marvels of the height of such wonderful realization which Sri Ramakrishna could attain with such a marathon speed and remarkable rapidity. Tota, a great wandering monk and a believer only in Non-dual Brahman, was an adamant votary of pure reason and scientific discrimination and looked upon ceremonial worships or rituals of any kind as mere kindergarten spiritual practices. But what took long forty years' acute austerities for Tota to realize was achieved by his blessed disciple within three days. To this, the great teacher became so much astounded that he cried out, 'Is it indeed true, what I see enacted before me? Has this great soul actually realized in a day what I could experience only as the fruit of forty years of austere *sādhana*?' (*Sri Ramakrishna The Great Master*, 1955, p. 256) Versed in the mystery of the super-conscious he examined his disciple in *samādhi* again and again. 'He scrutinized the signs manifested in the body, examined whether the heart was beating or the slightest of the breath was coming out of the nostrils.' But he found the body firm and fixed like a piece of wood with no change or variation whatsoever and again burst out in utter astonishment: 'Is it divine Māyā? Is it in truth *samādhi*? Is it the *nirvikalpa-samādhi*, the ultimate result attained through the path of knowledge spoken of in the Vedānta? Ah! How very strange is the Māyā of the Divine!' (*ibid.*) Tota's bold spirit and scientific outlook became further evident from another incident that involved an important question concerning Sri Ramakrishna's spiritual disciplines. He did never look upon Sri Ramakrishna's mar-

riage as hindrance to spiritual pursuits. Knowing Sri Ramakrishna married, Tota boldly said:

'What does it matter? He only may be regarded as really established in Brahman, whose renunciation, detachment, discrimination and knowledge remain intact inspite of his wife being with him; he alone may be regarded as having really attained the knowledge of Brahman, who can always look equally upon both men and women as the Self and can behave accordingly.' (*ibid.*, p. 270) Tota's unique suggestion induced Sri Ramakrishna to test his realizations in another revolutionary way which led him to a new frontier of conviction hitherto unrecorded in the spiritual history of the world. In fact this experiment which came last, was a fitting finale to all the preceding ones. So far the Scientist had locked himself up in the solitude of his inner cell completely cut off from the rest of the world from all its duties and obligations, relations and relativities. But he was to come out into the open arena and testify to the fact that his knowledge was an applied science of dynamic reality. He was to examine and verify that his God realization was not the one which was true only in a safe and solitary rampart away from the world of reality but was rather a total becoming that was not controverted or contradicted by any objective environment or mellowed by any challenge of test. The relative world of pleasure and pain is a corridor through which one has to pass through to make oneself permanently established in God. With the arrival of Sri Sarada Devi, his wife by his side at Dakshineswar, Sri Ramakrishna remembered the words of his teacher Totapuri and began his crucial test. On the one hand he was now to look to his wife and on the other he was to remain firm in his knowledge of Brahman which was beyond all senses of dualities. A crucial question met with a crucial involvement and the seeker

of truth did never fight shy of the same. For more than one year Sri Ramakrishna remained absorbed in his new experimentation in which he could test each and every grain of his renunciation and detachment, purity and guilelessness. Again and again he let his mind go to have a free choice between physical enjoyment and the bliss of Brahman and again and again he found it whisking away beyond all duality towards the realm supreme. At long last the new test ratified the same result; the God-intoxicated Scientist saw God in his wife too. In her he saw the same blissful Divine Mother who was being worshipped in the temple and who verily gave birth to his body. And one day he literally worshipped her as the Mother Divine with all the necessary formalities. No other spiritual teacher could dare to have such a range of brinkmanship in his search and verification and no other could get hold of the Supreme Truth in such minute measurement, mathematical accuracy and integral wholeness as did Sri Ramakrishna have. Numerous were therefore the other saints, savants and devotees who would come to visit this great soul from far and near. They would verify their respective different modes of realizations in the light of his super-human attainments and renew their devotion towards their respective faiths and ideals once again.

Romain Rolland, the French savant describes Sri Ramakrishna's realizations as the fulfilment of the spiritual aspirations for the last two thousand years and Mahatma Gandhi has remarked, 'His life enables us to see God face to face... Ramakrishna was the living embodiment of godliness.' Each branch of spiritual science which requires years of austerities, penance and perseverance for its mastery was mastered by him in one single life span of fifty years. None but a great soul with a gigantic appetite for God would be able to make this impossible task possible. No one but any

scientist of extraordinary genius could examine each and every bleached bone of the discarded theories and dead doctrines of the past, look through the bewildering incubus of the antiquated practices and re-integrate them again with the alchemy of a Super Truth to make the mortmain hold of the perverted inhibitions evaporate and testify to the hunches of the superconscious in all their perfect mystical halo and accurate clinical ardour. From a grand stand view of this Super Truth he uttered his note of the harmony of religions—'All religions are so many paths' and the note is the cumulative culmination of all his scientific ventures. It is more a scientific truth than a theological statement. Although the invisible air pervading the whole sky, knows no land and frontier, yet it makes complex hierarchical levels of atmosphere in different topographical zones of the earth. The same Super Truth, like the same way, makes itself felt through its differentiations and relativistic crystallizations as diverse levels of unity in variety of the different faiths. One going from end to end finds the same primordial cosmic ingredient everywhere. The scientist views one and the same integral process that runs from James Watt's kettle or Archimedes's bath tub to Einstein's dream or Faraday's experiments. Sri Ramakrishna's science of synthesis saw the one and same God in whom all merged meandering along the paths of diverse faiths. He did never create a new religion; what he made was a new synthesis. Einstein describes all creations of synthesis in science as 'combinatorial play'. Jacques Hadamard (*The Psychology of Invention in the Mathematical Field*, Princeton University Press, 1949) writes: 'Invention or discovery, be it in Mathematics or anywhere else, takes place by combining ideas. The Latin word *cogito*, to think comes from *coagitare*, to shake together.' Jerome Burner views all kinds of creativity the outcome of 'combinatorial activity'. Mckellar signifies the

same as 'fusion' of perceptions, Kubie, as 'discovery of unexpected connexions between things'. This is same as 'Goethe's connect, always connect'. (Cf. Arthur Koestler's address on 'Criteria of Creativity in Science' delivered before the Cambridge meeting of the British Association for the Advancement of Sciences, 1965: *Vide Science and Culture*, October, 1966) In his harmony of the Religions Sri Ramakrishna actualized that grand 'combination' or 'fusion' of the different faiths, doctrines and religions of the past and present and this was decidedly a new creation of spiritual science although not a new religion of history. It is because any new synthesis of science is more than the sum of its parts. 'When Newton combined Kepler's laws of planetary motion with Galileo's studies of the motion of the projectiles, a whole new universe sprang into being.' (ibid.) Equally the same way when Sri Ramakrishna integrated the diverse, discordant, isolated notes of different faiths into one, a grand symphony was created and heard.

*The Historic Encounter:* Orthodox verifications by the great spiritual guides dispelled Sri Ramakrishna's apparent doubts about his visions and realizations. The fantasy of the mad enquirer opened a new vista of thrill and wonder for all. But there remained another episode that was still to be enacted. So far the verifications had all been scholastic. Experts verifying his God realization were all saints and savants who in some way or other believed in God. To the empiricist such verifications may not be acceptable. He will ask for an objective test. He may like to question, 'Can one see God as I can see the tree?' He will not be confirmed about the truth till he can have a test of Sri Ramakrishna's purity, sincerity, renunciation and detachment under objective circumstances and, to think of the extreme, he may demand an objective demonstration of godliness.

Verily such demands came to be voiced before Sri Ramakrishna soon. The agnostic air had already pervaded the atmosphere of the Indian thought world and a bitter struggle had already ensued in the mind of the educated *élite*. Intellectuals like young Narendranath (the future Swami Vivekananda) had, in the meanwhile, begun to measure things through the Humean variables and Spencerean data. Everywhere there were frustrations, antinomies, disunities, estrangement, disgust and false pride. Where to find a solace? This was the cry of the agonized heart. Young and indomitable Narendranath, in his hectic search for truth, stormed every sanctuary of religion, met every known celebrity of the time to verify whether anybody anywhere had actually seen God. But nowhere did he get any direct answer. It was the question of Science and it could not be answered by any one who had not studied God scientifically, directly, decidedly and doubtlessly. At long last when he heard about the God-intoxicated saint of Dakshineswar, he immediately rushed in to the latter with his same old tormenting question and pointedly asked: 'Sir, have you seen God?' It was no wonder that he expected some hesitant and vague reply to his question as he had had from others before but the occasion proved to be a different one. The doubter heard a different reply: 'Yes, I see Him just as I see you here, only in a sense much more intense. . . . God can be realized; one can see and talk to Him as I am doing with you. But, my child, who cares to do so? People shed torrents of tears for their wife and children, for wealth and property but who cares to do so for the sake of God? If one weeps sincerely for Him, He surely manifests Himself.' The answer pierced straight into the heart of Narendranath and created a tremendous upheaval in the realm of his cherished realism. For the first time he confronted a man who dared to say that he had seen God, that religion was a reality

to be felt, to be sensed in an infinitely more intense way than one could sense the world. For first time Science encountered Religion and Religion too met with Science.

The meeting between Sri Ramakrishna and Narendranath can very well be compared to Hobbes's first contact with Euclid: opening the book by chance, at the theorem of Pythagoras, he (Hobbes) exclaimed, 'By God, this is impossible', and proceeded to read the proofs backwards until reaching the axioms, he became convinced. (Vide Bertrand

Russell's *The Will to Doubt*, Philosophical Library, New York, 1958) Narendranath's empirical outlook too considered Sri Ramakrishna's mysterious realizations to be the hallucinations of a sick mind but as he followed them up he became astounded to see their infinite potency, inexorable logic and fantastic exactitude. The entire transformation of Narendranath into Swami Vivekananda is a backward calculation to reach the axiom of Sri Ramakrishna—'God alone is real'.

## THE CREATION FROM THE WORD

SWAMI SATPRAKASHANANDA

1. It is an ancient view prevalent in varying forms among the Hindus, the Greeks, the Hebrews, and the Christians.

The view that 'the universe arises from the Word (*śabdāt prabhavati jagat*)' is as old as the Vedas. (*Brahma-Sūtras*, I. iii. 28, Śaṅkara's Commentary) As observed by Śaṅkara, the fact that the Word precedes creation (*śabdapūrvikā sṛṣṭih*) is declared both by the Śruti and the Smṛti. (ibid.) In the Vedas we find such statements as:

'Verily, in the beginning Prajāpati (the creator, lit. the Lord of creatures) alone existed here.' (*Prajāpatirvai idam agre āsīt eka eva*) (*Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*, VII. v. 2, 6)

'Verily, Prajāpati alone was this universe. With Him was only *vāk* (the Word), as His own, as a second.' (*Prajāpatirvai idam eka āsīt. Tasya vāg eva svam āsīd vāg dvitīya*) (*Pañcaviṃśa Brāhmaṇa*, XX. xiv. 2)

'*Vāk* (the Word) is Brahman.' (*vāgvai Brahman*) (*Rg-Veda*, I. iii. 21)

'*Vāk* (the Word) is co-extensive with Brahman.' (*yāvat Brahman tiṣṭhati tāvaṭi vāk*) (ibid., X. civ. 8)

'Verily, *vāk* (the Word) is the unborn one. It was from *vāk* (the Word) that the Maker of the universe produced creatures.' (*vāgvai aṣṭā vāco vai prajāḥ viśvakarmā yajāna*) (*Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*, VII. v. 2, 21)

The same Vedic view seems to be restated by St. John in the opening lines of the Fourth Gospel:

'In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God.'

'The same was in the beginning with God.'

'All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made.'

Thus, according to both Hinduism and Christianity the whole creation has proceeded from *Vāk* (the Word). The conception of the Word (Hebrew *Memrā*, Greek *Logos*) as the creative principle was prevalent in varying forms among the ancient Hebrews and the Greeks. In the Old Testament we read:

'And God said, Let there be light: and there was light.' (*Genesis* I. 3)

'By the word of the Lord were the

heavens made; -and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth.' (Psalm XXXIII. 6)

The primary meaning of 'logos' (from *lego*, to speak) is 'meaningful word.' It connotes 'active reason.' The Stoics conceived Logos as the creative reason (*logos spermatikos*) that unfolds and sustains the manifold. It is the seed of the universe.

According to many eminent writers, St. John, the author of the Fourth Gospel, got the idea from Philo, the Jewish philosopher of Alexandria, and adapted it to the personality of Jesus Christ as the Saviour. [Cf. *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 1948, 'Logos.' 'Among the influences that shaped the Fourth Gospel that of the Alexandrian philosophy must be assigned a distinct, though not an exaggerated importance. There are other books in the New Testament that bear the same impress, the Epistles to the Ephesians and the Colossians, and to a much greater degree the Epistle to the Hebrews. The development that had thus begun in the time of Paul reaches maturity in the Fourth Gospel, whose dependence on Philo appears (1) in the use of the allegorical method, (2) in many coincident passages, (3) in the dominant conception of the Logos. The writer narrates the life of Christ from the point of view furnished him by Philo's theory. True, the Logos doctrine is only mentioned in the prologue to the Gospel, but it is presupposed throughout the whole book. The author's task indeed was somewhat akin to that of Philo, "to transplant into the world of Hellenic culture a revelation originally given through Judaism." This is not to say that he holds the Logos doctrine in exactly the same form as Philo. On the contrary, the fact that he starts from an actual knowledge of the earthly life of Jesus, while Philo, even when ascribing a real personality to Logos, keeps within the bounds of abstract speculation, leads him seriously to modify the Philonic doctrine.

... What John thus does is to take the Logos idea of Philo and use it for a practical purpose—to make more intelligible to himself and his readers the divine nature of Jesus Christ.] Philo Judaeus, known as 'the Jewish Plato' lived late first century B.C. and early first century A.D. He was thus a senior contemporary of Jesus Christ. He sought to harmonize the speculative philosophy of Greece, particularly Stoicism and Platonism, with the tenets of Judaism and developed his doctrine of the Logos. In the words of Dr. Radhakrishnan:

'In Alexandria, which was the meeting-place of East and West, Philo developed his new interpretation of the Jewish scriptures. It is the systematic attempt to combine Jewish teaching with Hellenic ideas, to express the religious conceptions of the Jewish prophets in the language of the Greek philosophers. He tried to bring together under the inspiration of his personal experience the dogmas of the Jewish revelation and the results of Greek speculative wisdom. The central and the determining feature of Philo's system is the doctrine of the Logos.'— (S. Radhakrishnan: *Eastern Religions and Western Thought*, 2nd edn., Oxford University Press, London, 1940, p. 191)

## 2. The meaning of *Vāk* (the Word) in the Vedic texts quoted above.

What does *Vāk* (English *Word*, Greek *Logos*) signify in this context? The term '*vāk*' is from the root *vac* to speak. Literally, it means voice (Latin *vox*). It also denotes the word, uttered or written, which has a meaning. Some idea, thought, or reason is implicit in *vāk*. In fact, Sanskrit *vāk* and Greek *logos* (from *lego*, to speak) have the same etymological sense. Synonymous with *vāk* is the Sanskrit term *śabda* (sound or word). A word is the verbal symbol of a concept. It connotes a class or a species. The concrete material form denoted by a word, such as 'chair,' is the object perceived by

the senses. But the word 'chair' does not imply the percept, but the concept of chair. 'Chair' signifies chair in general and not any particular chair. An object, its class name, and the concept are closely related. An individual thing or being represents a universal, or a type, which is signified by a corresponding name or word. There being a natural relation between the manifest object and the word embodying the concept, the religious view that the word precedes creation is not without reason. As observed by Professor Max Müller:

'The word is the manifestation of thought; every word, we must remember, expresses a concept, not a percept. "Tree" is not meant for this or that tree, it is the general concept of all trees; and if every individual thing is the realization of an ideal type or thought or word, if every man, for instance, is the realization of the divine thought or word of man, or of manhood, we need not be startled when we find in India as well as in Greece a belief that God created the world by the logos or by the word, or by many words, the logoi, the ideas of Plato, the species or types of modern science.' (*The Vedānta Philosophy*, Susil Gupta Ltd., Calcutta, 1955, pp. 76-77: Three lectures delivered at the Royal Institution, London, in March, 1894, first published in London in 1894)

According to Vedānta the cosmic process continues endlessly in the cyclic order of projection, preservation, and dissolution. At the dissolution of the cosmic order (*prākṛta pralaya*) the whole variegated universe antecedent to the event, reverts to the undifferentiated Prakṛti, the *Māyā-śakti* of Īśvara. Even *Brahmaloka*, the highest sphere of the cosmic, is dissolved. Hiraṇyagarbha, its ruler, and the free souls dwelling there, become disembodied and attain final Liberation in the supreme state of oneness with Brahman. The bound *jīvas* lie dor-

mant with their causal bodies merged in undifferentiated Prakṛti. In due course, of incalculable duration, their *karma*, the latent impressions of past actions and experiences, become ready to bear fruit. Then Īśvara plans the creation in accordance with their merits and demerits and the unfoldment of their consciousness. In the words of Śaṅkara: 'He reflected concerning the order and arrangement of the world to be created. Having thus reflected he created the universe with time and space, as required by the *karma* and other conditions of the living beings. This is the universe that is being experienced by all creatures in all states according to their perception.' (*Taittirīya Upaniṣad*, II. 6, Commentary) The new creation is the development of the physical cosmos in conformity with the psychical realm. In fact, it is a readjustment of the natural to the moral order. The purpose is to lead the *jīvas* through experience to Liberation beyond the realm of experiences.

The Vedic texts declare consistently that Īśvara 'saw' or 'viewed' before the creation:

'He viewed: may I be many, may I be born variously.' (*Chāndogya Upaniṣad*, VI. ii. 3)

'He willed: let Me be many, let Me be born variously.' (*Taittirīya Upaniṣad*, II. 6) His activity consists in His knowledge or thought (*yasya jñānamayaṁ tapaḥ*). (*Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad*, I. i. 9) He makes no effort. He manifests the universe by His ideation and will. Like an architect, the Maker of the universe conceives the whole creation. But while the human architect depends on external means to carry out his plan, the Divine architect needs nothing extraneous, i.e., outside Himself. No pre-existent material He has to work on. The manifold comprising the living and the non-living is contained potentially in His *Māyā-śakti* (Prakṛti), the creative energy, inclu-



sive of the power of will and the power of knowledge.

His will, ever associated with the *sattva* aspect of Prakṛti, affects Him in no way. He wills not out of necessity, but out of freedom. Wisdom and joyousness are implicit in His will. His thought and action are invariably attended with reason. The fact that He needs no external means to accomplish His plan bespeaks its inherent potency and spontaneity. He starts the cosmic process, as it were, by glancing over Prakṛti, the causal potentiality of the universe. It is worthy of note that although the new cosmos is primarily the manifestation of the potential cause, yet it is not a replica of the preceding one in all particulars. Every seed grows differently from the tree of its origin.

It is Īśvara's plan of creation, in other words, the cosmic ideation of Saṅga Brahman on the eve of the creation, that is meant by the term 'Vāk' in the Vedic texts quoted above. Greek 'Logos' and English 'Word' as used by St. John in the beginning of the Fourth Gospel also point to this. Sanskrit term 'śabda' is also used in this sense. Though the Hellenic conception of the Logos has varied in the course of time, yet the basic idea that the universe is rooted in the Divine thought or the cosmic reason has been, more or less, associated with it. [Cf. *Dictionary of Philosophy*, edited by Dagobert D. Runes, New York, Philosophical Library, 1960, 'Logos.' 'In its most important sense in philosophy it (Logos) refers to a cosmic reason which gives order and intelligibility to the world. In this sense the doctrine first appears in Heraclitus, who affirms the reality of a Logos analogous to the reason in man that regulates all physical processes and is the source of all human law. The conception is developed more fully by the Stoics, who conceive of the world as a living unity, perfect in the adaptation of

its parts to one another and to the whole, and animated by an immanent and purposive reason. As the creative source of this cosmic unity and perfection the world-reason is called the seminal reason (*logos spermatikos*), and is conceived as containing within itself a multitude of *logoi spermatikoi*, or intelligible and purposive forms operating in the world.... In Philo of Alexandria, in whom Hebrew modes of thought mingle with Greek concepts, the Logos becomes the immaterial instrument, and even at times the personal agency, through which the creative activity of the transcendent God is exerted upon the world. In Christian philosophy the Logos becomes the second person of the Trinity and its functions are identified with the creative, illuminating and redemptive work of Jesus Christ. Finally the Logos plays an important role in the system of Plotinus, where it appears as the creative and form-giving aspect of intelligence (Nous), the second of the three Hypostases.]

3. *Vāk* (the Word) as the origin of the universe.

As the creative ideation of Īśvara *Vāk* is the first move towards the manifestation of diversity in unity. It is the source of all ideas representing the types of objects. Words and ideas are inseparable. The idea is the subtle aspect of a word. One implies the other. We cannot conceive an idea without a word. Every word must express an idea. So the Divine Word signifies the Divine Ideation or the creative thought of God. It is next to God, as it were, in the order of creation and is united with Him. Hence it is said, 'With Him (the Creator) was only *Vāk* (the Word) as His own, as a second.' Īśvara and His creative thought or word are inseparable. As the matrix of all ideas and words, this is also designated '*parā vāk*' or '*parā śabda*' (supreme word). Since each new plan of creation follows the begin-

ningless pattern of the universe latent in His *Māyā-śakti*, God and His Word are co-eternal. Even when the whole cosmos is dissolved *śabda* (Word) as God's creative idea or knowledge stays in potential state. It holds the archetype of the universe, which is implicit in every new design of the world-order.

The Divine Word is intermediate between the unity of God and the plurality of creation. It forms the link between the One and the many. It is beyond the dichotomy of the subject and the object, the self and the not-self. *Īśvara* is above the distinction of 'I' and 'thou.' He is the all-inclusive Reality. The creation in all its phases is contained in His *Māyā-śakti*, the inscrutable power, which is the causal potentiality of the universe. *Māyā* manifests the manifold without causing any change in the unity and the fullness of the Supreme Being. Vedānta maintains not only the unity of God but also His sole reality. Nothing but He really exists. He alone exists in the absolute sense. The manifold exists because of Him. In itself it is unreal, being an appearance. He permeates every form of existence. He is the one Self of all. Undiversified He holds all diversities. Though immanent, He is all-transcendent.

In the Vedāntic view the entire variegated universe is characterized by *nāma* and *rūpa* (name and form). All diversification is due to them. *Nāma* means the particular class or species to which an object belongs; *rūpa* means the specific form or structure which differentiates or separates it from every other object. *Nāma* and *rūpa* constitute the principle of individuation. Each and everything, e.g., a book, a desk, a tree, a house, a bird, a meadow, a mountain, a lake, has these two distinctive marks. When different objects are made out of wood, such as a chair, a table, a shelf, a box, a door, a post, it is *nāma* and *rūpa* that make all differentiation in one and the same material

cause. What we call wood is the outcome of another material cause, tree, under different name and form. Thus, each and everything in the universe is the product of a preceding material cause inscribed with new name and form. The basic or the primal cause is never known to us. All that we deal with are only the effects, the primal cause of which ever remains hidden under a succession of names and forms. The ultimate causal substance is beyond our grasp. This, as declared by Vedānta, is Pure Being, Brahman. Underlying all diversities is the same fundamental Reality, Brahman; variations result from the modifications of *nāma* and *rūpa* emerging from His *Māyā-śakti* responsible for the world-appearance. The starting point of the whole array of *nāma* and *rūpa* is *Vāk*, the creative ideation of *Saguṇa* Brahman, the initial step towards the projection of the manifold.

From the Divine Word (*Vāk*) issue all names and forms that apparently differentiate the undifferentiated One. So says the Upaniṣad:

'Of such names *Vāk* is the source, for all names arise from it. This is their common basis, for it is general in all names. It is their self, for it sustains all names.' (*Bṛhadāraṇyaka*, I. vi. 1)

All finite objects have names and forms as the conditions of their manifestation.

'This universe was then undifferentiated. It differentiated into name and form—it was called such and such and was of such and such form. So to this day it is differentiated into name and form—it is called such and such, and is of such and such form.' (ibid., I. iv. 7)

Every object is but the apparent modification of the Supreme Reality, Brahman, which is the sole causal substance of the manifold. Being an effect, it is not self-subsistent. Its reality depends on the Supreme Cause. In itself it is a mere name,

(*Chāndogya Upaniṣad*, VI. i. 4-6) Its emergence depends on name and form proceeding from the Word.

Variety in unity is the principle of creation. The process of individuation starts with the rise of name and form, as Īśvara 'sees' or views them. Says Śaṅkara:

'What then is the object to which the knowledge of Īśvara is related prior to the origin of the world? Name and form, we reply, which are indefinable either as identical with or as different from Brahman, unevolved but about to be evolved.' (*Brahma-Sūtras*, I. i. 5, Commentary)

The cosmic ideation initiates all differentiation through name and form. As Śaṅkara puts it, '*Vāk* sustains all names, all words, by endowing them with reality.' (*Bṛhad-āraṇyaka Upaniṣad*, I. iv. 7, Commentary)

4. The monosyllabic word '*Om*' as the symbol of *Vāk*. Its significance.

Being the matrix of all names and forms *parā vāk* is the potent seed of the manifold. As the immediate source of the creation it is called *Nāda-Brahman* or *Śabda-Brahman*, that is, Sound-Brahman, indicative of its first movement or vibratory motion towards the manifestation of the universe. Its most appropriate verbal symbol as such is the mystic word '*Om*'. As explained by Swami Vivekananda:

'All this expressed sensible universe is the form, behind which stands the eternal inexpressible *sphoṭa*, the manifester as Logos or Word. This eternal *sphoṭa*, the essential eternal material of all ideas or names, is the power through which the Lord creates the universe; nay, the Lord first becomes conditioned as the *sphoṭa*, and then evolves Himself out as the yet more concrete sensible universe. This *sphoṭa* has one word as its only possible symbol, and this is the *Om*. And as by no possible means of analysis can we

separate the word from the idea, this *Om* and the eternal *sphoṭa* are inseparable; and therefore it is out of this holiest of all holy words, the mother of all names and forms, the eternal *Om*, that the whole universe may be supposed to have been created. But it may be said that, although thought and word are inseparable, yet as there may be various word-symbols for the same thought, it is not necessary that this particular word *Om* should be the word representative of the thought out of which the universe has become manifested. To this objection we reply that this *Om* is the only possible symbol which covers the whole ground and there is none other like it. The *sphoṭa* is the material of all words, yet it is not any definite word in its fully formed state. That is to say, if all the peculiarities which distinguish one word from another be removed, then what remains will be the *sphoṭa*; therefore this *sphoṭa* is called the *Nāda-Brahman* (the Sound-Brahman).

Now, as every word-symbol, intended to express the inexpressible *sphoṭa* will so particularize it that it will no longer be the *sphoṭa*, that symbol which particularizes it the least and at the same time most approximately expresses its nature, will be the truest symbol thereof; and this is the *Om*, and the *Om* only; because these three letters A,U,M, pronounced in combination as *Om*, may well be the generalized symbol of all possible sounds.... If properly pronounced, this *Om* will represent the whole phenomenon of sound-production, and no other word can do this; and this, therefore, is the fittest symbol of the *sphoṭa*; which is the real meaning of the *Om*. And as the symbol can never be separated from the thing signified, the *Om* and the *sphoṭa* are one.' (*The Complete Works*, Vol. III, 1960, pp. 57-58)

It is worthy of note in this context that

Swami Vivekananda's interpretation of the term 'sphoṭa (that which manifests the meaning)' differs from that of the Grammarian philosophers, who advocate the *sphoṭa*-theory. (The theory of *sphoṭa* has been discussed by the present writer in his *Methods of Knowledge*, pp. 185-7, Allen and Unwin, London, 1965) He does not refer to their *pada-sphoṭa* or *vākya-sphoṭa* (the unitary medium underlying a word or a sentence to convey its meaning). Nor does he refer to the ultimate *sphoṭa*, which is maintained by some Grammarians as pure, eternal, uncompounded, primary Word, without beginning or end, underlying the universe as its primal Cause. (Vide Bhartrhari's *Vākya-padiya*: Brahma-kāṇḍa and Mādhvācārya's *Sarvadarśana-saṅgraha*: Pāṇini-darśana) By 'sphoṭa' he signifies 'parā vāk,' Īśvara's cosmic ideation, in which Word and Idea are indistinguishable. It is the Idea of ideas and the matrix of all words as well. From this emerge all particularized ideas representing types or species and also the corresponding words composed of letters. The Mīmāṃsā philosophers view this as the original Word, the potent seed of all articulate words, particularly the Vedic words, and thus maintain the eternity of the Vedas. They recognize a natural relation between the word and its meaning, that is, the type or the species signified by it. The word is ever associated with its meaning and the meaning is ever associated with the word; the two are inseparable. None of the six Vedic systems of philosophy, except the Yoga of Patañjali, supports the Grammarian philosophers' theory of *sphoṭa*. Śabara-swāmī has refuted the theory in his commentary on the *Pūrva-mīmāṃsā Sūtras* (I. 1.5). So has Śaṅkara in his commentary on the *Brahma-Sūtras* (I: 3.28). The proponents of *sphoṭa* do not quite agree on their views of it.

It may be mentioned here that the significance of the verbal symbol 'Om' is not restricted to *Nāda-Brahman* or *Śabda-*

*Brahman*. It has a still wider and deeper import. Being intermediary between the Supreme Being and His manifestation, 'Om' represents Him in all His aspects. It signifies Saguna Brahman associated with every phase of existence, the causal, the subtle, and the gross, and also points to Nirguna Brahman beyond all distinction. The very sound *O-m*—prolonged and tapering like the peal of a distant bell—represents a movement from the grossest to the finest existence, the all-pervading reality beyond all limitations. Consequently, this is the most comprehensive of all the verbal symbols. It conveys the knowledge of the Self that is all-embracing. As such *Om* is the embodiment of spiritual consciousness in concentrated form and is regarded as its potent seed. It develops mystical awareness of the inmost Self through repeated utterance with devout contemplation on its meaning. It is to be noted that as a symbol of thought or idea every word is a form of inner consciousness and has the power to evoke the same. In Yoga as well as in Vedānta 'Om' is commended as the most potent and purifying name of God. (*Yoga-Sūtras*, I. xxvii. 28; *Kaṭha Upaniṣad*, I. ii. 15-17; *Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad*, 1. 2; *Taittirīya Upaniṣad*, I. 8; *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*, VIII.iii. 5 etc.)

##### 5. The manifestation of the Vedas and the role of the Vedic words in creation.

According to the orthodox view the Vedic words as well as their meanings, that is, the ideas represented by them are without beginning and without end. In the state of the cosmic dissolution they exist potentially in Īśvara's power of knowledge, of which *Vāk* is the first manifestation. From *Vāk* arise all the Vedic words with their meanings. So *Vāk* is said to be 'the mother of the Vedas (*Vedānām mātā*).' (*Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa*, II. viii. 8, 5) The Vedic language is held to be the original language of mankind,

all other languages being derived from it directly or indirectly.

The Vedic words were exhaled by Īśvara, so to speak, with ease like the exhalation of air by man that is effortless. So it is said, 'The Vedas issued like breath from the Self-existent One. (*Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*, XI. v. 8, 3) The spontaneous manifestation of the Vedas from the Supreme Being is thus described by Yājñavalkya to his wife, Maitreyī: 'As from a fire kindled with a wet faggot diverse kinds of smoke issue, so my dear, the *R̥g-Veda*, *Yajur-Veda*, *Sāma-Veda*, *Artharvāṅgīrasa*, history, mythology, arts, Upaniṣads, verses, aphorisms, elucidations, and explanations are like the breath of this Infinite Being: they are like the breath of this, the Supreme Self.' (*Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*, II. iv. 10) The last eight items (history, mythology, etc.) are included in the *Brāhmaṇa* section of the Vedas. The first four constitute the *Mantra* or *Saṁhitā* section. As pointed out by Śaṅkara, only the *Mantras* and the *Brāhmaṇas* of the Vedas are meant here. (ibid., Commentary)

In the beginning the Supreme Lord (Īśvara) brought into being the cosmic soul (Hiraṇyagarbha, Brahmā) and imparted to him the Vedic words. (Vide *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad*, VI. 18) It was with the help of the Vedic words that Hiraṇyagarbha created spheres of various orders and also countless varieties of natural phenomena and living beings with their respective functions. (Vide *Vedānta-paribhāṣā*, VII) As declared by the śruti, 'Uttering the word "*bhūh*" (the earth) he (Hiraṇyagarbha, also called Prajāpati) created the earth.' (*Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa*, II. iv. 4, 2) This means that Prajāpati shaped the worlds, such as *bhūh*, etc., from the Vedic words *bhūh*, etc., which, with their meanings, became manifest in his mind. The point is, the words as subtle ideas called forth the gross manifestations of the species of things that existed during the period of dissolution in potential state in Īśvara's *Māyā-śakti*, the creative energy that

is the causal potentiality of the universe.

So says Manu: 'In the beginning, it is from the words of the Vedas that Hiraṇyagarbha developed the respective names and forms of all beings and their duties as well.' (*Manu-Smṛti*, I. 21, Kulluka's Commentary as quoted by Śaṅkara in *Brahma-Sūtras*, I. iii. 28, Commentary) Śaṅkara remarks: 'It has been observed by all of us that when a person wants to make a desired thing he first remembers the word signifying the object and then sets to work. So we conclude that before the creation the Vedic words became manifest in the mind of Prajāpati the creator, and he created things corresponding to those words.'

That the creation of the diversified universe followed the manifestation of the Vedas is also affirmed by the *Mahābhārata* (*Śāntiparvan*, CCXXXII. xxiv. 26): 'At the outset the self-existent Brahmā uttered the divine and eternal Vedic words, having no beginning or end, from which all norms of actions proceeded.... Verily, the Lord of all creatures, in the beginning, created all things from the words of the Vedas.... Upon the expiration of his night [the period of dissolution] Brahmā created from the prototypes that existed before all things, which were, indeed, well made by him.' (As noted by Śaṅkara, the term 'uttered' is indicative of the institution of the oral transmission of the Vedas by the preceptor to the pupil: *Brahma-Sūtras*, I. iii. 28, Commentary)

It is a well-known fact that in order to create something a person has to conceive it first in his mind and that it is some word or words signifying the type of the object that conveys the idea to him. Hence this is reasonable that Hiraṇyagarbha conceived the diversified universe before he produced it and that it is the eternal words of the Vedas which provided him with the ideas of the different worlds and species of things and beings to be created. A word is inevitably connected with the idea of the object it denotes. It signifies thought and also the

object of thought. But it does not refer to a particular object but the type, class, or species of the object. A word, whether it denotes substance, attribute, or action, always signifies the species or the type of what is denoted. While the individual objects vary, their species or type remains constant. Says Śaṅkara:

‘And it is with the species or the type (*ākṛti*) that a word is related and not with the individual objects, which being innumerable and varied, its relation with the particulars is absurd.’ (*Brahma-Sūtras*, I. iii. 28, Commentary)

#### 6. The instrumentality of *Vāk* in creation.

Every object represents the species or the type to which it belongs and which is signified by its name. This is why by knowing a single object of a class a person can recognize any other object of the same class. For instance, by knowing one chair a person can recognize any other chair in spite of differences of particularities. The object ‘chair’ as well as the word denoting it acquaints him with the concept ‘chairness.’ The idea that underlies the word also underlies the object denoted by it. The word (*śabda*), its meaning (*pratyaya*), and the object (*artha*) are interconnected. The essence of the word is the idea implicit in it. In the origination of an object the word serves as the prototype and not as its material cause.

The following remarks of Śaṅkara in the present context are significant:

‘The origination [of the world] from the Word is spoken of not in the sense of the origination [of the world] from Brahman as its material cause. In what sense then? There being the eternal word with the potency of conveying the meaning and ever related to the eternal species of objects, the accomplishment of an individual object to which the word is applicable becomes possible. In this sense it is said to have originated from the word.’ (ibid.)

The point is that in the origination of the world the Word (*Vāk*) does not serve as its material cause but as its instrumental or contributory cause.

It is to be noted that in the production of an object Advaita Vedānta recognizes only two kinds of cause: (1) material cause (*upādāna-kāraṇa*) and instrumental cause (*nimitta-kāraṇa*). For instance, when a pot is made out of clay, its material cause is clay, which constitutes its essence or substance; the instrumental cause includes all other factors that contribute to its production, such as the potter, the wheel, the rod for turning the wheel, the idea of the pot. The shape of the pot that inheres in clay is included in the material cause. Thus, the instrumental cause has several varieties. Among them the potter is the efficient cause, the rest are subsidiary to it. According to Advaita Vedānta Brahman is the material as well as the efficient cause of the universe. As subsidiary to the efficient cause the Word is included in the instrumental cause.

The manifest Veda, the assemblage of words, is not all that the Veda means. In the last analysis it is identical with *Vāk*, the cosmic ideation of Saṅga Brahman, in which all particular ideas and the corresponding words naturally related to them exist potentially and are indistinguishable. As the immediate source of creation *Vāk* is called *Śabda-Brahman* or *Nāda-Brahman* (lit. Sound-Brahman), which is also an epithet of the Veda. (*Bhagavad-Gītā*, VI. 44) *Nāda-Brahman* represents the first movement or the vibratory motion of *Vāk* towards the manifestation of the universe and is symbolized by the monosyllabic word ‘*Om*’. We quote below the pertinent remarks of Swami Vivekananda in the course of a conversation with a lay disciple:

‘The Veda is essentially the word (*śabda*), that is to say, the idea. It is but the aggregate of innumerable ideas. The old Vedic meaning of *śabda* (word) is the subtle idea, which becomes manifest in

gross form later on. Hence at the dissolution of the cosmos the subtle seeds of future creation become involved in the Veda... Even when the whole universe is dissolved the idea of the cosmos or the totality of the subtle forms of the concrete things exists in Brahman in potential state... On the eve of the creation Brahman at first becomes manifest as the Word (*śabda*) and next assumes the form of "Nāda" or "Om." Then numerous particular words or ideas that existed in previous cycles, such as "bhūḥ (the earth)," "bhuhah (the next higher world)," "svah (heaven)," "cow," "man," "pot," begin to issue from "Om." As these ideas successively appear to Brahman [manifest as Brahmā or Hiranyagarbha] of never failing will, the corresponding concrete things also emerge and gradually the diversified universe becomes manifest. Now you see how the word is the source of the creation.' (*Swāmi-Siṣya-Saṁvāda* or Conversations between the Master and the Disciple, Udbodhan office, Calcutta, 1955, p. 82)

7. The Vedāntic conception of the Word compared with that of Philo and of St. John.

We have tried to explain from the Vedāntic viewpoint the significance of *Vāk* (the Word) in the cosmic process and the way it brings forth the manifold. So far as the origination of things and beings in general is concerned Vedānta agrees with St. John, who says:

'All things were made by him [the Word] and without him was not anything made that was made.' (1 : 3)

But St. John also speaks of the special creation or manifestation of the Word. He affirms that Jesus Christ is the Word incarnate in human form:

'And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father) full of grace and truth.' (1:14)

He identifies Jesus Christ with the Word as the only begotten Son of God:

'No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared *him*.' (1:18)

In *The Revelation* Jesus Christ is called 'the first begotten.'

'And [peace] from Jesus Christ *who is* the faithful witness, *and* the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood.' (1:5)

Before St. John some Alexandrian philosophers, especially Philo, conceived the Word (the Logos) as the first born Son of God. Says Max Müller:

'I only wanted to prove once more what had been proved long ago by Greek and Indian philosophers, namely, that language and thought are one, and that in that sense the creative thoughts of the Supreme Being were called *logoi* and if conceived as one, the Logos of God. It was the same Logos that was called by Philo and others, long before St. John, the *huios monogenes*, that is, the only begotten Son of God, in the sense of the first ideal creation or manifestation of Godhead.' (*The Vedānta Philosophy*, p. 76)

Evidently, Philo and some of his predecessors in Alexandria called the Logos 'the only begotten Son of God' figuratively. [Cf. Alfred Weber: *History of Philosophy*, Eng. trans. by Frank Thilly, Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 1925, p. 124, note 1. 'In order to reconcile Scripture with the philosophy of his century he (Philo) had recourse to allegory, like the Stoics. His theory of the Logos (the Word, as the revelation of God, the Son of God, the second Son) has passed into Christianity.'] They did not conceive the Logos as a mode of the being of God. By 'Son of God' they did not mean a distinct person of the God-

head. Nor did they use the expression 'the only begotten Son of God' with reference to any living personality. Never did Philo identify the Logos with the Messiah. In all probability St. John got the allegorical expression 'the only begotten Son of God' from Philo. But instead of using it figuratively he hypostasizes the Word (the Logos) as the second person of the Godhead and declares historical Jesus as the Word incarnate in human form. [Cf. Charles Bigg, D.D.: *The Christian Platonists of Alexandria*. Eight Lectures before the University of Oxford in 1886; Oxford, the Clarendon Press, 1886; p. 24. 'It is probable that Philonism coloured the New Testament itself, and it is certain that it largely affected the after development of Christian doctrine. ... But there can be little doubt that St. John acquired from Alexandria that conception of the Word, which first brought Christian theology within the sphere of metaphysics.']

According to Vedānta *Vāk* (the Word) is not of the essence of God. It is the first expression of His creative power of knowledge, a phase of His *Māyā-śakti* that belongs to Him as an adjunct or attribute distinct from His Being. (*Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad*, VI. 8) As the first and ideal manifestation of His creative knowledge *Vāk* can be figuratively called the first born Son or the first begotten Son of God, but cannot be considered a hypostasis of the Supreme Being. It is a mode of Divine Power but not of Divine Being. The cosmic ideation of *Saguṇa Brahman* is not an embodiment of His essence. As we have already noted, *Vāk*, according to Śaṅkara, is neither the material nor the efficient cause of the universe, but a subsidiary cause. (Section 6: *Brahma-Sūtras*, I. iii. 28, Commentary)

Philo's view of the Logos is in some respects similar to the Vedāntic view of *Vāk*. He conceives the Logos as an intermediary between the all-perfect Godhead and the imperfect world. Dr. Radhakrishnan thus

explains the status of the Logos according to Philo:

'In mediating the relation between the godhead and the universe Philo develops his conception of the Logos and the intermediate powers. He looks on the latter sometimes as personal beings, at other times as impersonal attributes. In one sense the ideas are identical with God, for, through them, the finite is able to participate in the deity; in another they are different, for the supreme, in spite of this participation, remains free from all contact with the world. God touches matter not through His essence but through His powers. The cosmic process does not add to or take away from the perfection of God. The thoughts are in a sense objective to God, independent of His essential subjectivity, but they are not separate from Him. They are modes of His energy, eternally and inseparably dependent on Him.' (*Eastern Religions and Western Thought*, p. 194)

8. The Christian and the Vedāntic view of the Divine Incarnation.

But St. John has a different conception of the Word (the Logos). The same Word, which is the source of all things and beings, from which the world-order with all its imperfections proceeds, is comprehended by him as the Second Person of the Trinity, who became incarnate in human form as Jesus Christ the Redeemer. God the Son, God the Father, and God the Holy Ghost are fundamentally one. As God the Son Jesus Christ is the manifestation of the same essential being of God that is said to be responsible for the creation of the variegated world. In the Christian view historical Jesus is the first and last incarnation of the Divinity. He is the sole Saviour of mankind. Man has his chance for salvation only in one life. If he loses this opportunity he faces eternal damnation.

Vedānta upholds the doctrine of the In-



carnation of God in human form. It is the descent of the Supreme Being from the transcendental plane to the human level (*avatāra*). So the Divine Incarnation is not the manifestation of *Vāk* in a psycho-physical frame. Out of compassion and love for the bound souls the Supreme Lord assumes the human body, imposes apparent limitations on Himself, for their guidance and liberation. So His power of action and knowledge remains intact. It is like a monarch's inspection of his kingdom in disguise, as Sri Ramakrishna puts it. Śrī Kṛṣṇa clarifies his position as Divine Incarnation:

‘Though I am birthless, essentially immutable, and the Lord of all created things and beings, yet, being established in my divine nature, I become embodied through my *Māyā* [the power that apparently limits the limitless].’ (*Bhagavad-Gītā*, IV. 6)

Then again, according to Vedānta, God becomes incarnate in the form of man whenever the human situation demands it. Unredeemed man is reborn and gets a chance for liberation in as many lives as he needs for the eradication of his ignorance of the real nature of the self and the cultivation of the true knowledge. Divine Incarnation is not a lone incident of the world-process that takes place once for all in the history of mankind. It is the Benign Lord's periodic move for the preservation of the world-order. It is not confined to any particular age, country, race, or religious body.

The All-beneficent Ruler lives among the mortals as one of them whenever necessity arises. So says Śrī Kṛṣṇa:

‘Whenever, O Bhārata [Arjuna], righteousness declines and unrighteousness prevails, I incarnate myself.

For the protection of the righteous and the destruction of the wicked and for the establishment of the moral and spiritual order, I am born from age to age.’ (*ibid.*, IV. 7, 8)

Because of the outgoing force of the creative process, the inner spirit of religion declines in course of time, although its outer forms often continue to flourish. Ostentatious rites and ceremonies, gorgeous temples and pageantry, exhaustive paraphernalia, powerful organizations with stringent rules and regulations cannot compensate the lack of spiritual ardour nor check the consequent moral decay. The world requires a new adjustment for its spiritual regeneration, for turning human minds Godward—towards the One Source of all. This necessitates the advent of a Divine Teacher. The founders of great religions, whether they are adored by their followers as prophets, or messengers of God, or as Divine Incarnations, all come from above. They are the Saviours of human souls. Their sole mission is to lead men from the non-eternal to the Eternal.

To conclude: *Vāk* is instrumental in the creation of the world-order, but its preservation needs God's direct action—His protective care, guidance and grace.

## TIME MUST HAVE A STOP

SWAMI SHRADDHANANDA

The rebellious noble Hotspur in Shakespeare's first part of *King Henry IV* had surely made a correct appraisal of man's life and destiny when he uttered these profound lines just before dying in a combat:

‘But thought's the slave of life, and life  
time's fool;  
And time, that takes survey of all the  
world,  
Must have a stop’. (*1 King Henry IV*, v, 4)

Man is thoroughly encumbered by thought all through his life. In how many ways does thought drag and push him in hundreds of directions! Worries, anxieties, desires, passions, prejudices, hopes, frustrations—these are only a few of the numberless forms that thought—that is to say, our mind—assumes under different situations. So long as man is awake or even when he is dreaming he cannot run away from mental activities. Thought is necessary in life but it can also be a burden. How often we groan under the tyranny of thought. How often we wish that we could be free from all thoughts and thereby attain peace. But normally that is not possible. Life is bound to come to a standstill without a purposive guidance at every step. It is thought that conducts this guidance. So thought is the most important tool of life, nay it is concomitant with life. It is life's indispensable workman—'slave'.

Life again is not free. It is 'time's fool'. It issues at a point of time and continues with the successive beats of time. It is constantly at the behest and mercy of time. One day the final signal comes and life stops precisely at a particular point of time. The duration between its point of emergence and that of cessation is our life-span. Life is so dear to us and how desperately we struggle to prolong it! But really speaking we have little hold on it. It is time that controls our life-span. However precious our life may be to us we cannot preserve it indefinitely. In fact, every moment we are losing our life with every breath. When we consider our great fascination for life and at the same time our helplessness in its ebbing away at the touch of time we cannot but say with the dying Hotspur—'Life time's fool'.

Is time an independent entity? From all the evidence we possess this seems to be the case. Time appears to be the supreme controller of things. 'It takes survey of all the world'. All movements happen in time

—it is the matrix of all change. Take away time and the whole world process stops. No wonder, in many ancient writings, time has been honoured as a great Deity. We read in the *Bhāgavad-Gītā* (X. 30); '*Kālah kalayatām aham*'—'Of measures I am Time' and again (XI. 33): '*Kālo'asmi loka-kṣayakṛt pravṛddho*'—'I am the Mighty World-Destroying Time'. In a hymn of the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* we read: '*Kālo gabhīr-ārāya uttamapuruso'stvam*'—'Thou are That Supreme Person, Time, moving with immeasurable speed'. Yet in the heart of man there lies buried a deep resentment against time. Man refuses to believe that time is the supreme arbiter of his destiny. Sick of being played upon by time man may sometimes even throw at it a challenge. The words of dying Hotspur, 'time must have a stop' may be taken as an illustration in point. It is the voice of rebellious man beginning to understand the tyranny of thought and the mockery of life through the trickeries of that despot Time.

In our everyday life however, we do not want time to stop. 'Time is money' for us as Benjamin Franklin said. If our watch stops for some time we are greatly embarrassed. We want time to roll on for us smoothly and fruitfully. We want time to be available to us abundantly—fifty hours a day and five hundred days a year if possible! We have so much to do, so many desires to be fulfilled. How can all that be possible without the co-operation of time? Yet in our everyday life time has to stop periodically. We have to lose the sense of time every night in sleep. We have to forget all about time in moments of profound emotion. These escapes from time are a blessing in our life. They soothe our nerves and renew our energy. Of course there are many people, extremely practical by nature, who resent this loss of time. In Russia recently some scientists have been conducting experiments to see how far possible it is for man to do away with sleep,

if not altogether, at least to cut it down to the minimum number of hours, thereby gaining much more time for work.

Whatever such over-zealous advocates of time might think, it is a fact that man needs to be oblivious of it occasionally for the health of his body and mind. Like thought, time also can oppress us most cruelly. The feeling of boredom is one example in point. Are there not occasions when with nothing useful to do, with no friends to talk to, with no place to go to, time hangs heavily on us and we fret and fume at it? Time-sense is important in life but continuous time-consciousness is distressing. We need breaks in our connexion with time.

All this is in the context of our everyday practical life but when we come to our spiritual life our attitude to time has to be different. We have then to look beyond time. Servility to time has to be questioned. 'Time must have a stop' becomes the slogan of our spiritual aspiration. We are up in waging a war—a holy war against time. Time has to be conquered and with its 'fool' life and life's 'slave' thought. Then only comes the 'peace that passeth all understanding'.

One expression of this revolt is the search for a timeless God. The God who creates and rules this universe takes leave for the time being and His other face stares at us—His timeless face.

'Before the mountains were brought forth or ever Thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, Thou art God'. (The Bible, Psalm 90.) In the *Puruṣa-Sūkta* of the *R̥g-Veda* we read that Puruṣa, the Supreme Person has His 'three quarters above'. He uses only one quarter to accomplish all the cosmic processes of creation but the three quarters—the major elements of His total being are 'above'—that is to say beyond time, space and causality. The *Bhagavad-Gītā* (VIII. 20) voices the same idea:

*Parastasmātau bhāvo'anyo'avyaktaḥ*  
*avyaktāt sanātanaḥ;*  
*Yah sa sarveṣu bhūteṣu naśyatsu*  
*na vinaśyati—*

'But beyond the subtle there is yet another unmanifested Eternal Being, who does not perish when all things perish'.

In Hinduism the dual concepts of Śiva, namely, Śiva dancing as Natarāja and Śiva sitting in deep meditation in Kailāsa have a profound philosophical significance. Natarāja stands for God in time who has been engaged in His cosmic play of *śṛṣṭi-sthiti-laya* creation, preservation and dissolution. Śiva in meditation, on the other hand, points to God beyond all movement, the Absolute who shines in His own timeless truth. Contemplation on the timeless God frees our mind from our attachment to time. When we know that all the might and splendour of time are as nothing compared to the eternal grandeur of the Absolute, we are no longer afraid of the frowns of time. By devotion to and communion with the timeless Divine, our mind becomes gradually attuned to the ground of all existence which is free from all change and limitation. A new assurance and power descend on our consciousness. There have been, through the centuries, hundreds of mystics in India, as also abroad, who have thus conquered time by touching the Supreme. The last book of the Bible, the Book of Revelation, has tried to describe in various imageries the state of heavenly life which the faithful is destined to enjoy in the eternal, presence of God. One sentence is very meaningful—'There should be time no longer'. (Rev. 10.6) Yes, in the presence of God time vanishes in the same manner as darkness vanishes when the sun is up. Time, according to Vedānta, is a constituent of *Māyā*, the basic ignorance of life. It has no substantial reality.

From the timeless God to the true Self of man is the most fascinating and fruitful

journey of our spiritual life. As we have seen, in deep communion with God the worshipper rises above time. This experience of the timeless can be called objective. You, the time-bound, are touching a reality different from and outside you. But there is another kind of comprehension of the timeless which may be termed subjective. You have now known that the Absolute is not outside you but one with your true Self. Your body, mind, vitality and your so-called personality function in time but at the back of all these there is the eternal Self of yours—the source of your consciousness, the limitless and unconditioned. If you can stand on this vast truth you at once find yourself limitless and free. You are no longer communing with God objectively, you become God as He is in His absolute nature.

The Upaniṣads speak unequivocally of the great fulfilment which Self-knowledge can bring to man. '*Tarati śokamātmavit*'—

'The knower of Self surpasses all affliction', says the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* (VII. i. 3). We read in the *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad*, (II, ii. 8);

*Bhidyate hṛdayagranthiḥ  
chidyante sarvasaṁśayāḥ;*

*Kṣīyante cāśya karmāṇi*

*tasmin dṛṣṭe parāvare—*

'The knot of the heart is loosed, all doubts are dissolved and all the evil effects of *karma* are destroyed when the Supreme Self is seen.'

For a man groping in darkness, mercilessly battered by the forces of ignorance and crying in supplication to all the gods for succour, to find one day that all this tremendous suffering was really a nightmare, that he was for all times the ever-free immortal Self, pure and perfect, is indeed the most covetable blessing. Our challenge to time is really springing from our own truth where time can never dare to approach.

## 'I' AND 'I AM'

SWAMI NITYABODHANANDA

'All can say "I", "I"; it is only the Lord can say "I am".'

—Meister Eckhart

When the prophets state a fundamental spiritual truth they adopt two methods:

(1) They speak in the third person. In the Old Testament, for example, the prophets say 'The Eternal is all powerful'. In the Sermon on the Mount, Christ said 'Happy are the pure in heart for they shall see God'. In no case does he who speaks, identify himself with the Lord.

(2) They speak in the first person. 'I am the light of the world' said Christ. 'Under my guidance the universe

evolves', said Kṛṣṇa. Here, he who speaks, identifies himself with the Supreme Being and asserts himself as Spiritual Truth.

Indeed, the 'I' which is meant in this context is not merely the symbol of the person speaking, it evokes an archetype of experience which passes beyond the personal self. The experience in question is universal. When we utilize the 'I', we believe ourselves to be expressing only an intense subjective experience, in fact on each occasion we touch on a trans-subjective experience. This is what the sage expressed by his 'I'. Thus we have Socrates when he says 'I know one thing: that I know noth-

ing', or Descartes 'I think, therefore I am', or Christ, 'I am the Light of the world'. In saying 'I know' Socrates symbolized the root and source of all the small 'i's of all men. He established an 'I' witness, the means and end of existence of other 'i's. When Descartes states that all thinking individuals exist, his conviction is linked to the 'I' which asserts itself as both subject and object at the same time. This thought which rises from consciousness as an object, is taken over by the consciousness-subject and reintegrated into its own substance as subject. Any man can make this observation, the I symbolizes therefore a universal subject which passes beyond the intellectual understanding of the individual. The Vedānta would have said: 'I am, therefore I think', refusing to make the mental function proof of being. Christ for his part established the 'I' as the absolute and supreme subject, the beginning and end of all that exists in this world. It is this absolute, infinite subject that man tries to imitate when he uses the 'I'.

We find 'I' employed therefore in both the philosophic and the religious fields to express the experience which serves as a common denominator of all human experience. We can connect this idea to the 'englobement' of Jaspers and also to the 'Witness' of the Hindus or to the liberating and unifying experience referred to in the Vedānta, which is expressed by '*Aham Brahmasmi*', 'I am Brahman'.

Normally, we remain at the stage of the 'I' torn between past and future experience, agreeable or disagreeable. We are not aware that the individual 'I', so enamoured of its individuality, is also the cosmic 'I'. The *Gītā* assures us of this in several instances; there is no difference between the individual 'I' and the cosmic 'I', between Ātman and Brahman. The space enclosed in a room is no different in essence from cosmic space; there are but two forms of space and not two spaces. My little 'I' is

nothing more than a localization of 'I' in a series of conditionings. We can help the small 'i' to find the 'I' which is its source by stopping all the conceptualizations which enclose it and reduce it to such miserable dimensions. Pure consciousness, without qualities, non-reflexive in both subject and object, is the spontaneous 'I am' and the 'I', our divine spark.

How has the 'I' divine become the 'i'? By individuation, and it is in this way that the sense of the ego is formed. The Vedānta explains this by two theories: that of limitation and that of reflection. The theory of limitation is explained by the example of space enclosed in a room, identical to cosmic space, even though we are not aware of this. The theory of reflection uses the example of the sun reflected in a mirror or a pool of water. The reflection is the sense of the ego. The reflection is not the sun but it makes us aware of it and evokes our desire for it; the space in a room gives us the idea and nostalgia of unlimited space, thus our ego no longer satisfies us; we search for its source in order to find the supreme 'I' which gratifies us completely. Thus it is our own ego which offers us the possibility to free ourselves from the ego.

This is why Ramana Maharshi based all his spiritual research on this question 'who is the "i"—the "i" to which we hold so dearly?' Is it our body, our bank account, our profession? If we agree to push our search to the stage when we reach silence, that is to say, pure consciousness, we achieve the liberating and unifying experience referred to above. The ego is absorbed in the source which is the origin of all personality; as Swami Vivekananda said, the temporal 'I' is lost in the immortal 'I'. The 'I' which searches and the 'I' which is searched for become one, and even the idea of searching disappears; there is only the silence and the plenitude of conscious-

ness, without either reflection or qualities, completely free.

The 'I' can never become object or symbol, since one cannot speak of the 'I' except in a subjective way. The present is inseparable from it. All experiences, past or future, are focussed in this nucleus of the 'I'. Thus when I say 'I was in Rome' or 'I shall go to Rome' the 'I' is the present. Did St. Augustin not say 'God is the present of all that is in the past and in the future?' And the I which, without our knowing it, expresses our divine spark, free from all contingency in space and time, this 'I' overflows the present moment and joins it to the past and to the uncertain future. Various experiences, all that is manifested, are focussed in the I, in being.

There are two levels: that of the 'I' and that of the 'I am', the level of being and that of manifestation. A study of these two levels throws light on many problems, both religious and philosophical, such as the relation between God and the world, between consciousness and matter. In the *Gītā*, the Lord is expressed in the first person: 'Under My direction, thanks to Me ...' According to the Vedānta, it is because the Lord said 'I' that we can say 'I am'. The Lord is the standard, the essence from which the world draws its existence. 'God is, the world exists', said the scholastics. 'I am he who am', says God in the Bible. The 'I' in this case is much more far-reaching than the 'I' that we use. It means *the* 'I', the essence which impregnates all existence, in such a way that one can no longer distinguish one from the other. Only God can infuse the totality of His Being into manifestation. That was why Meister Eckhart said, 'Everyone can say "I", only God can say "I am"!'. The 'I' of God transforms the 'am' into light. The 'I' of God is the supreme subject which integrates into itself all that it touches. Thus there is no longer an object and all paradoxes and oppositions are resolved.

This is how the paradox between the 'I' and the 'I am', between God and the world, between consciousness and matter, is resolved. The world is what it is because of the transparency given to it by God, and only God can make it so. *Māyā*, the whole of what we see, the world of multiplicity, is not opposed to Brahman, but manifests it, and the paradox between *samsāra* and *nirvāna* disappears. But what is the relation between *Māyā* and Brahman. *Māyā* is the circumference of that of which Brahman is the centre. There can be no circumference without a centre, and the same centre can produce an infinite number of circumferences. If we try to conceive of a world without God, we take away its basis, its depth, which makes it the arena of our evolution. If, on the other hand, we can see the world as the circumference of God, the world reminds us constantly of God instead of teaching us to forget Him. Furthermore, if the world and matter, seem to us as separate entities from God, we turn them into instruments of our separation from the Divine, and the origin of all evil and all paradoxes.

We then see how men can be classified into three categories: those who see the world side by side with God and never separated from Him; these are the *jivanmuktas* or the 'liberated'; those who see the world as sometimes separated and sometimes side by side; and those for whom the world is completely separated from God.

To the *jivanmuktas* the world appears, as to us, with good and evil. But this sage is not affected by the evil because for him the world and spirit remain side by side. He may be compared to someone suffering from jaundice to whom everything is yellow. He knows that he can only see things in this colour, but he also knows that they are not really yellow. He knows that the world is what it is because of consciousness, that the world is world because of God. The world and matter are, therefore, for him, signs of consciousness, of God. He will

not fight against them because he knows how to find God in the depths of dualities. He is, nevertheless, not inactive, because he also knows that the world is given to him to enable him to exercise a choice and to feel free.

The ordinary man, starting on the spiritual path, feels that he must 'do something', fight against evil and establish good. He experiences a feeling of responsibility corresponding to an awakening of consciousness. This sometimes leads to fetishism.

Finally, we find men who no longer struggle, they see good and evil as so completely separated that they have no hope of integrating them. They cultivate a feeling of guilt, a feeling of being poor sinners, separated from the Lord.

We have retraced here the three attitudes of supra-responsibility, responsibility and guilt. The *Jivanmukta* knows that he has nothing to do but everything to be. He knows that he cannot change the world by his action. And Bertrand Russell agrees with him when he states that it is not the scientists who have changed the world with their discoveries but the mystics by being.

The trees, which obey the laws of nature, the roses, which flower and give forth their scent for our pleasure, *are*. We human

beings, who are deficient from the point of view of being, endeavour to add to our being by our possessing; we wish to add to our possessions, to acquire more and more. We try to calm our anguish of being or of not being by possessing more and more. But this is a bait that does not even deceive ourselves. In life we can accept evil as a calamity that we must submit to and which we cannot change; we lament passively over the wickedness of the world. We can try to fight to change the face of things by working in different ways. We shall try very hard, we shall alternate between optimism and pessimism, hope and despair, at the mercy of the results of our actions.

We can simply, after the manner of the *jivanmukta*, place the emphasis on the Being, that we are; by being we change the face of things. Chapter XVIII of the *Gītā* sums up as follows what our attitude should be:

'In becoming Brahman serene in the Self, he does not grieve or desire; the same towards all beings, he obtains union with the Self. By devotion he knows Me in my essence. He knows who "I am" (essence) and that which I am (manifestation). Having thus learned to know Me in truth he enters immediately into the Supreme.' (54 and 55)

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## AN EXAMINATION OF SARTRE'S EXISTENTIAL HUMANISM

DR. S. K. NANDI

The negation of any ontological determination of human destiny characterized the philosophy of the existential atheists and this very indeterminism enabled existentialism to provide a forum and a language in which various religious, secular, idealist and anti-religious advocates could and did meet to discuss human problems of primary importance and common concern. There are the pitiless atheists (like Sartre) and the

devout Roman Catholics (like Gabriel Marcel) trudging together to solve the mystery of human existence qua human existence. Again there were distant influences from such thinkers as Nietzsche, Chestov, Berdiaieff and Kafka. During the intellectual disorder between the two great wars, Kierkegaard's influence was felt in Germany and was associated with certain currents of post-Nietzschean thought. Distrusting all mysti-

cism, Kierkegaard based his position upon the individual man here and now, man in his passion and anxiety. Existential thought, we know, branched in the two main directions of religious philosophy and of a secular activism that is still anti-religious. The most important of modern developments in Protestant theology (its important spokesmen being Barth and Brunner) was largely of existential origin. But so was the completely secular philosophy of Heidegger and his work was the principal source of contemporary French existentialism; so we may place Heidegger at the head of this band of existential atheists, wherein are included Jean Paul Sartre and the French existentialists. So for us, Sartre is an atheistic existentialist; he held that there being no God there is at least one being whose existence comes before its essence, a being which exists before it can be defined by a conception of it. (cf. Philip Mairet's 'Introduction' to Sartre's *Existentialism and Humanism*) That being is man or as Heidegger has it, the human reality?

When Sartre discussed the human problem, he could do it with more felicity because of his 'intense personalism of the existential method' and this led him to characterize his philosophy as humanist. Actually his philosophy is as much a reform as a form of humanism. Sartre's ethic of action was the Kantian one of Universal validity. Unethical action, Sartre tells us, is always characterized by that contradiction of the self by itself which he calls *'mauvaise foi'*. Sartre's humanism was freedom-oriented. To him, freedom was the value of all values. It is as a philosopher of freedom that he gave the all-consuming drive to his humanism. Sartre's existential humanism is not a philosophy of quietism (as has been regarded by many) since it defines man by his action. Nor is it a pessimistic description of man as he places the destiny of man within man himself. Nor is it an attempt to discourage man from

action since it tells him that there is no hope except in his action and that the one thing which permits him to have life is the deed. Upon this level we would be considering Sartre's ethic of action and his idea of self-commitment. And it would be found that existentialism was neither quietism nor attentism. It was essentially a philosophy of action, professing an optimistic outlook on men and matter, all the time denouncing degagement. This philosophy of action, this optimism, this indeterminateness also went straight into his creative activity.

His noted story 'Le Mur' concerns the fate of three Spanish Republicans condemned to death by the Fascists and awaiting execution. Two are duly shot after a tormented night of waiting; the third Ibbieta, is offered his life if he will betray the whereabouts of his leader Gris. Ibbieta is for the bravest of the three condemned men. He has passed beyond hope and is fully reconciled to death, when, as a grim sort of joke against his captors, he tells then that Gris is hiding in the local cemetery, fully believing him to be in fact far away. By a coincidence Gris is hiding in the local cemetery. He is captured, and Ibbieta's life is spared. Now although this is the short-story which (with *La Nausée*) made Sartre's name in France before the war, it is, in its general outline, the least characteristic of his works. The neat plot with the ironical twist at the end belongs to a tradition of fiction which Sartre specifically repudiates... what is more, it is logically connected with just that deterministic philosophy to which Sartre is most opposed, namely that of those nineteenth-century pessimists and historicists, who see man as the creature of a merciless fate which deviously outwits and thwarts him wherever he tries to shape his future. The coincidence of Gris being in the local cemetery; the unwished reprieve of Ibbieta—such devices are far too typical of the determinist imagination to bear effective witness



to a philosophy which vigorously upholds human liberty. It is interesting to note that Sartre sees an intimate connexion between his idea of the freedom of man and the principle of nothingness, as understood by him. 'Nothing compels me to act one way rather than another; because the future is open, nothingness confronts me as I look into the future. In the face of this void I naturally feel dread or anguish. The same dread or anguish which reveals nothingness to me is the proof of my freedom. Consciousness moves all the time and it sees itself continually as a nihilation of its own past being.' The characteristic experience of consciousness is to choose: and to elect one possibility is to nihilate the possibilities we reject.'

According to Sartre, man first of all exists, encounters himself. He surges up in the world—defines himself afterwards. To begin with man is nothing as there is no God for him to have his 'concept' *a priori*. Man is nothing but what he makes of himself. Man is simply what he conceives himself to be, he is what he wills him to be. Existence is a pre-condition for all his future possibilities (and this is the first principle of existentialism). For this firm declaration, they have been accused of subjectivity. But the underlying significance of the foregoing remarks is that man is of greater dignity than a stone or a table. For what Sartre and others of his group mean to emphasize is that man is (before all else) something which propels itself towards a future and is aware that it is doing so. This conscious effort for building one's own future on the part of 'human reality' negates all forms of pre-determination at the very outset. Man has been described by Sartre as a 'project' which possesses a subjective life; he is not a kind of moss, a fungus or a cauliflower. He has no pre-determined future; he is not a seed in whom the whole process of germination has been pre-fixed by a sort of pre-established

harmony. In a rejoinder to the Marxist, Sartre points out that the Marxists spoke of pre-condition and pre-determination. For Sartre the real problem did not centre round this pre-determination; it was in defining conditions in which there could be universality. For him, there was no human nature; each epoch developed, according to dialectical laws and men depended upon their epoch and not upon human nature. What Sartre meant by situation was precisely the whole of the conditions, not only material but psychoanalytic (which he characterized 'as a whole' in the epoch under consideration). His conception of the situation was in no way identifiable, even remotely, with any Marxist conception, in that it denied causality. He thought that the Marxian notion of causality had no precise meaning. As for the objection raised by the Marxist as to the existentialist world of probabilities and his denial of scientific causality, Sartre retorted that the sciences did not employ the notion of causality. The sciences were abstract and they studied the variations of factors that were equally abstract and not real causality. Sartre was concerned with universal factors upon a plane where their relations could be studied. The Marxist's search for causality in a single totality was not the scientific causality, Sartre contended. He told M. Naville while having that Sartre-Naville dialogue that in the context of this human freedom man could not possibly be considered as an object. Sartre refuses to accept the Marxian position that in the name of human dignity man refuses to regard man as an object. He tells Naville that it is for a reason of 'philosophic and logical order' that man refuses to regard man as an object.

Cranston rightly points out that Marx and many other Left-wing critics of the bourgeoisie themselves uphold determinism. It is a central tenet of Marxism that the only way to control the world is to understand its deterministic nature. Sartre is an excep-

tional theorist of the Left in rejecting determinism as a bourgeois philosophy. Admittedly, the bourgeois theorists Sartre attacks are psychological determinists, whereas the Marxists are economic determinists; but this is incidental; Sartre's argument is directed against any theory which denies human freedom. His contention is that human freedom is a necessary condition of at least some forms of art and certainly of imaginative literature . . . Freedom is a burden on mankind, something to be borne with courage, at times with actual heroism. This thought receives its fullest elaboration in Sartre's first play, *Les Mouches*.

Nothing exists before the projection of the self by man. His existence is a result of 'what he purposes to be'. This purpose is being distinguished by Sartre from the mere wish of the individual man. For what we usually understand by wishing or willing is a 'conscious decision taken—much more oftener than not—after we have made ourselves what we are'. So wishing or willing is not primary but only secondary. We may wish to join a party, to write a book or to marry. But in such cases what we call 'our will' is probably a manifestation of a 'prior and more spontaneous decision.' However, if it is accepted that existence is prior to essence (as has been contended by the existentialists like Sartre and others), man becomes responsible for what he is. Thus existential humanism puts every man in possession of himself as he is. It places the entire responsibility for his existence squarely upon his own shoulders. We may here profitably fall back on Cranston and let us quote him: 'This is another of Sartre's main themes: perhaps his most important. If a man is free, it follows that he is responsible for everything. He is not just a cog in a machine, a creature of circumstance or destiny, a puppet, or a robot. Man is what he makes himself; and for what he makes himself he alone is answerable. Responsibility again, is not an

easy thing to bear, for it brings with it that most tormenting of all afflictions, guilt. In *La Nausée*, his philosophical novel, Roquentin's trouble is that he deceives himself. He does not want to feel guilt and he thinks that in evading responsibilities—in pursuing his uncommitted way of life—he can escape uneasiness. But there is no getting away from one's responsibility; it is part of the nature of things, a necessary consequence of man's free being. Self-deception, according to Sartre, is a very common thing; many people live out their whole lives in what he calls '*mauvaise foi*'. (Sartre, p. 18)

And when the existentialists say (and Sartre is one of them) that man is responsible for himself, they do not mean that he is responsible only for his own individuality but he is responsible for all men as well. For, Sartre and others mean by 'subjectivity': 'man cannot pass beyond human subjectivity'. According to Sartre, this is the deeper meaning of subjectivity, so much maligned by the critics of existentialism. When the existentialist says that man chooses himself, he means that every individual human being must choose himself, implying thereby that in 'choosing for himself he chooses for all men'. For, in effect, of all the actions a man may take in order to create himself as he wills to be, there is not one which is not creative, at the same time, of an image of man such as he believes he ought to be. Sartre in his essay entitled '*M. Francois Mauriac et la liberté*' speaks of the place of human freedom in the cosmology of the novel. Sartre's argument is that character in fiction can only be successful, can only live and be real if they are free, if they have the freedom which human beings in the actual world have.

Otherwise invented characters cannot be interesting or convincing. Let us quote his words:

'If I suspect that the hero's future actions are determined in advance by heredity, social influence or some other mechanism,

my own tide ebbs back into me; there remains only myself, reading and persisting, confronted by a static book'.

Sartre's case against Mauriac is that Mauriac's notion of predestination leads him to write novels peopled by puppets. So they were intrinsically boring. For Sartre, the real novelist is stirred up by things that are unpredictable. Sartre is 'excited by door because they must be opened, by envelopes because they must be unsealed'. Sartre's earlier conclusions did not reveal (let us note it incidentally) always that arduous champion of human freedom. For his conclusions in *L'Être et le néant* were: (a) that we shall never achieve, in our relations with other people, mutual recognition of each others' freedom; (b) that the Kantian principle of treating other persons as ends is unattainable, and (c) that the essence of relations between conscious beings is not the *Mitsein* (togetherness, community, mutuality) but conflict. In *L'Existentialisme est un humanisme* Sartre advances the contrary opinion that we can, should and indeed must, respect the freedom of others. Hence he says there: 'I cannot make my own freedom my aim unless I make the freedom of others equally my aim. In the same argument he introduced the very notion of community which he had previously rejected. Sartre here wanted to tell us definitely that freedom was the foundation of all values.

Choice affirms the value of what we choose. For, we are unable ever to choose the worse. What we choose is always the better and nothing can be better for us unless it is better for all. That is how Sartre argues his case. [There is an apparent confusion of identity between the desired and the desirable. Sartre's position does not fully and satisfactorily explain the supersession of an earlier choice by a later one. Of course, his contention that the human situation was 'psychoanalytic' as well helps him in explaining the 'supersession' but does not explain all cases of such supersession.]

He goes on to tell us that if existence precedes essence and we will to exist at the same time as we fashion our image, that image is valid for all and for the entire epoch in which we find ourselves. So Sartre considers individual human responsibility to be much greater than what it is normally assumed to be. We, as individual human beings are concerned with mankind as a whole. Sartre goes on illustrating his point:

'If I am a worker, for instance, I may choose to join a Christian rather than a communist trade union. And if by that membership, I choose to signify that resignation is, after all, the attitude that becomes a man, that man's kingdom is not upon this earth, I do not commit myself alone to that view. Resignation is my will for everyone, and my action is, in consequence, a commitment on behalf of all mankind. Or if, to take a more personal case, I decide to marry and to have children, even though this decision proceeds simply from my situation, from my passion or my desire, I am thereby committing not only myself, but humanity as a whole, to the practice of monogamy. I am thus responsible for myself and for all men and I am creating a certain image of man as I would have him to be. In fashioning myself I fashion man. (*Existentialism and Humanism*, pp. 29-30)

[This sounds a bit dogmatic. He seems to prescribe the action of an individual human being in a particular situation for all men although he had no idea *a priori* or pre-established and pre-conceived ideal like that of Kant. Although he accused the Marxist of dogmatism, he is no less dogmatic here in his argument.]

In the context of this sense of 'choice' of the human agent, we will have to find out the specific meaning of such terms as anguish, abandonment and despair (as understood by Sartre). We have earlier referred to anguish in the context of nothingness and freedom. Nausea and anguish, Sartre believed, were part of the experience of us

all. Nausea was the natural feeling that came to anyone who confronted the fluid sticky, viscous mess which constituted the world of sensible appearance. Anguish was the natural feeling that came from confronting the absolute openness of our own future, the nothingness in the centre of which we could live. To people who say that they have no such nausea or anguish, Sartre would tell that they had been protecting themselves by self-deception. They must have practised bad faith or *mauvaise foi*. Sartre gives good examples of self-deception as he found in a girl and in a waiter in a Cafe. In explaining anguish (and Sartre tells us that man is in anguish) he tells us that when a man commits himself to anything, fully realizing that he is not only choosing what he will be, but is thereby at the same time a legislator deciding for the whole of mankind—in such a moment a man cannot escape from the sense of complete and profound responsibility. Kierkegaard called this anguish 'the anguish of Abraham': When a certain course of action is taken to be 'good' by me 'it is only I who choose to say that it is good and not bad'. There is a suggestion that I am obliged at every instant to perform actions which are examples. [This position is not universally acceptable. We know of an Indian Statesman who said: 'Do what I say but don't do what I do.' A father, who smokes (and advises his children not to smoke) does it with the idea that it was not an example of good behaviour to be followed by all. His responsibility in the matter is neither representative nor prescriptive.] Everything happens to every man as though the whole human race had its eyes fixed upon what he was doing and regulated its conduct accordingly. So the type of anguish with which Sartre was concerned, did not lead to quietism or inaction. Let us quote Sartre: 'Obviously I do not mean that whenever I choose between a millefennille and a chocolate éclair, I choose in anguish. An-

guish is constant in this sense—that my original choice is something constant. Indeed this anguish is, in my view, the complete absence of justification at the same time as one is responsible in regard to everyone'. It is anguish pure and simple, involved in all types of decision making. When for instance (and it is cited by Sartre) a military leader takes upon himself the responsibility for an attack and sends a number of men to their death, he chooses to do it. In making the decision the military leader feels a certain anguish and it is shared by leaders of men in other contexts as well. But this anguish does not in any way prevent them from acting; on the contrary, it was the very condition of their action. A problem suggests a number of possibilities as solution and in choosing one of these, they realize that it has value only because it is chosen. Now Sartre recognizes anguish only in this sense of direct responsibility towards other men who are concerned.

And abandonment, Sartre tells us, meant that God did not exist and it was necessary to draw the consequences of His absence right to the end. Dostoevsky once wrote: 'If God did not exist, everything would be permitted'. And that was the starting point for Sartre's existentialism. Everything is indeed permitted if there were no God. Man is in consequence forlorn for he cannot find anything to depend upon either within or outside himself. He discovers forthwith that he is without excuse. For if indeed existence preceded essence, one would never be able to explain one's action by reference to a given and specific human nature. In other words, according to Sartre, there is no determinism—man was free, man was freedom incarnate. So we have no excuse anywhere. Sartre tells us that 'man is condemned to be free'. Condemned because man did not create himself, yet he is nevertheless at liberty and from the moment that he is thrown into this world, he is responsible for everything he

does. Sartre holds man responsible for his passions as well. To lay stress on responsibility he makes out his theory of bad faith. Sartre believed that bad faith was much encouraged in the modern world by the teaching of Freud. He thought that Freud offered people the means of escape from responsibility into the myth of being creatures determined by unconscious forces. Sartre's rejection of Freud's theory of the unconscious follows from his identification of human reality with consciousness. But he cannot neglect the psychological problems which led Freud to introduce the concept of the unconscious. Sartre told us that those experiences which were there at the origin of neuroses and which Freud classified as unconscious were, in reality, conscious. If they were forgotten that was not because they were kept from consciousness by the workings of a hidden censor; it was because men, in their bad faith, had put them out of their minds. As opposed to the Freudian notion of unconscious wishes unconsciously repressed, Sartre speaks much more harshly, of falsehood, of men denying what, if they are frank with themselves, they know what they want, or once wanted to do. Sartre could be harsh, because for him, man was the future of man i.e. his future had to be fashioned, a virgin future that awaited him. To illustrate his point Sartre gave us two examples and we quote the latter one. He spoke of a Jesuit who had a series of misfortunes in his early life and as a young man he failed in the military entrance examination. That was the last straw on the camel's back and it broke. This failure was taken to be the sign that he was not intended for secular successes. Sartre tells us that this gentleman was cent per cent responsible for the decipherment of the sign. So the element of responsibility is always there and this is what abandonment implied. We ourselves decide our being. And, according to Sartre, abandonment (in this sense) does away with the anguish.

[This is a position very difficult to accept. Sense of being responsible exaggerates the torment of anguish. It is a common experience and Sartre's position is contrary to this empirical evidence of common men and women.]

By despair what Sartre means may be stated thus. When we decide to act, we limit ourselves to a reliance upon that which is within our wills or within the sum of the probabilities which render our action feasible. Whenever one wills anything there are always these elements of probability. Beyond the point at which the possibilities in a given situation cease to affect my action, I ought to disinterest myself. For, there is no God and no prevenient design, which can adapt the world and all its possibilities to my will. Sartre thought that when Descartes prescribed 'conquer yourself rather than the world' what he meant was that we should act without hope. On this issue there is a known dialogue between the Marxists and Sartre. Marxist's rejoinder to Sartre may be summarized thus:

That our action is limited, obviously, by our death; but we can rely upon the help of others. That is, we can count, both upon what the others are doing to help us elsewhere as in Russia and upon what they will do later, after our death, to take up our action and carry it forward to its final accomplishment which will be the revolution. Moreover, we must rely upon this; not to do so is immoral.

To this Sartre rejoins first that he would always count upon his comrades-in-arms in the struggle, in so far as they were committed (as Sartre was) to a definite, common cause; in the unity of a party or a group which he could more or less control—that is in which Sartre was enrolled as a militant and whose movements at every moment were known to him. In that respect to rely upon the unity and the will of the party was exactly like Sartre's reckoning (while expecting a friend who had been journeying

to meet him) that the train would run to time or that the train would not be derailed. But Sartre refused to rely upon men whom he did not know. He had no idea as to whether the Russian Revolution would lead. He could very well appreciate the part played by the Proletariat in the Russian Revolution but could not tell definitely that it would lead to the triumph of the Proletariat. Sartre repeatedly told us that we must confine ourselves to what we could see. We could not possibly be sure that comrades-in-arms would take up our work after our death and carry into the maximum perfection, seeing that those men were free agents and would freely decide to-morrow, what man would then be. Sartre further asks himself, following this line of argument, whether his position leads to quietism or not? He thought that it did not lead there. His emphasis was on the fact that we should be without illusions and that we should do what we could do. Quietism means that let others do what we cannot do. Sartre's position is opposite of this.

Since Sartre believed that there is no reality except in action, there is no love apart from the deeds of love. There can be no potentiality of love other than that which is manifested in loving. There is no genius other than that which is expressed in works of art. The genius of Proust and Racine, Sartre tells us, is the totality of the works of Proust and Racine. He asks: 'Why should we attribute to Racine the capacity to write yet another tragedy when that is precisely what he did not write? In life, a man commits himself and draws his own portrait. This attitude, the existentialist claims, puts everyone in a position to understand that reality alone is reliable. If we go by the dreams, expectations and hopes of man we try to define him negatively and not positively. The existentialist thus takes man to be a 'series of undertakings, to be the sum, the organ-

ization, the set of relations that constitute these undertakings.' (Sartre's *Existentialism and Humanism*, p. 42)

So with the existentialist, there is no pessimism, rather there is sternness of optimism. Sartre did not believe that people were born heroes. Cowards made themselves cowardly and heroes heroic. There was always a possibility for the coward to give up cowardice and for the hero to stop being a hero. What counted with Sartre was a total commitment and it was not by a particular case or particular action that we were committed altogether. [May we ask Sartre about the differentia that differentiates an action i.e. qua total commitment and an action not as such. He is conveniently silent on this point.]

## II

So we find from the foregoing discussion that the point of departure, for Sartre, was the subjectivity of the individual. The principle of self-certitude as found in the Cartesian doctrine of *Cogito ergo Sum* has been accepted by Sartre and he considers that any theory which begins with man, outside of this moment of self-attainment is a theory which suppresses the truth; for outside of the Cartesian '*Cogito*', all objects are no more than probable. And any doctrine of probabilities which is not attached to a truth will crumble into nothing. According to Sartre, if we are to define the probable, we must possess the true. And 'before there can be any truth whatever, there must be an absolute truth and there is such a truth which is simple, easily attained and within the reach of everybody; it consists in one's immediate sense of one's self.'

Secondly, Sartre's position does not make man into an object. He wanted to establish the human kingdom as a pattern of values

in contradistinction from the material world. His subjectivity is not individual subjectivism for it is not only one's own self that one discovers in the *Cogito*, but those of others too. Contrary to the meaning of Descartes, contrary to that of Kant, Sartre gives a new meaning to 'I think'. When we say 'I think', Sartre tells us, we are attaining to ourselves in the presence of the other and we are just as certain of the other as we are of ourselves. Thus the man who discovers himself directly in the *Cogito* also discovers all the others and discovers them as the condition of his own existence. He recognizes that he cannot be anything (in the sense in which one says one is spiritual or that one is wicked or jealous) unless others recognize him as such. Thus Sartre's world is a world of 'inter-subjectivity'. It is where man has to decide what he is and what others are. Sartre admitted of a 'human universality of condition' although he did not accept the notion of human nature (in the sense of universal essence in man). By this 'condition' is understood 'all the limitations which *a priori* define man's fundamental situation in the Universe'. Of course, the historical situations are variable but what never vary are the necessities of being in the world, of having to labour and to die there. These limitations are both subjective and objective, subjective because they are lived and are nothing if man does not live them and objective because we meet with them everywhere and they are everywhere recognizable. As for diverse human purposes, Sartre tells us, none of them is wholly foreign to us as every human purpose presents itself as an attempt either to surpass these limitations or to widen them or else to deny or to accommodate oneself to them. Consequently every human purpose may be considered to have some universal value. In this sense, there is a 'human universality' and it is being perpetually made. Every individual

human being through his free commitment realizes himself in realizing a type of humanity.

Of course, the foregoing arguments are not enough to refute the charge of subjectivism, so frequently levelled against existentialism. And Sartre is conscious of the fact that the charge of anarchy so often levelled against existentialism has yet to be grappled with. A moral judgment, the critics of existentialism point out, cannot be passed by the existentialists as they have no reason for preferring one purpose to another. Their third objection against the existentialists is: 'Everything being merely voluntary in this choice of yours, you give away with one hand what you pretend to gain with the other.'

Sartre did not consider the above objections to be very serious. He would reply to them as follows:

(a) To say that it matters not what we choose is not correct. In one sense, choice is possible but what is not possible is not to choose. When I do not choose, that is also a choice. This is of great importance as a limit to fantasy and caprice. Sartre points out that man finds himself in an organized situation in which he is himself involved. His choice involves mankind in its entirety and he cannot avoid choosing. But he chooses without reference to any pre-established values, although he is not capricious. Sartre compares this moral choice with the construction of a work of art, although he hastens to tell us that he was not propounding any aesthetic morality. As there is no pre-defined picture for the artists to make or for him to follow some *a priori* aesthetic rules, so the individual man does not follow any preconceived moral ideal while he makes his choice. In both art and morality we have to do with creation and invention. Man makes himself; he makes himself by the choice of his morality and he cannot but choose a

morality; such is the pressure of circumstances upon him. Sartre contends that the existentialists defined man in relation to his commitments and as such it was not right to reproach them for irresponsibility in their choice.

(b) Secondly, when it is said that the existentialists were unable to judge others, Sartre's quip was that this was true in one sense and false in another. It is true in this sense that whenever a man chooses his purpose and his commitment in all clearness and in all sincerity, whatever that purpose may be it is impossible to prefer another for him. It is true in the sense that the existentialists did not believe in progress. Progress meant amelioration; but man's choice was a 'choice in the situation'. Sartre claims that one can judge for 'one chooses in view of others and in view of others one chooses himself'. One can judge first—and perhaps this is not a judgment of value, but it is a logical judgment—that in certain cases choice is founded upon an error and in others upon the truth. One can judge a man by saying that he deceives himself. Since Sartre defined the situation of man as one of free choice, any man who took refuge behind the excuse of his passions (or by inventing some deterministic doctrine) was a self-deceiver. One may point out here: 'Why should he not choose to deceive himself?' Sartre's reply would be: 'It is not for me to judge him morally but I define his self-deception as an error'. Here one cannot avoid pronouncing a judgment of truth. The self-deception is evidently a falsehood, because it is dissimulation of man's complete liberty of commitment. Sartre, goes on to tell us: 'upon this same level, I say that it is also a self-deception if I choose to declare that certain values are incumbent upon me; I am in contradiction with myself if I will these values and at the same time say that they impose themselves upon me'. (*Existentialism and*

*Humanism*, p. 51) He points that here there was no question of self-deception and that the attitude of strict consistency was one of good faith. The existentialist claims that he could pronounce a moral judgment. For, freedom in respect of concrete circumstances can have no other end and aim but itself. And when once a man had seen that values depended upon himself, in that state of forsakenness he could will only one thing and that was freedom as the foundation of all values. And in this willing freedom, he discovered that it depended entirely upon the freedom of others and that the freedom of others depended upon his freedom. Obviously freedom as the definition of a man does not depend upon others, but as soon as there is a commitment, he is obliged to will the liberty of others at the same time as his own.

(c) The third objection, really meant (Sartre points out) that the values of the existentialists were not serious as they themselves chose them. Sartre would tell us *a propos* this objection that when God was excluded somebody must be there to discover the values. There was no sense in life *a priori*. Life was nothing until it was lived. This value is dependent on the sense we choose. Thus herein we find the possibility of creating a human community. And Sartre's humanism in this sense transcends the Comtian humanism, shut-in upon itself. Sartre meant that man was all the time outside of himself. Let us quote Sartre: 'It is in projecting and losing himself beyond himself that he makes man to exist; and, on the other hand, it is by pursuing transcendent aims that he himself is able to exist. Since man is thus self-surpassing and can grasp objects only in relation to his self-surpassing, he is himself the heart and centre of his transcendence. There is no other universe except the human universe, the Universe of human subjectivity. This relation of transcendence as constitutive of man



is (not in the sense that God is transcendent, but in the sense of self-surpassing) with subjectivity (in such a sense that man is not shut up in himself but forever present in a human Universe)'. (ibid., p. 55) It was this what Sartre called existential humanism. This was humanism, because the existent-

ialists reminded man that there was no legislator but himself; that he himself thus abandoned would decide for himself; also because Sartre showed that it was not by turning back upon himself, but always by seeking, beyond himself that man could realize himself as truly human.

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## SWAMI VIVEKANANDA IN FRANCE

### AN INTRODUCTORY CHAPTER

SWAMI VIDYATMANANDA

On the afternoon of June 16, 1966, Swami Sambuddhananda and I stood at the edge of a small park near the Arc de Triomphe in the fashionable Sixteenth Arrondissement of Paris. We were both rather excited, for the park formed the green centre of the Place des Etats-Unis; and there in the middle of the North side of the block, was the house numbered 6.

Swami Sambuddhananda, a senior member of the Ramakrishna Order, was visiting the Centre Védantique Ramakrishna at Gretz, on a world tour. The Swami had, years before, been acquainted with the Indian writer Dhan Gopal Mukherji, who had died in 1936. The Swami had heard that the writer's son, Dhan Gopal Mukherji, Jr., was living in Paris. He had seen the son as a youngster and wanted to meet him again.

We had lunch as the guests of Gopal Mukherji in the heart of Paris in the secluded garden of the Union Interalliée. The Union Interalliée is a private club; it occupies a beautiful property which was once the palace of one of the ministers of Louis XIV, was after that the residence of Jérôme Bonaparte, and finally, until the time of the Russian Revolution, housed the

Imperial Russian Embassy. Swami Sambuddhananda's simple *gerua* formed a striking contrast to the elegant suits or fashionable dresses of the other diners. The Swami was speaking of one of his favourite topics, Swami Vivekananda.

'In 1900,' said Swami Sambuddhananda, 'Swami Vivekananda spent several months here in Paris. He attended the Congress of the History of Religions held in connexion with the Exposition Universelle Internationale. He made two speeches.'

'After lunch,' I remarked, 'we can drive past the house where he lived in 1900.'

'You mean Mr. Leggett's house in the Place des Etats-Unis?'

'Yes. It is not far from here.'

'I should like that very much. Is the house known to the devotees in France? Is it preserved, or marked in any way?'

'No, I don't think anyone has paid much attention to the subject. But I must tell you that we shall not be able to see anything but the outside. I have already been there, and I found that the house is occupied by a business firm. The people were courteous, but naturally they don't care to have strangers sightseeing in their offices.'

Gopal Mukherji had been listening.

'What number on Place des Etats-Unis?' he asked.

'Number 6.'

'Isn't that the house of Garnier, the cosmetics company?'

'Yes.'

'But my own office is just around the corner. I know someone at Garnier. Let me phone and explain the situation to him and see whether they will let us go through the house.'

It was thus that it became possible, after sixty-six years, for admirers of Swami Vivekananda to enter once again the house where Swamiji had lived some days in August, September, and October of 1900; and whose address is known to all the world because it appeared at the top of so many letters written by the Swami during his Paris period.

The Place des Etats-Unis is a small square, perhaps a hundred feet wide by four or five hundred feet long. The park in the centre provides greenery and a place to take the air in the midst of a great city. Streets border it on four sides. Set next to each other all around the square are tall, stately mansions, facing the park.

The houses fronting on the Place are generally five or six stories tall, modified Louis XVI in architectural styling, mostly constructed, I should judge, in the late 1800's. According to a publicity leaflet of the Garnier firm, Number 6 was built by a Prince Bariatinski and was during the time the Prince lived there the scene of many brilliant parties. Number 2 is today and has been for some years the Egyptian Embassy. Today Number 8, next to Number 6, is the residence of the Duc de la Rochefoucauld. Other houses on the Place serve as offices; some have been divided into apartments.

In times gone by a house like Number 6

would have been the private residence of a single family, called in French an 'hôtel'. Typically, a Parisian town house of this type would have a garden in the rear, where there would also be a coach house and stable. In the front facade, large double doors, permitting the passage of carriages, would open directly on to the street. The passage inside the double doors, sheltered by the upper floors, was called a 'porte cochère'. The entrance was guarded by a porter called a concierge, whose lodge was just inside the big doors. From the 'porte cochère' one could pass directly through the actual 'front door' of the house into a ground-floor lobby. From this lobby a grand staircase would lead to the living quarters on the upper floors. The ground-floor and basement would contain store-rooms, the kitchen, and the quarters of the 'concierge' and his family.

Going up the staircase, one would enter a hall leading, toward the front of the house, to a salon of noble proportions. To the rear, facing a garden, there would probably be the dining room and perhaps a library. On the floors above there would be several bedchambers. Small rooms in the attic served to house the servants. Since in 1900 a mansion of this sort was staffed with a number of servants, it was possible for the owner to give dinners and parties with considerable ease.

It was exactly this kind of house that we now entered. We were shown over the building by a member of the Garnier firm, a Mme Lebreton. Although this was the first time, to her knowledge, an admirer of Swami Vivekananda had come to see the building, it is a curious fact that Mme Lebreton was already acquainted with the name of Vivekananda; she had read with enthusiasm Romain Rolland's biography of the Swami. Mme Lebreton was pleased

to learn that she was an occupant of a house where Vivekananda had stayed; she did not know any facts as to the past history of the property.

There was only one drawback in my mind as we went through 6 Place des Etats-Unis. Was it absolutely certain that this was the same house in which Vivekananda had stayed? More than sixty years had passed. Perhaps a renumbering of the buildings on the Place had occurred in the meantime! Perhaps more serious changes than that had taken place: demolitions, remodellings, rebuildings? The house we were in was exactly the type of house one would expect the Leggetts to have occupied, to cause Swami Vivekananda to say in a passage of his 'Memoirs of European Travel' written the day before he left France and eventually the West forever:

And the daily reunion of numbers of distinguished men and women which Mr. Leggett brought about at an enormous expense in his Paris mansion, by inviting them to at-homes—that too ends today.

All types of distinguished personages—poets, philosophers, scientists, moralists, politicians, singers, professors, painters, artists, sculptors, musicians, and so on, of both sexes—used to be assembled in Mr. Leggett's residence, attracted by his hospitality and kindness. That incessant outflow of words, clear and limpid like a mountain fall, that expression of sentiments emanating from all sides like sparks of fire, bewitching music, the magic current of thoughts from master-minds coming into conflict with one another—which used to hold all spell-bound, making them forgetful of time and place—these too shall end.

The house we were in was perfect for the

kind of entertaining Swami Vivekananda described; but could one be sure it was the same house?

In any case, we looked at everything with great interest. The Garnier firm is a cosmetics distributing company, part of a large trust called L'Oréal. The factory is in a suburb of Paris. Number 6 is the head office of Garnier. Many of the rooms held desks and files, and we saw perhaps fifteen or twenty employees at work. In the rear where the coach house must have been, a small auditorium had been built. There, we were told, Garnier salesmen were called together from time to time for training sessions.

As we climbed the stairs from the ground-floor entrance hall, I thought of how Swamiji's hands had perhaps touched the beautiful bronze handrail. We entered what had been the dining room, looking across into the handsome garden of Number 8; and I guessed that the neighbouring yard probably appeared about the same in Swamiji's time and that the view we were looking at might have been very much the view he saw when dining. On the floors above we went into what had formerly been bedrooms, wondering in which one Swamiji might have slept.

Finally we entered the salon on the front of the house, with its full-length windows looking out at the trees of the Place. This must have been where Mr. and Mrs. Leggett held the at-homes Swamiji speaks of, and where that delightful party took place on September 3, 1900, described in Swamiji's humorous letter which commences: 'We had a congress of cranks here in this house.'

I realized later that Swamiji's use of the idea of a congress reflected the interest of everyone present in the Congress of the History of Religions which had opened that very day, Monday, September 3, and which it may be presumed most of those

present, and humorously referred to in the letter, had attended. Whether the guests actually put on a mock congress, or whether the description of the evening's fun was an amusing exaggeration on Swamiji's part is impossible to know. In any case, we see that Swamiji, now thirty-seven, was not unaware of the ridiculous sides of such parliaments; he had seen a great deal of the world since his 1893 achievement at Chicago.

The 'Dear Mother' to whom the letter was addressed was Mrs. Leggett, wife of Francis H. Leggett of New York. At the time of the 'congress of cranks' she was with her husband at Kreuznach, a health resort in Germany. Alberta Sturges, Mrs. Leggett's daughter by a first marriage, and Josephine MacLeod, Mrs. Leggett's sister, were acting as hostesses at this time in the house in the Place des Etats-Unis. Miss MacLeod, then aged forty-one, was known by her intimates as Joe or Jojo; in later years by a world-wide acquaintance as Tantine. Alberta was then twenty-two. Mrs. Frances H. Leggett, daughter and only child of Mr. and Mrs. Leggett (tenants of 6 Place des Etats-Unis) has written to me that she thinks Swamiji adopted the humorous tone in the 'cranks' letter to cheer her mother up, knowing as he did that she was feeling very depressed by the cure at Kreuznach.

Swamiji's letter is well known, but is worth reading again in light of the facts now perceivable about the circumstances of its composition:

6 Place des Etats-Unis, Paris,  
3rd Sept., 1900.

Dear Mother —,

We had a congress of cranks here in this house. The representatives came from various countries, from India in the South, to Scotland in the North, with England and America buttressing the sides.

We were having great difficulty in electing a president, for though Dr. James was there, he was rather more mindful of the blisters raised on him by Mrs. Melton than solution of world problems.

I proposed Joe, but she refused on the ground of the non-arrival of her new gown—and went to a corner to watch the scene, from a coign of vantage.

Mrs. Bull was ready, but Margot objected to this meeting being reduced to a comparative philosophy class.

When we were thus in a fix—up sprung a short, square almost round figure from a corner, and without any ceremony declared, that all difficulties will be solved, not only of electing a president but of life itself, if we all took to worshipping the Sun God and Moon God. He delivered his speech in five minutes, but it took his disciple, who was present, fully three quarters of an hour to translate. In the meanwhile, the master began to draw the rugs in your parlour up in a heap, with the intention, as he said, of giving us an ocular demonstration of the power of 'Fire God,' then and there.

At this juncture Joe interposed and insisted that she did not want a fire sacrifice in her parlour; whereupon the Indian saint looked daggers at Joe, entirely disgusted at the behaviour of one he confidently believed to be a perfect convert to fire worship.

Then Dr. James snatched a minute from nursing his blisters and declared he would have something very interesting to speak upon fire God and his brethren, if he were not entirely occupied with the evolution of Meltonian blisters. Moreover, his great Master, Herbert Spencer, not having investigated the subject before him, he would stick to golden silence.

'Chutney is the thing,' said a voice near the door. We all looked back and saw Margot. 'It is chutney,' she said, 'chutney

and Kālī, that will remove all difficulties of life, and make it easy for us to swallow all the evils, and relish what is good.' But she stopped all of a sudden and vehemently asserted that she was not going to speak any further, as she had been obstructed by a certain male animal in the audience of her speech. She was sure one man in the audience had his head turned towards the window and was not paying the attention proper to a lady, and though as to herself she believed in the equality of the sexes, yet she wanted to know the reason of that disgusting man's want of due respect for women. Then one and all declared that they had been giving her the most undivided attention, and all above the equal right, her due, but to no purpose. Margot would have nothing to do with that horrible crowd and sat down.

Then Mrs. Bull of Boston took the floor and began to explain how all the difficulties of the world were from not understanding the true relation between the sexes. She said, 'The only panacea was a right understanding of the proper persons, and then to find liberty in love and freedom in liberty and motherhood, brotherhood, fatherhood, Godhood, love in freedom and freedom in love, in the right holding up of the true ideal in sex.'

To this the Scotch delegate vehemently objected and said that as the hunter chased the goatherd, the goatherd the shepherd, the shepherd the peasant and the peasant drove the fisher into the sea, now, we wanted to fish out of the deep the fisher and let him fall upon the peasant, the peasant upon the shepherd and so on; and the web of life will be completed and we will be all happy. He was not allowed to continue his driving business long. In a second every one was on his feet and we could only hear a confusion of voices—'Sun God and Moon God,' 'Chutney and Kālī,' 'Freedom holding up right understanding,

sex, motherhood,' 'Never, the fisherman must go back to the shore' etc. Whereupon Joe declared that she was yearning to be the hunter for the time and chase them all out of the house if they did not stop their nonsense.

Then was peace and calm restored, and I hasten to write you about it.

Yours affly,  
Vivekananda,

I saw in mind's eye the room filled, not with desks and files, but with good French furniture. There were rugs on the floor, chandeliers above, plenty of books, flowers, art objects. Well-dressed people talked with animation. Servants handed around coffee.

Although Alberta is not mentioned, we may assume she was present, since it is known that she acted as hostess at a dinner at Number 6 on September 10th, as will be seen below when the events of that day are described. Five years later this girl was to marry George Montagu, who in 1916 succeeded his uncle as ninth Earl of Sandwich. Alberta then became chate-laine of the Montagu ancestral home, Hinchingbrooke, Huntingdon.

Dr. James was Professor William James, the famous Harvard philosopher, popularizer of pragmatism, and the author of *The Varieties of Religious Experience*. Probably Mrs. James was present also, as it is known she accompanied her husband on the trip to Europe that summer. In referring to James, Swamiji pokes a little fun at academic conservatism.

According to Frances Leggett, the Mrs. Melton (or Walden) mentioned in the letter was a magnetic healer whom Joe MacLeod had discovered some months before in California. I quote: 'Mrs. Melton or Walden gave Swami a number of treatments when he was in California. I doubt that she did him much good. But my mother, who had a sore on her leg

that would not heal, was treated with much benefit. My family at any rate brought her that year to Paris where she treated a number of their acquaintances, among whom was Professor James.' The reference to the blisters of James will become clear when two letters from him are reproduced on a later page.

Joe was individualistic, cosmopolitan, and fashionable. She was dressed very smartly in her youth, Swamiji alludes to her in one of his letters as 'that Paris-dressed young lady.' Hence the reference in the 'cranks' letter to the non-arrival of a new dress. Yet Joe MacLeod was a devoted friend—indeed, a confidant—of Vivekananda, and a great benefactor of the Ramakrishna Mission throughout her long life that ended in October of 1949.

Mrs. Bull was the widow of Ole Bull, well-known Norwegian violinist. She was a wealthy lady in her own right and lived in Boston. She had known Vivekananda since 1894, had been in India with him and her friends Joe MacLeod and Margaret Noble in 1898, had known Sri Sarada Devi, the Holy Mother and indeed had arranged in Calcutta to have the photograph made of Holy Mother usually referred to as the 'worshipped' pose. During the summer of 1900 Sara Bull took a house at the small seaside village of Perros-Guirec, near Lannion, on the coast of Brittany about three hundred miles from Paris. Swamiji, Margaret Noble, and Joe MacLeod visited her there. Sara Bull had perhaps come into Paris to attend the Congress and thus was present at Number 6 on the 3rd. We gain the impression from Swamiji's reference to Sara Bull that there was in her character a not altogether universally appreciated strain of sweetness and light!

Margot in the letter was Margaret Noble, since two years known as Sister Nivedita. Swamiji had only a few days before expressed some strong sentiments to her in

letters written to Perros-Guirec. She had perhaps come into Paris with Mrs. Bull. Swamiji's references to Nivedita in the 'cranks' letter are written in a spirit of fun, yet reveal he was not unaware of the considerable lack of flexibility in some of her attitudes.

The 'short squat almost round figure' I take to be Vivekananda himself. Frances Leggett questions this and wonders whether he might be Jules Bois or Hyacinthe Loyson. I have not yet obtained physical descriptions of these two men; but portraits of them do not show them as excessively stout. Perhaps the reference to the fact that the translation of this person's remarks took longer to give than did his original words reflected events which had taken place that day at the Congress of the History of Religions. Max Müller sent a letter saying he was sorry not to be able to attend. We may speculate it took some time to give a French version of this to the audience; or perhaps the remarks of some delegate speaking in English or German had to be translated.

The Scotch delegate was Professor Patrick Geddes, a sociologist, of Edinburgh University. We can see what Swamiji thought of some scholarly theories from his amusing description of Geddes' purported doctrine about the rhythm of life.

The fact that Swamiji used the colloquialism 'cranks' shows how completely he had grasped western language, and western attitudes. These pioneer Vedāntists of the West—all of them now historical figures due largely to their association with Vivekananda—were to the world of 1900 real eccentrics, and he the biggest eccentric of them all.

As we stood in that converted salon, I strenuously wished I could tune in on the past. How entrancing those gatherings must have been; Swamiji himself uses the word 'magic' to describe what occurred.

And always at the centre of everything, the matchless Vivekananda. If only the walls could play back what they had absorbed in 1900: the ideas of some of the most interesting people in the world, in the most interesting city of the world, at the moment of that city's highest splendour.

I ticked off in my mind the persons who had been in that room. There were no doubt many others; the names of only a few are known. Besides those who attended the 'cranks' party, we find the following mentioned as having met Vivekananda: Jules Bois, Hyacinthe Loyson and his American-born wife, Sarah Bernhardt, Emma Calvé, Princess Demidoff, the young Duke of Richelieu, Gerald Nobel, Auguste Rodin, Princess Doria, the Duke of Newcastle, Lady Anglesey, Sir Hiram Maxim, and J. C. Bose.

As we drove away from 6 Place des Etats-Unis in the heavy afternoon traffic, I thought it would be worthwhile to find out all I could about Swamiji's stay, or stays, in France. Thus began an effort which is proving to be a rewarding venture, about which the present article forms an opening report.

On his two trips to the West, Swami Vivekananda spent a total of roughly three years in the United States, a total of nearly a year in England, and something like six months altogether in Europe, more than half of that time in France.

The standard biography of Vivekananda is *The Life of Swami Vivekananda*, by his Eastern and Western Disciples. This book was published in four volumes by Advaita Ashrama about ten years after Swamiji's passing away in 1902. (It has since been revised and shortened.) The space given in the book to Swamiji's activities in the West is relatively proportionate to the amount of time he spent there and the importance of what he did. Fifteen per cent is given to his first trip to America

and some five per cent to his second. His English visits and his sojourns in Europe also are well covered. Another book, written shortly after Swamiji's passing away, gives biographical details as to his activities in England and Europe as well as in America, namely Sister Nivedita's *The Master as I Saw Him*.

As the years have passed, considerable additional material has been brought out having to do with Swamiji's stays in America. There is Marie Louise Burke's valuable *Swami Vivekananda in America: New Discoveries*, which deals in considerable detail with Swami Vivekananda's life in the United States on his 1893-1896 trip. There is the book *Reminiscences of Swami Vivekananda*, a symposium collected from several sources, with contributions by thirty-five persons—western and Indian—who met the Swami. More than a third of the material reports on Swamiji's sojourns in America, most of the rest of it having to do with his activities in India.

Up to the present time we do not find the same detailed attention given to the periods spent in England and in Europe. Included in the *Reminiscences* are one or two souvenirs concerning Swamiji in England and France. A few references to Jules Bois and his relationship with Vivekananda appeared years ago in *prabuddha Bharata*. One would think that perhaps Romain Rolland would have done some original research concerning Swamiji in France when he wrote his *Life of Vivekananda*. But in this book, published in the late 1920's, Rolland adds nothing new except to remark that it is 'regrettable' that Swami Vivekananda should have had as interpreters of the French spirit only Jules Bois and Hyacinthe Loyson. The notable recent biographies of Vivekananda rely largely on already published, known material.

Interestingly enough, most of the bio-

graphical matter having to do with Swami Vivekananda in France comes directly from writings by Swami Vivekananda himself: 'The East and the West,' 'Memoirs of European Travel,' and 'The Paris Congress of the History of Religions'.

It seems clear, thus, that an opportunity exists to do additional research concerning Swamiji's activities in England; and in Europe, especially France. I have undertaken to work on this latter subject: Swami Vivekananda in France. It is not a subject of vast importance. Swamiji spent less than four months in France altogether; he left few if any disciples, made only one or two public appearances, inspired no continuing Vedānta activity.

Yet there are many things one would like to know, such as the dates of the sessions of the Congress of the History of Religions, where they were held, and the extent of Swamiji's participation in the Congress; where and for how long Swamiji stayed with Jules Bois; when and for what length of time Swamiji visited Brittany; what influence, if it can be traced, Swamiji had on the people he met in France, and what effect his experiences in France had on Swamiji himself. These are a few examples of what one would like to know and what must be traced out if our knowledge of Swamiji in France is to be as complete as the knowledge we have today of Swamiji in America.

As I see the project, the study of Swamiji in France falls into four areas, or chapters. The first chapter deals in a general way with Vivekananda's four trips to France, particularly the longest, of 1900, and attempts to establish, as specifically as possible, a calendar of his activities throughout the periods he was in France.

The second chapter naturally concerns itself with the Congress of the History of Religions and Swamiji's part in it. In this chapter I shall try to deal with the subject

of how well Swamiji knew French and whether, as it is customary to claim, he knew the language well enough to give public addresses in it.

If possible, a succeeding chapter will deal with Swamiji's visits to Brittany in 1900. It will be necessary for me to go to Lannion, Perros-Guirec, and Mont Saint Michel in order to attempt to gather material and verify first hand what are now conjectures. This I expect to do in the near future.

Finally, I hope to study the matter of Swamiji's associations with several very striking French people, most particularly: Jules Bois, whose life story includes dueling, the study of black magic, a visit to Swami Vivekananda at Belur Math in 1901, reconversion to Catholicism, and a long period of exile in America ending in his death in 1943 in Brooklyn, New York and Hyacinthe Loyson, once a Carmelite monk and popular preacher at Notre Dame Cathedral, who opposed certain practices in the Catholic Church, was excommunicated, married continued to celebrate the mass after his excommunication, struggled for liberality and reconciliation in religion, and died in Paris in 1912 at the age of eighty-five. After his funeral in a protestant chapel, the body was cremated.

A word about the sources of material for this chapter.

I have been aided greatly by Mrs. Frances H. Leggett. See the entry under August 4 below. Frances Leggett (after her divorce she took back her maiden name) still lives in the family home, Ridgely Manor, Stone Ridge, New York, place several times visited by Swami Vivekananda and in later years by many of his disciples. Two other disciples of Sri Ramakrishna stayed at Ridgely Manor also: Swami Turiyananda and Swami Abhedananda. Frances Leggett has furnished new material and several photographs hitherto unpublished, and has verified many facts. She has read and



corrected the manuscript of the present chapter.

At the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris, where I did considerable research, I was aided greatly by M. Jean Bruno, Conservateur au Département des Imprimés.

A study of all the issues of *Prabuddha Bharata* from the first number onwards revealed some useful material.

Considerable help came from members and friends of the Centre Védantique Ramakrichna at Gretz. In addition, several devotees in America and India gave assistance.

I cannot claim that much of the material here presented qualifies as 'new discoveries'. Some historical facts given in this chapter have not previously appeared in the literature about Swami Vivekananda. But much that I have set down has resulted from ordering, or reordering, what is already known. Of the greatest help towards this end are the letters of Vivekananda, published in *The Complete Works*, which furnish many facts and clues leading to the establishment of other facts. (Whether envelopes of these letters, or some of them at least, exist, I do not know. Return addresses from envelopes, and post-marks, might provide information in addition to what is included in the letters themselves, saving entering into guesswork in cases where guesswork would not then be necessary.)

I make no claim that this work is at all complete. There are many gaps. Worse, there are suppositions and speculations. Even so, there is an advantage in commencing. To commence has the power of drawing peoples' attention to a project and can result in bringing forth previously unknown material, as well as correcting what has been written. I hope that this will happen. The content of the present chapter will be the subject of a lecture in French, which subsequently will be pub-

lished. Who knows what unsuspected souvenirs of Swamiji's sojourns in France remain hidden, ready to be called forth? It is even conceivable that a hitherto unknown photograph of Swamiji might miraculously come to light. This would be gratifying indeed, since the Editor of the new photo album of Swamiji, recently published by Advaita Ashrama, reports that there is no known picture of Swamiji taken when he was in France.

## II

Swami Vivekananda was in France four times—once in 1895, twice in 1896, and finally in 1900. The stay in 1900 lasted nearly three months. The other visits were short.

Having reached the United States in 1893 by way of the Pacific, Swamiji was in the West about two years before he was to see Europe. He spent the last part of 1895 in England, going there after a short visit to France. In his letter to E. T. Sturdy of August 2, 1895 from New York, Swamiji says he was to start for Europe on August 17, to be present at the marriage of a friend. The friend was Francis H. Leggett, who was coming to Paris to marry Mrs. Besse MacLeod Sturges.

According to Frances Leggett, Swamiji did start on this date, together with her father; the ship they took was the *Touraine*. I inquired of the Compagnie Générale Transatlantique, or French Line, which operated the *Touraine*, and found that the ship was quite a new one, having been put into service in 1891. The records of the company do not show when the *Touraine* reached France, but a spokesman for the line said the ship generally made the voyage in eight to ten days, landing at Le Havre. Swamiji's crossing must have been a favourable one, for in a letter written to Sturdy on August 26, Vivekananda states that he arrived 'the day be-

fore yesterday,' which would have been the 24th. From Le Havre one reached Paris by train in about two hours, arriving in Paris at the St. Lazare station.

The same letter to Sturdy gives as Swamiji's return address the Hôtel Continental, 3 rue de Castiglione. This was a very fine hotel. Rue Castiglione runs from the Place Vendôme to the Rue de Rivoli; the hotel faces the Tuileries Garden. One may guess that the groom-to-be stayed there too. Unfortunately, the hotel register of 1895 is not available for examination. It is believed that Mrs. Sturges and her sister, Joe MacLeod, stayed at the Hôtel de Hollande, 18 and 20 rue de la Paix, just a short distance away on the opposite side of the Place Vendôme. Frances Leggett says her parents stayed at the Hôtel de Hollande during their honeymoon, and there is a letter, again to Sturdy, dated September 5, 1895, giving as Swamiji's return address: Care of Miss MacLeod, Hotel Hollande, rue de la Paix.

The Continental Hotel is still in its old position, unchanged in appearance, one of the best hotels in Paris. The de Hollande went out of business in 1913 or 1914, office buildings today occupying its former site.

According to Frances Leggett, the wedding of her parents took place at the American Episcopal Church of the Holy Trinity in Paris on September 9, 1895. Since Swamiji was present as a witness, his name should appear on the church register. I inquired at the church, which is at 23, Avenue George V, and is now called the American Cathedral in Paris, and received the following reply from the Dean, the Very Reverend Sturgis L. Riddle:

We have looked up our old register of the last century and duly found registration of the wedding you mention between Francis Leggett and Besse MacLeod Sturges on September 9, 1895, but are sorry to advise that the signature

of Swami Vivekananda does not appear on the same. The marriage was no doubt just registered in those days without the signature of the witnesses.

There is in the *Reminiscences* a brief description of Swamiji in France in 1895 by Maud Stumm, a friend of the Leggetts. She recounts having seen Vivekananda in Mrs. Leggett's sitting room and tells something of the conversation. One may assume this meeting took place on September 9, after the wedding, since before that day Mrs. Leggett was Mrs. Sturges; and Swami Vivekananda went to London the following day, the 10th. The sitting room must refer to the sitting room of the Hôtel de Hollande suite; certainly not to the salon at 6 Place des Etats-Unis, which belongs to 1900 only, as will be seen later.

Swamiji's letter of September 9 to Alasinga Perumal, his Madras friend, establishes the date of his going to London. During the next two and a half months he was in England. During this period he gave many lectures and met, among others, Margaret Noble, eventually Sister Nivedita. He left for the United States on Wednesday, November 27, 1895, on the R.M.S. *Brittanic*, arriving in New York Friday, December 6. Swamiji in one letter describes the crossing as 'rough and tedious'; in another letter as 'the most disastrous voyage I ever had'.

Swamiji's second trip to Europe occurred the next spring. He left the United States for England on April 15, 1896, apparently passing through Ireland *en route* to London. He stayed in England until July, when he left for a two-month trip on the Continent. He crossed from Dover to Calais, spending the first night in Paris. He had written to Dr. Nanjunda Rao on July 14th that he was going to Switzerland the following Sunday. In 1896 the 14th was a Tuesday. Hence Swamiji must have left for the Continent and presumably reached

Paris on Sunday, the 19th of July, 1896.

Thence he travelled to Geneva, Lucerne, and other places in Switzerland; Heidelberg, Coblenz, Cologne, Berlin, Kiel, and Hamburg in Germany; and then via Amsterdam back to England. He was back in London on September 17, on which date he wrote to Mary Hale from Wimbledon. He did not visit Germany again after that one visit; the descriptions of Germany, and the interesting comparisons he made between Germany and France in his 'Memoirs of European Travel,' written four years later, were based on his 1896 observations.

Swamiji now stayed in London (not returning to America) until December 16. Then he went via Dover and Calais through France and across the Alps to Milan. He visited Pisa. He was in Florence on December 20, and he spent Christmas week in Rome. He left Naples for India on December 30, arriving in Colombo, Ceylon, on January 15, 1897.

Thus we find that Swamiji was in France about two weeks in 1895; and twice in 1896 for only a day or so each time while passing through the country.

Swami Vivekananda probably saw France in July of 1899, but this does not count as a visit, because the ship taking him from India to England merely called at Marseilles as it had called at Aden and at Naples. He reached London on this his second and final trip to the West, on July 31.

After staying briefly in England, Swamiji went on to the United States, reaching there in late August. He spent the autumn in and around New Year, then went to California in November, where he spent the winter. Crossing the country again in the late spring of 1900, he left the United States forever in the latter part of July.

Two letters establish the date of Swamiji's departure for France in the summer of 1900. One to Tantine, (who

was already in Paris), written from New York on July 24, says he is sailing on 'Thursday next' on the *Champagne*. (The ship was named, not for the wine, but for a section of France.) In a letter to Swami Turiyananda, written on the 25th, Swamiji says he is leaving the next day. Since in 1900 July 26 was a Thursday, we may be sure that July 26th was the day Swamiji sailed for France.

The Compagnie Général Transatlantique furnished a photograph of the *Champagne* and gave some information about her. The *Champagne* was one of four ships put into service in 1886 to inaugurate, according to a spokesman for the steamship line, postal service of 'great quickness' across the north Atlantic. The *Champagne* was 155 metres (about 500 feet) long. She had four masts for sails and two chimneys for the engines, up to 1900, in which year the masts were reduced to two, steam power having proved in the meantime to be perfectly dependable. The steamship people said the *Champagne* should have reached Le Havre eight to ten days after having left New York.

Frances Leggett has given us the original of a telegram, which establishes the date of Swamiji's arrival in France in 1900. It was sent from Le Havre to 'Mme Leggett, 6 Place des Etats-Unis,' and is dated August 3: 'ARRIVE A HUIT HRES STLAZARE =VIVEKANANDA.' Swamiji and the other passengers must have had to get up very early that morning to disembark, go through entrance formalities, get themselves and all the baggage into the boat train, make a two-hour rail journey, and arrive at the St. Lazare station, Paris, by 8:00 A.M. I am not unaware of the possibility that 8:00 P.M. was meant. If so, it is curious that this was not stated, since time schedules in Europe are usually given on a 24-hour basis, 8:00 P.M. generally being written 20:00 o'clock.

We know that Swamiji left France, on the commencement of his slow return to India by way of Constantinople and Egypt, on October 24, 1900. Since he arrived in France on the 3rd of August, he was in France in 1900 a total of 83 days. It is possible from clues in the letters and from new material to know something of what he did on about a quarter of those days. It is possible in addition to deter-

mine when he went to Perros-Guirec—he went twice—and how long he stayed there.

A calendar of August, September, and October, 1900, will be useful in following descriptions I have prepared of Swamiji's activities during those months. Those dates on which something of Swamiji's doings are known or can logically be inferred are marked with asterisks :

	S	M	T	W	T	F	S	
1900	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	July
	29	30	31					
				1	2	3*	4*	.....
	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	
	12	13*	14*	15	16	17	18	August
	19	20	21	22	23	24*	25*	
	26	27	28*	29	30	31*		
							1*	
	2	3*	4	5	6	7*	8	
	9	10*	11*	12	13*	14	15	September
	16	17*	18	19	20	21	22*	
	23	24	25	26	27	28	29*	
	30*							
		1	2	3	4	5	6	
	7	8*	9	10	11	12	13	
	14*	15*	16	17	18	19	20	October
	21	22	23*	24*	25	26	27	
	28	29	30	31				
					1	2	3	November

*Friday, August 3.* This is the day on which Swamiji arrived in France. Joe MacLeod writes on the 4th that Vivekananda stayed at Gerald's 'last night.' Gerald was Gerald Nobel, whom Frances Leggett identifies as follows: 'Gerald Nobel, a bachelor then, and an old family friend, was a resident of Paris; he was engaged in industry and was also of excep-

tional cultivation and intelligence. He remembered Swamiji well when I wrote to him when he was nearly ninety.' Why Vivekananda did not go directly to 6 Place des Etats-Unis we have no way of knowing. In any case, he would naturally have gone to see the Leggetts as soon as possible, and in fact presented himself at their house at 9:00 the next morning. Joe Mac-

Leod immediately wrote the good news of Swamiji's safe arrival to Sara Bull at Perros-Guirec.

*Saturday, August 4.* Frances Leggett has supplied the text of a letter from Joe MacLeod, dated August 4, 1900 :

Dearest II,

Swamiji arrived at 9 looking like a boy, he has lost 30 pounds and is vigorous. The Goddesses come to lunch today to meet him. Fun?

He stayed at Gerald's last night, but comes to us today—having the nursery. He, Gerald, Margot, and I are to dine on the Eiffel Tower....

Swami asked immediately after the 'Sacred Cow of India'. He thinks he would like to go to Lady Cunard's & he and I may run over to Nevill Holt to stay a few days.

This is a line to tell you of our Prophet's well-being.

Lovingly  
JoJo.

There is a P.S. in Vivekananda's writing :

Hello—Sacred Cow! What are you doing in the forest; meditating or counting how many palpitations Mrs. Brigg's heart gets a day?

We learn a great deal from this letter.

First of all, we know from it that Swamiji went on that day to 6 Place des Etats-Unis. As to how many times he was in that house, and particularly as to how many times he spent the night there, we have no exact information. Swamiji himself refers to the 'daily reunion' of distinguished people, which suggests he was there frequently. Joe MacLeod says in her memories, printed in the *Reminiscences* :

Later in 1900 my sister and Mr. Leggett took a house in Paris for the Expo-

sition. We went over in June, and Swami followed in August. He stayed some weeks with us until he went to stay with Mr. Gerald Nobel, a bachelor.... We entertained largely during these six months, Swami coming nearly every day to luncheon.

I had supposed that the Leggetts owned the house at 6 Place des Etats-Unis and had thought that by checking old deeds it would be possible to establish with certainty that the present Number 6 is indeed the Number 6 of 1900. Frances Leggett states, however, that the house was rented only, for six months, and this is borne out by Tantine's use of the word 'took' above.

It is certain that Swamiji did not stay at 6 Place des Etats-Unis all the time he was in France in 1900. We know he stayed with Gerald Nobel and with Jules Bois, and he was at Sara Bull's house in Brittany two weeks certainly and perhaps nearly three weeks altogether. The reason the Place des Etats-Unis address is given on most of the letters he wrote during his Paris stay is that Swamiji undoubtedly used the house as his mailing address, even when he was staying in other places.

Joe MacLeod says that Swamiji was to occupy the nursery. In regard to this, Frances Leggett has explained: 'I, aged 3½, had been sent with my governess to the seaside in England; hence Swami could sleep in my nursery.' (This little girl that Swamiji displaced is the subject of a most charming letter from Swamiji. The letter is to Francis H. Leggett, dated December 13, 1896, congratulating him on the birth of his daughter Frances: 'So Gopāl has taken the female form!... I wish I could have come to America now if only to fulfil the form "the sages of the East bringing presents to the Western baby."')

It is interesting to note that Joe MacLeod refers to Swamiji as being vigorous,

looking like a boy, and having lost thirty pounds. We see that Swamiji drew an unnecessarily unflattering picture of himself in the 'cranks' letter (if indeed it is he who is pictured in that letter) when he spoke of himself as being almost round.

'Dearest II' appears to have been a pet name Joe MacLeod used for Sara Bull, of the moment. Frances Leggett is not able to identify the 'goddesses'. Swamiji often called Mrs. Bull Sacred Cow; and evidently he thought the seaside resort where she was staying was forest. Frances Leggett explains further: 'Nevill Holt is the name of the house in Leicestershire, England, of Sir Bache Cunard, husband of Maud Cunard, later celebrated London hostess, she was a friend of my parents and knew Vivekananda.' Who Mrs. Briggs was, I have not been able to find out.

On August 4th Swamiji presumably had his first view of the Exposition, which occupied a considerable area centering on the Eiffel Tower. According to reports, the Exposition Universelle Internationale of 1900 was a genuinely marvellous and exciting spectacle. We assume Vivekananda, Joe MacLeod, Nivedita, and Gerald Nobel went there in the afternoon, making a round of the exhibits. As the late July twilight gave way to evening, the interesting foursome went up to the celebrated Restaurant Russe on the first landing of the Tower to dine. Having dinner on the Eiffel Tower was 'the thing to do' in 1900. One could look down on the lights and movement from nearly two hundred feet up.

Nivedita was in Paris working with Professor Geddes. Shortly after this she went to stay with Sara Bull for several weeks.

*Monday, August 13.* On this date Swamiji wrote to Swami Turiyananda, who was then heading the Vedānta work in northern California. He gives 6 Place

des Etats-Unis as his address; but whether he was staying there is not known. He speaks of shortly starting for England—perhaps, we may assume, to visit Lady Cunard. As we know, he did not go. Such 'changeableness' or 'uncertainty' as to what he was going to do is often seen in Vivekananda and is very apparent from a reading of his letters. It is said that such 'indefiniteness' is characteristic of a holy man. He keeps his options open while waiting for the Lord's will to be known.

*Tuesday, Aug. 14.* *The Complete Works*, Vol. VIII includes a letter of this date to John Fox at Dorchester, Massachusetts, with the return address: Boulevard Hans Swan, Paris. This must surely be Boulevard Haussmann, one of the important avenues of Paris, not a great distance from the Leggett house. I have not been able to clear up the question as to who lived there or what was the address on Boulevard Haussmann. Perhaps this was the place of Gerald Nobel. Frances Leggett says Gerald Nobel occupied a small apartment, but she does not know where it was located. A search of the directories of this period at the Bibliothèque Nationale does not reveal the name or address of Gerald Nobel. It was certainly not the residence of Jules Bois, whom Swamiji visited for the first time on August 31.

*Friday, August 24.* Frances Leggett has supplied the text of a card of invitation to a lecture given by Swami Vivekananda at 6 Place des Etats-Unis on Friday, August 24:

Vous êtes invités, vous et vos amis, à entendre un savant distingué, le Swami Vivekananda, qui se propose d'exposer la religion et la philosophie des Hindous, vendredi prochaine 24 aout à quatre

heures, dans les salons de M. Leggett, 6 Place des Etats-Unis, Paris.

Following is a translation :

You are invited, you and your friends, to hear a distinguished scholar, Swami Vivekananda, who plans to explain Hindu religion and philosophy, this coming Friday, August 24, at 4:00 o'clock, at the house of Mr. Leggett, 6 Place des Etats-Unis, Paris.

Apparently one of the persons who attended this lecture was Hyacinthe Loyson. There is a letter from Hyacinthe Loyson dated August 26 (which I shall reproduce in a later chapter) referring to some points in the remarks made by Swami Vivekananda in the lecture.

*Saturday, August 25.* On this day Swamiji wrote a letter to Nivedita, who was at Perros-Guirec. He gives as his return address 6 Place des Etats-Unis. The letter is in parts severe in tone; Swamiji evinces worry over the rigidity of some of Nivedita's opinions. It is likely Nivedita received the letter on Monday, the 27th, and sent off an immediate reply, which letter seems to have reached Swamiji on Tuesday the 28th. At least on that day he again wrote Nivedita, it may be presumed in response to what she had written him. If this interchange took place as we have here guessed it did, we may congratulate the French postal system for the speed with which letter went and came in 1900, a distance of some three hundred miles.

*Tuesday, August 28.* Swamiji's letter of this date to Nivedita is simply headed 'Paris'. It includes two wonderful passages: 'All our efforts are but to stave off for a season the great climax—death' and 'when the dream is finished and we have left the stage, we will have a hearty laugh at all this—of this I am sure'.

*Friday, August 31.* In a letter to Swami Turiyananda dated September 1, Swamiji says that 'yesterday' he went to see the house of 'the gentleman with whom I shall stay'. This was Jules Bois. He describes the flat as being on the fifth floor, with no elevator (still not unusual in France), filled with books, and facing a park.

*Saturday, September 1.* The letter written to Swami Turiyananda on this date gives 6 Place des Etats-Unis as the return address. The letter is optimistic in tone, Swamiji saying that he plans to stay with the French to improve his knowledge of the French language.

*Monday, September 3.* This is the day the Congress opened and is the day the 'cranks' letter was written. One gains the impression that the 'cranks' letter was written late in the evening—the congress of cranks was in 'this' house—from 6 Place des Etats-Unis.

Frances Leggett has supplied the texts of two letters from William James, which may be appropriately included here. Parts of them have already been reproduced in *Vedanta and the West*, November-December, 1953. They do not so much shed light on Swamiji in France as show the delightful sense of humour of Professor James and his admiration for Swamiji:

Ostend August 2nd (1900)

Dear Mrs. Bull,

As usual I knocked under! You, Mrs. Leggett and my wife all pulling together were too many for me, especially as Mrs. Leggett's pressure came in the shape of an invitation to her house. So we left Paris; and after two days followed the wonderful Mrs. Melton here. To my great delight, she had pronounced me well after 4 treatments, so I am free again and expecting to go to England tomorrow with my wife to pick up our little girl (whose vacation

has just begun) and eventually to stay sometime at my brother's at Rye. I will report of my progress in a fortnight to Miss MacLeod—so far there is no noticeable alteration in me, except the excoriations with which I am covered, making me look like an American flag, and today begetting a slight feverishness. If it cures me or improves me I shall make acknowledgements. If no, I shall at least have had a most entertaining and profitable social time. Mrs. Melton herself is worth the price of admission to anything.

I thank you heartily, in any event, dear Mrs. Bull, for caring enough for my poor carcass to take the trouble you did and subject yourself to my somewhat rude rebuffs. I know you have forgiven me already....

I have just been reading some of Vivekananda's Addresses in England, which I had not seen. That man is simply a wonder for oratorical power. As for the doctrine of the One, I began to have some talk with that most interesting Miss Nobel about it, but it was cut short, and I confess that my difficulties have never yet been cleared up. But the Swami is an honour to humanity, in any case....

With best regards from both of us, I am always truly yours,

Wm. James.

Hotel du Littoral  
Ostend

August 8th (1900)

Dear Miss MacLeod,

Will you kindly send me Prof. Geddes's address? I hope the Swami arrived safely, and is better than you feared, in health. If it is cardiac asthma, Nauheim is the place! I am sending back to you his addresses, all but 4; The real & the apparent Man; Māyā & Freedom; Practical Vedānta, part IV. These I keep a while longer, and I wish I might get hold of the first 3 parts

of Practical Vedānta. Has the Swami my books? It has made me feel badly that I didn't give him my Psychology when he was in America; and if he would like aught of mine, I will now have it sent to him, if you can provide me with an address which will 'keep' a while. I am perhaps unduly shy about obtruding my writings on people...

The wife sends best regards and so do I.

Sincerely yours,

Wm. James.

*Friday, September 7.* The Congress commenced on Monday, September 3 and closed on Saturday, September 8. The opening and closing sessions were held at the Palais des Congrès on the Exposition grounds. On Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday, there were sectional meetings held morning and afternoon in rooms of the Sorbonne. The published Proceedings of the Congress show that Swamiji's two talks were given in one of these sectional meetings at the Sorbonne on the morning of Friday, September 7. Whether he attended the opening and closing sessions and any sectional meetings other than that of Friday morning I do not know.

*Monday, September 10.* We know from two letters of Alberta Sturges that there was a dinner, attended by Swamiji, at 6 Place des Etats-Unis on the evening of the 10th. Alberta's descriptions are graphic. Both letters are dated the 11th, from Number 6. The first is to Tantine, who was at Perros-Guirec:

Dearest Tante,

Swami was in a splendid mood last night and our little dinner was consequently a great success. He is *dreadfully* sorry you invited them up there, says he is nervous and so is Mrs. Bull, that he enjoyed seeing Paris, was meeting all the



artists and thinkers, Rodin, etc., and just in the spirit of the French tongue and mind. Now he won't be able to learn French, that had you asked *him* he would have refused, but that Bois (being a poor man) naturally jumped at the idea so that now it is too late to regret. I am sorry too for he is doing good work and is very well, jolly as could be last night. But then doubtless something good will come of it.....

Swami will go to Brittany next Monday, as Thursday he goes to visit a French painter of note in the country. I will give him the 100 francs and send the carriage for him....

This is an intriguing letter. The 'them' who were invited to Perros-Guirec were apparently Swamiji and Jules Bois. Alberta evinces some pique at the prospect of losing Swamiji from her salon. The letter suggests that Bois was a social climber, or an opportunist. There is considerable other evidence to support this theory, known from events in Bois' later life. Bois was apparently the 'man friend' Nivedita mentions as having been with Vivekananda, in her well-known description, in *The Master as I Saw Him*, of her parting with her *guru* at Perros-Guirec.

The second letter from Alberta is to her mother, who was still in Germany:

Last night we had a lovely time. The dinner went off most successfully. I put Princess Doria on my right, then Swami, Lady Anglesey at the foot of the table and between us on my left the Duke of Newcastle. Swami was in a gala mood and I could see the Princess was radiant at her brother's sympathy. The Duke asked Swami at dinner quite a number of interesting questions and immediately made Swami promise to call. He, Swami, spent the night here and I drove him home this morning....

Frances Leggett explains that Princess Doria and the Duke of Newcastle were brother and sister. I have made no further enquiries as to who they were, or who Lady Anglesey was.

*The Complete Works*, Vol. VI includes a letter (actually it was a postcard) from Swamiji to Alberta Sturges, dated Sept. 10 (characteristically giving 6 Place des Etats-Unis as the return address) which reads as follows:

Dear Alberta,

I am surely coming this evening and of course will be very glad to meet the princess and her brother. But if it is too late to find my way out here, you will have to find a place for me to sleep in the house.

That Swamiji slept in the house we know from Alberta's letter of the next day.

*Tuesday, September 11.* We know that Swamiji was driven 'home' by Alberta on this day. Probably to the flat of Jules Bois which, being at the southern edge of Paris, a considerable distance from the Place des Etats-Unis, would certainly qualify to be described as 'out here'.

*Thursday, September 13.* This is the day Swamiji was scheduled to go to the country in the Leggett's carriage to see a 'celebrated French painter'. It is too bad that Alberta was not explicit as to who he was. That Swamiji met Auguste Rodin—often called the greatest sculptor of the century—is interesting.

*Monday, September 17.* This is the day that Swamiji was scheduled to go to Brittany. The trip by train probably took about six to eight hours; one left Paris from the Montparnasse station.

Perros-Guirec is on the English channel about six miles from Lannion. Although

now Perros-Guirec has about the same population as Lannion—about six or seven thousand—in 1900 Lannion was the big town and Perros-Guirec a small village. The train went no farther than Lannion. One had to go the rest of the way by carriage. The mail for Perros-Guirec went to the Lannion post office.

The *Guide Bleu* to France gives the following description of Perros-Guirec: 'A fishing port and coastal trading station, very important seaside resort, situated on a rocky peninsula at an altitude of 210 feet, two superb beaches.'

Frances Leggett has informed us that Sara Bull's address was :

Perros-Guirec  
Près Lannion  
Côtes du Nord

and letters addressed to people other than Sara Bull bore the additional line: Aux soins de Mme Bull. 'Près' means 'near.' Côtes du Nord is the name of the Département (the French equivalent of state or county) in which Lannion and Perros-Guirec are located. 'Aux soins de' means 'In care of'.

Frances Leggett says that her mother referred to Sara Bull's place as a 'pretty house with a walled garden'. It is to be hoped that we shall be able to identify the house, if it is still standing.

*Saturday, September 22.* On this date Swamiji wrote a poem for Alberta's twenty-third birthday, which was September 17, and enclosed it with a letter headed 'Perros-Guirec'. The poem wishes Alberta many wonderful qualities of character. Swamiji describes the poem as 'not good, but it has all my love. I am sure therefore you will like it'. If Alberta was disappointed in Swamiji for having left Paris, surely such a tender remembrance was bound to mollify her.

There is a letter to Swami Turiyananda starting, 'Now I am staying on the coast of France'. The text reproduced in *The Complete Works* carries no date, but it surely must have been written between September 17 and September 29. It gives as Swamiji's return address 6 Place des Etats-Unis.

*Saturday, September 29.* September 29 is the feast day of the Archangel Michael, who is very popular in France. On this day Swamiji visited Mont Saint Michel, the great abbey built on a tiny island a mile off the coast of Normandy. Tradition has it that this Benedictine monastery was founded in the year 708 according to directions received from the Archangel Michael. Adorers of Saint Michael have made pilgrimages to the abbey for centuries, and still do. Nivedita says in *The Master as I Saw Him* that one of the party who visited Mont Saint Michel with Vivekananda 'and happened to stand next to him looking at the dungeon cages for mediaeval prisoners [at times the abbey served as a fortress] was startled to hear him say, under his breath, "What a wonderful place for meditation."'

Mont Saint Michel is about seventy-five miles from Perros-Guirec. Whether Swamiji and party went there from Perros-Guirec and came back in one day, or whether they stopped off there on the return to Paris from Brittany I do not know. I favour the latter as being more likely.

*Sunday, September 30.* In any case there is circumstantial evidence to suggest that Swamiji returned to Paris on this, the last day of September. In a letter to Swami Turiyananda, dated simply September, 1900, Swamiji speaks of his intention to start on a tour of Constantinople. This project has been in the mind of Joe MacLeod for some time. Apparently she

and Swamiji determined to go ahead with the plan while they were both at Sara Bull's house. The letter to Swami Turiyananda adds that Swamiji would be leaving 'this place' before Swami Turiyananda's reply could come. The letter also states that Nivedita had gone back to England. In *The Master as I Saw Him* Nivedita says that in September of 1900 she spent a 'fortnight' as Swamiji's fellow guest with American friends in Brittany. Since the Swami was in Normandy on the 29th, Nivedita had been with him in Perros-Guirec, and the letter seems to have been written from Paris, if the September dating is correct Swamiji must have gone back to Paris on the 30th and written the letter the same day.

*Monday, October 8.* In the July, 1949, issue of *Prabuddha Bharata* there appeared a letter from Jules Bois to 'Mademoiselle' at Lannion, dated 'Monday'. It states that he and Vivekananda were planning to return to Lannion for four days, going by train and starting the following Monday. I have concluded that the letter was written on the 8th of October as the only possible Monday. On the 1st Swamiji and Bois had hardly got back from Brittany, and if the letter was written on the 15th there would not have been four days after the following Monday for the trip to Lannion to occur before Swamiji's departure from France on Wednesday, October 24th.

Jules Bois ended the letter by saying he was handing his pen to Swamiji who would add a note. Swamiji writes briefly in a very simple 'English-like' French, concluding: 'My letter is funny, isn't it? But it is my first attempt.'

The letter is published in translation only in *The Complete Works*. It is dated simply October, 1900, and characteristically gives 6 Place des Etats-Unis as the return address. But that Swamiji was staying with Jules Bois is certain from the fact that he

says: 'I find life here with Mr. Bois very satisfactory.'

Frances Leggett says that 'Mademoiselle' was surely Joe MacLeod.

*Sunday, October 14.* On this day Swamiji wrote to Sister Christine. Although he gives as his return address 6 Place des Etats-Unis, he says he is staying with a 'famous French writer, M. Jules Bois'. It is interesting that in this letter he says he is going to Constantinople and Egypt, then adds: 'On our way back we shall visit Venice.' He speaks of the possibility of giving lectures in Paris 'after my return'.

*Monday, October 15.* If I have calculated correctly the date of Jules Bois' letter of 'Monday' and if Jules Bois and Swamiji kept to the plan that letter visualized, on October 15 the two of them went back to Brittany for four days. They must have returned to Paris about Friday, October 19, or Saturday, October 20.

*Tuesday, October 23.* In his 'Memoirs of European Travel' Swamiji writes: 'Today is the 23rd of October; tomorrow evening I am to take leave of Paris. This year Paris is a centre of the civilized world. ... Everything on earth has an end. Once again I took a round over the Paris Exhibition today—this accumulated mass of dazzling ideas, like lightning held steady as it were, this unique assemblage of celestial panorama on earth.' ('Memoirs' were originally written in Bengali for the *Udbodhan* magazine. The words we read are a translator's.)

*Wednesday, October 24.* On the evening of the 24th Swami Vivekananda left Paris—perhaps a bit regretfully?—never to return. With him were Hyacinthe Loyson

and his wife, Jules Bois, Joe MacLeod and Mme Emma Calvé. The party visited Vienna, Constantinople, Athens, Cairo. From Egypt Swamiji took a steamer bound for India. He reached Belur Math late in the evening of December 9, 1900.

I should like to conclude this chapter by saying that we found that the present 6 Place des Etats-Unis is certainly the 6 Place des Etats-Unis of 1900.

Study at the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris provided the following information. Two hundred years ago the area that is now the park was the site of reservoirs into which water was pumped from the Seine to give a supply of water for the surrounding area. About a hundred years ago this arrangement was discontinued, and eventually the present park in the centre of the Place took the place of the reservoirs. In 1887 the Place was given its present name, because the United States embassy had been for a long time in the vicinity.

In recent years various monuments have been erected in the park, referring to persons and events having to do with America. At the east end there is a statuary group dedicated to American volunteers who gave their lives to help France in the war of 1914-1918. At the west end is a monument of Lafayette and Washington, by the eminent French sculptor Frédéric Bartholdi. There is even a bust of an American dentist, Horace Wells, who, the

plaque says, innovated surgical anaesthesia.

Research in old directories at the Bibliothèque Nationale revealed the fact that the owner of 6 Place des Etats-Unis in 1900 was a family named de Villamil, whose actual residence was at Number 15 on the nearby Avenue d'Iéna. The house was occupied from 1896 to 1901 by a Madame Felipe de Yturbe, née de Idaroff. Who these people were I do not know, nor have I as yet established a definite link between either of them and Francis H. Leggett. Frances Leggett says: 'My father leased the Paris house through the offices of a friend, Mr. Keifer, who lived in Paris.' Presumably the house was sublet, furnished and staffed, from Mme Yturbe.

It has been definitely established that the numbering on the north side of the Place des Etats-Unis has not changed since considerably before 1900. Since the present house is manifestly pre-1900, we may be confident that the Number 6 of today is equally the number 6 of 1900.

The Centre Védantique Ramakrichna is searching for a suitable means of commemoration—not, of course, to honour the house, but to memorialize Swami Vivekananda's stay there, the wonderful things that were thought and said there, the extraordinary hosts and guests that spent some time there in the enchanted presence of a knower of God.

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## AN EARLY NON-OFFICIAL EXPERIMENT IN COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT IN INDIA

SWAMI LOKESWARANANDA

Way back in the nineties of the last century, a young Hindu monk was on his way to Murshidabad, once seat of Moslem rule in Bengal, Bihar and Orissa. He was a great

traveller, having covered when he was barely twenty-two or so, most of India and even parts of Tibet, alone, penniless and without knowing anybody in the places he visited.

His wanderlust had once landed him in a British gaol and, on two occasions at least, brought him face to face with death. In spite of his extensive tours lasting over a dozen years, his restless spirit was not satisfied and he was now planning to visit Central Asia. But before embarking on this journey he had decided to 'do' Bengal, his home State, starting with Murshidabad. He travelled on foot most of the way, partly by preference and partly by force of circumstances, for being a monk, how could he afford to travel otherwise? Leaving behind Navadwip, Bengal's traditional seat of Sanskrit learning, as he trekked through the small pathetic villages such as one comes across in this part of Bengal even today, he saw increasing signs of distress on all sides. He had very little money with him, but whatever he had he changed into small coins and went on distributing the same to the starving children that besieged him for help on the way. He came to hear that an officer had arrived to give relief to those who were in distress. He went to see him in order to impress on him the gravity of the situation as he had seen it during his walking tour, but on the way he found a young man, probably a petty police official, abusing a poor villager for no offence of his. The monk strongly protested against this. The young man, enraged that he should thus be admonished by a stranger who was no better than a wandering monk, had him taken to the police station where the officer-in-charge threatened the monk with arrest. The monk calmly replied that he deemed it his duty to interfere where he thought injustice was being done to an innocent person who was also poor and if this was an offence in the eye of law he was ready to court arrest. He left the police station telling the officer where his next halt was going to be, so that if he so chose, he might go and arrest him there.

After this brush with the police he had

not gone far when he came upon a small Moslem girl in a market-place who was crying disconsolately. On questioning her, he gathered that she had come to draw water in the only earthen pitcher that her family possessed, but somehow or other, that pitcher had broken, and knowing that there was no money in the family to buy a second pitcher she did not know how to face up to her mother who she knew for certain would be very angry with her. To comfort the girl the monk who had on him then only a quarter-rupee, bought the girl an earthen pitcher. This was a signal to draw to the spot immediately a host of famished children who, as it were, appeared from nowhere and who, as soon as they appeared, began to clamour for food. The monk spent the balance of the money in purchasing some puffed rice for them.

As the monk went along, he came across several cases of cholera which, unfortunately, had broken out in an epidemic form amongst the poor sections of the people due probably to eating inedible roots and grains from hunger. There was one case in particular which made it impossible for him to leave the place without doing something about it—the case of a destitute ninety-year old widow lying in a small hut with the mess she had made over the days, alone, without medicine, without anyone to look after her. She was in her last gasps when this young monk arrived, and thanks to his nursing lasting for days the woman slowly recovered. Almost the first thing she said when she was able to speak was, 'Child, you must have been my son in one of my previous births.' To this, the monk replied, 'Why, mother, in a previous birth? I'm your son in this very birth.'

As the young monk proceeded, he saw more and more signs of distress, and he realized that the situation was so grave that it was impossible for him, a penniless, wandering monk, to try to mitigate the sufferings of

the people. He also felt that he had already wasted much valuable time trying to give relief to a few individuals and instead of wasting time thus, he should now press on with his journey so that he could finish Bengal soon and then undertake the bigger journey that he had decided to make. But he could not leave the place, for every time he tried to do so he felt weak in the limbs and he also heard—at least, he thought he heard, a voice telling him that he must not leave the place but stay on to serve the people. He accepted this as a will of God, though he did not know how exactly he could give relief to the people, being only a poor monk. He wrote to several friends giving an account of the misery he had seen among the people and asking if they could suggest any means by which some relief could be given to the distressed people. Everybody expressed his inability to do anything in the matter.

Meanwhile, word had got around in the villages about the unusual monk who, unlike others that people knew of, had nursed cholera patients, fed hungry children by denying food to himself, risked police wrath in protecting the innocent and was now contemplating organizing relief for the distressed. People were naturally curious to know who the monk was, where he came from and what Order of monks he belonged to. The monk himself was most reticent to disclose his identity or say anything about himself, but the letters that he had been receiving through the post office, gave him away and the people were agreeably surprised when they discovered that the monk was Swami Akhandananda, a brother disciple of the great Swami Vivekananda. If the Swami had already evoked their respect and admiration, they were now overwhelmed.

While Swami Akhandananda was worrying about this problem of how to give relief to the famine-stricken people of Murshid-

abad without any glimmer of hope from any quarter about getting help or encouragement, Swami Vivekananda was in Darjeeling trying to recoup his broken health. When, returning to Calcutta, he came to know how Swami Akhandananda, despite every discouragement, had been doggedly pursuing the task of giving relief to the famine-stricken people of Murshidabad, he was overjoyed. At once, he sent him besides a small sum, a note in which he said, 'Go ahead with your work, I promise to give you whatever money you require.' The work formally began on May 15, 1897, at Mahula, a village sixteen miles from Murshidabad.

As the work went on, contributions began to arrive from many places and some money came even from far-off Madras. Swami Akhandananda was now happy that he was able to give help to many families covering a wide area and he never knew a moment's rest, for he was constantly moving from village to village enquiring about the needs of the people and making sure that they had the help that they needed. Besides distributing food grains to the needy families, he made also nursing arrangements for patients suffering from cholera, for, unfortunately, the epidemic was raging unabated and was also exacting a heavy toll of life. In many cases, he himself did the nursing.

The work lasted for several months and Swami Akhandananda managed it with such efficiency that the intelligentsia of the district were greatly impressed, specially the District Magistrate, a British officer, who called personally to thank him for his magnificent work. But it was the poorer sections of the people who loved him most, for they found in him one who understood their problems better than anyone they had known before and who was also capable of doing something practical to solve those problems. He was to them no longer one who had come only temporarily and would

go away as soon as their distress was over, but one whom they considered as one of them, having, as it were, his roots in the soil. So complete indeed was his acceptance by the people that he soon earned the appellation 'Bābā' (father) a term they gave him from the depths of their heart as a mark of their love, affection and respect. He was indeed the 'father' of the community.

## II

It was never the intention of Swami Akhandananda to start any permanent centre in the area, but it so happened that when he had finished the relief work he found himself saddled with the care of a few orphan children. There was no home to which he could turn them over and he found, if only for their sake, he should start one. He wrote to Swami Vivekananda seeking his permission which the latter promptly gave, promising him also monetary help as and when necessary. An additional reason and a more important reason at that, for which Swami Akhandananda was anxious to start a permanent centre in the area was that he had felt that there were bound to be recurring visitations from cholera and famine so long as the conditions in the villages remained what they were. He wanted to start as an experimental measure an institution which would serve as a model to the villagers around so that they might not look up to any outside agency for the solution of the problems that plagued them but would attack them themselves and also solve them entirely through their own efforts. He was convinced from what he had observed during his extensive travels on foot through Indian villages, that unless India's rural economy which had been shattered by foreign rule, was rehabilitated, there could be no salvation for India. The basic problems of the villages, as he saw them, were problems of agri-

culture, education and health, and no plan for India's regeneration had any chance of success unless it took due account of these problems and also made adequate provisions for their solution. Again, of these problems, agriculture was the one to which top priority must be given, for, as it came to be, people were famished and, first and foremost, they must have enough to eat. He had discussed his plans with Swami Vivekananda who was full of enthusiasm for what he was trying to do as the following letter which Sister Nivedita (who, by the way, used to call him 'Famine Swami') wrote to Swami Akhandananda on 10.8.99, shortly after her arrival in London accompanied by her Master, Swami Vivekananda and Swami Turiyananda:

'All through the voyage I have been intending to write to you and tell you how often and how Swamiji has spoken of you, for the way in which you have struggled to do and carry out the ideas that we have all received. He seems to place great confidence in you—and to approve of all your efforts in a very special way ...'

So he started his centre which was nothing but an orphanage to begin with, having orphans he had picked up from the streets or the police had sent to him. He had no money, no workers, no permanent site for his centre, but he enjoyed the goodwill and affection of everybody, specially the common man, whose heart he had won by the way he treated and cared for those who occupied the lowest position in the social hierarchy. His greatest assets were, however, his orphans. Small tots though they were, they looked after one another and did their utmost to lighten his burdens, for even to them it was clear that he was wearing himself out. One of them, a sweet little one, promised that when he grew up he would look after him and see that he had the food and rest that he so much needed, but death claimed him not

long thereafter. Although there was good will for his work from all sections of the community including even the British officials and merchants, he always had difficulty in making both ends meet, but he bore his privations most cheerfully, for when he looked at the children and saw them bustling about, happy, and completely unaware of the troubles he was having feeding them but trusting that so long as their 'father' was there, they had nothing to worry about, he felt joy welling up within him.

For the first few years, he and his children had to shift from one village to another, depending upon where they were able to get free accommodation but at last, he had the offer, on lease, of a seventeen-acre plot of land in the village called Sargachhi, one hundred miles from Calcutta and six miles from Berhampore, from a Moslem gentleman and this he gladly accepted. Others might have thought that he had made a very rash choice, for the land was as arid as one could imagine and the only thing that could possibly grow on its sandy soil was brushwood. Explaining why he settled for the land, he said that as soon as he set his foot on it he felt a thrill passing through his body, which made him decide that it was God's will that he should have his centre sited on it. After he had taken possession of the land, he set about putting up a few mud huts thatched with brushwood with which his land was choking, and when they were ready for use he moved in with the children.

### III

He had long realized that the ideal that each village should have before it was that it should function as a self-sustaining economic unit and this might be possible if only it became self-sufficient in food and had cottage industries, to boost, to supplement, its earnings from agriculture. But he had noticed, during the period that he had been in the district, that most of its

land remained fallow during the year except that mulberry plants grew in a few places to supply food to the silk-worms which many people reared; even in places where the land was good and well-irrigated, only one crop of food grains was raised, and naturally, the district chronically suffered from food shortage or, as indeed was the case, shortage of every useful commodity. From the talks that he had had with the people he had found that the plea that was usually put forward was that the soil was bad, there were no irrigation facilities and that any labour that they spent trying to improve the land or grow anything on it was sheer waste. He did not argue with the people, for he felt that there was much substance in what they said, but, knowing as he did that India's salvation lay only through improved agricultural practices, he decided that he would make experiments with farming and try to demonstrate that in spite of all the familiar handicaps, it was possible, by sustained efforts, to have a break-through and increase production even in the adverse conditions in which an Indian farmer had to work.

But as always it was easier said than done, for being a man about town, he knew very little about agriculture and had of course no farming experience. His greatest hurdle was, however, the land, for it had never been used in living memory and it was as dry as bone. It being at one time a river bed, its top soil had been washed away and it was full of sand. Also, there was no way of irrigating the land, for there was no tank or river near-by. Last but not least, he had no capital to put into the farm, and even for labour, he had to depend upon himself and his minor children. It was a big challenge even for the stoutest of heart, but being ignorant, he did not know what he was bargaining for and he started on the venture full of hope and confidence that he would succeed in the end. If ever his spirits drooped, it was the chil-



dren who put cheer into his heart, and also, the nagging fear that he with his growing family would starve unless he was able to produce their own food, that kept him going. It was a bitter struggle, and it often happened that in spite of the back-breaking labour that he and his children put into the fields, they would yield nothing. There were also many set-backs, for some of his children were forcibly taken away by their distant relations and once he himself fell seriously ill. Any other person would perhaps have given up the venture as impossible, but he had long before decided, while starting on the venture against the advice of his friends, that he would rather die than accept defeat. He, therefore, kept struggling on, his back against the wall, till the wheels started turning and after a long stretch of bleak years, the production began to rise and he became self-sufficient in food.

He did not rest on his oars because he was now able to produce enough food for himself and his family, for although this was his immediate objective, his ultimate and more important, objective was to demonstrate to the farmers around him that in spite of all the handicaps about which they complained, it was possible to grow on the soil of the place almost anything they desired. Being a firm believer in the adage that 'example is better than precept', he did not go about airing his views, for he was sure that they would make no impression on the minds of the farmers who, as he knew, were very conservative and did not accept a new idea or technique about agriculture unless it had been thoroughly tested and found sound. The only way of convincing the farmers was to demonstrate what could be achieved by way of production from the fields despite all the inhibiting factors, provided one worked hard. He, therefore, decided that he would develop his farm as a model one, so that others might follow and learn from it. He had the same drawbacks as the other farmers had and he had also

an additional one which was that he knew nothing about agriculture; yet, if he could raise better and more varied crops it would strike others that they could do the same, too. He had previously been handicapped, like anybody else, by lack of irrigation facilities, but almost the first thing he had done as soon as he was in a position to do so, was that he had had some wells dug which now supplied as much water as his fields needed; he also had plenty of manure, for he had by now many heads of cattle which not only supplied milk for the children, but also, gave him the manure which his farm so badly needed. He was now, in fact, a prosperous farmer who was able to raise different varieties of crops seldom attempted by other farmers of the locality and who had also succeeded in adding more and more land to his original seventeen acres. He hired labour as and when it was necessary, for he could now afford it, but it filled his heart with great joy and pride that his children had now become so knowledgeable about farming. He had set up a small laboratory where his children conducted simple tests to find out if there was anything wrong with the soil or with the crop. They had also become experts in animal husbandry and they could now manage all the operations of the farm with an ability that would do credit to many grown-ups. They were a happy family where monk and orphan loved and trusted each other and worked inspired by a common ideal—that of service to the community.

It was now clear to the people around that if it was possible for a monk without any previous knowledge of agriculture and aided only by a handful of young children, to grow all varieties of vegetables and food-grains on the kind of soil with which they all had to grapple, it was certainly possible for them, experienced farmers, also to do the same. Swami Akhandananda did not think it enough to grow only vegetables and grains or rear farm animals; he rightly decided that it was also necessary to grow

fruits suitable for the Bengal climate to make the farm complete and also give the villagers a balanced diet. He, accordingly, plunged into experiments with the planting and caring of fruit trees and, just as had happened in the case of vegetables and grains, he was soon able to grow fruit trees of different kinds, best in the country, which he had collected from all corners of the country. He also succeeded in growing decorative trees and creepers bearing beautiful flowers, many of them rare and unknown in the district, if not also in the State. While the whole landscape around was bare of vegetation except for some scrub, his centre looked like an arbour, always green and smiling with flowers. Seeing it from a distance for the first time, a visitor once remarked, 'This is an oasis in this place which is otherwise nothing but a desert.' Although it is said that in ancient India a tree was regarded as dearer than a son, it is India's misfortune that for many generations her people have only sought to destroy trees ruthlessly, often unnecessarily and without any thought about the unfortunate consequences that this may have on India's future rainfall. He, on the other hand, tended them with the greatest care and affection, looking after them in the same way as he did for the children who lived with him. So devoted was he to the trees of his centre that once, some years later, when he had gone on a visit to the Belurmath in some summer and people were pressing him to prolong his stay so that he might avoid the rigours of the summer heat at Sargachhi, he replied, 'You see, the idea is certainly attractive but when I think of the trees I have left behind I have a guilty conscience, for I know how much they are suffering. I can almost see them looking at me reproachfully, as if to say, "Well, now that you are a big man, summer does not affect you, for you have an electric fan constantly whirring over your head and you have also many other amenities at your command, but what

about us? There is none here now to look after us, none even to see if we are having the minimum quantity of water that we require for survival against this heat."' He added that whenever he had anything offered to him to relieve the heat, he had this thought come to his mind and he felt extremely disturbed.

While Swami Akhandananda was then busy developing a model farm to teach scientific agriculture to the neighbouring villages, he was not oblivious of the other needs of the community—cottage industries, for instance. He taught his children spinning, weaving, carpentry, smithcraft and similar other industries essential to the life of an agricultural community. Long before Mahatma Gandhi had thought of introducing spinning as a weapon with which to fight his political battle with the British, Swami Akhandananda introduced it to the people in the villages near his centre, of course not exactly for political purposes but for economic reasons and as part of his community development programme. He grew cotton which he distributed to villagers along with spinning wheels and in return, took from them yarn which he wove into cloth to be sold back to them, the whole deal being carried out on a no-profit no-loss basis.

He also started a school which had the very novel feature of insisting on the students' spending more time on the farm and in the workshop than in the class-room. He insisted on some training to make his pupils learn some trade well enough so that they might later find employment easily. He had observed how bookish the education that was imparted to the children was and it was, therefore, no wonder that after spending many years at school a student found that he had not learnt anything well enough to be able to earn his bread. He, therefore, made it compulsory for the staff as well as the students to work by hand for several hours a day, he himself setting an example in this.

He also discarded the use of the text-books which were then prescribed by the Government for use in such schools, for he found they really taught nothing very useful and if they taught anything at all, it had no relation whatsoever to the environment in which those village children lived. Some even had an anti-national bias. He, therefore, decided, after consulting Sister Nivedita for whom he had high regards, to stop using such text-books, with the result that the Government promptly withdrew the meagre help that they were giving to the school.

Swami Akhandananda was fully alive to the need to educate the adults, for otherwise there was no possibility of taking forward the community as a whole. He had, therefore, night classes for the village adults, where they were taught different subjects with the help of slides and pictures, in a simple way, and keeping in view their needs, the greatest emphasis being placed on agriculture as it was agriculture which sustained them.

Sixty years back, i.e., when Swami Akhandananda had founded his centre at Sargachhi and was carrying out his many-sided welfare programme in the villages, both malaria and cholera stalked the land taking a huge toll of life every year, but people were helpless, there being no medical facilities worth the name in the villages. But Swami Akhandananda also saw how people suffered often because they did not know the basic principles about prevention of diseases or even knowing them, did not care to follow them, with fatal consequences to themselves and others. Since the Government was callous or in any case, incapable of taking even the elementary steps to cope with the problem of epidemics, he often

toured the villages telling the people how it was within their means to take preventive measures to arrest the spread of diseases, specially cholera. If there was an epidemic, he organized nursing for those who suffered, for in those days cholera was such a dreaded disease that even the closest relations would not dare to go near a person suffering from it. In such cases, Swami Akhandananda would himself serve as doctor and nurse. In times of epidemics, he would often be seen going about distributing medicines, making arrangements for the nursing of the sick, giving instructions to their relations and encouraging them.

Thus, he was busy the whole day planning, guiding and executing, well-thought out diverse activities for the all-round welfare of the community, and under his inspiring leadership, the community now pulsed with a new life anxious to progress in education, health, industry and all other fields. He was indeed the 'father' of the community. He continued his mission of service so long as it was physically possible for him, and when old age and disease made this impossible, he concentrated on the work of inspiring young men who now visited him in large numbers to dedicate themselves to the service of the community. It is still possible to meet old men and women who recall with great joy and pride their visits to him and the inspiration they derived from him which later changed, as it happened in many cases, the direction of their lives altogether. When he finally passed away on February 7, 1937, he had laid the foundation of a powerful and progressive agricultural community, which, though without his guiding hands, was able to go forward along the lines chalked out by him.

# THE CONVERGENCE OF SCIENCE AND RELIGION\*

DR. CHARLES H. TOWNES

[The author, a scientist and an active church member, explains why he believes that science and religion may ultimately converge. Dr. Townes, whose work on the maser won him a Nobel Prize in 1964, is Provost and Professor of Physics at Massachusetts Institute of Technology, U.S.A.]

The ever-increasing success of science has posed many challenges and conflicts for religion—conflicts which are resolved in individual lives in a variety of ways. Some accept both religion and science as dealing with quite different matters by different methods, and thus separate them so widely in their thinking that no direct confrontation is possible. Some repair rather completely to the camp of science or of religion and regard the other as ultimately of little importance, if not downright harmful.

To me science and religion are both universal, and basically very similar. In fact, to make the argument clear, I should like to adopt the rather extreme point of view that their differences are largely superficial, and that the two become almost indistinguishable if we look at the real nature of each. It is perhaps science whose real nature is the less obvious, because of its blinding superficial successes. To explain this, and to give perspective to the non-scientists, we must consider a bit of the history and development of science.

The march of science during the 19th century produced enormous confidence in its success and generality. One field after another fell before the objective inquiry, experimental approach, and the logic of science. Scientific laws appeared to take on an absolute quality, and it was very easy to be convinced that science in time would explain everything.

This was the time when Laplace could

believe that if he knew the position and velocity of every particle in the universe, and could calculate sufficiently well, he would then know the entire future. Laplace was simply expressing the evident experience of the time, that the success and precision of scientific laws had changed determinism from a speculative argument to one which seemed inescapable.

This was the time when the devout Pasteur, asked how he as a scientist could be religious, simply replied that his laboratory was one realm, and that his home and religion were a completely different one.

## SCIENTIFIC ABSOLUTISM

There are today many vestiges of this 19th-century scientific absolutism in our thinking and attitudes. It has given Communism, based on Marx's 19th century background, some of its sense of the inexorable course of history and of "scientific" planning of society.

Towards the end of the 19th century, many physical scientists viewed their work as almost complete and needing only some extension and more detailed refinement. But soon after, deep problems began to appear. The world seems relatively unaware of how deep these problems really were, and of the extent to which some of the most fundamental scientific ideas have been overturned by them. Perhaps this unawareness is because science has been vigorous in changing itself and continuing

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to press on, and has also diverted attention by ever more successes in solving the practical problems of life.

Many of the philosophical and conceptual bases of science have in fact been disturbed and revolutionized. The poignancy of these changes can be grasped only through sampling them. For example, the question whether light consists of small particles shot out by light sources or wave disturbances originated by them had been debated for some time by the great figures of science. The question was finally settled in the early 19th century by brilliant experimentation which could be thoroughly interpreted by theory. The experiments told scientists of the time that light was unequivocally a wave and not particles. But about 1900, other experiments turned up which showed just as unequivocally that light is a stream of particles rather than waves. Thus physicists were presented with a deeply disturbing paradox. Its solution took several decades, and was only accomplished in the mid-1920s by the development of a new set of ideas known as quantum mechanics.

The trouble was that scientists were thinking in terms of their common everyday experience and that experience encompassed the behaviour of large objects, but not yet many atomic phenomena. Examination of light or atoms in detail brings us into a new realm of very small quantities with which we have had no previous experience, and where our intuitions could well be untrustworthy. And now in retrospect, it is not at all surprising that the study of matter on the atomic scale has taught us new things, and that some are inconsistent with ideas which previously had seemed so clear.

Physicists today believe that light is neither precisely a wave nor a particle, but both, and we were mistaken in even asking the question, "Is light a particle or is it a

wave?" It can display both properties. So can all matter, including baseballs and locomotives. We don't ordinarily observe this duality in large objects because they do not show wave properties prominently. But in principle we believe they are there.

We have come to believe other strange phenomena as well. Suppose an electron is put in a long box where it may travel back and forth. Physical theory now tells us that, under certain conditions, the electron will be sometimes found towards one end of the box and sometimes towards the other, but never in the middle. This statement clashes absurdly with ideas of an electron moving back and forth, and yet most physicists today are quite convinced of its validity, and can demonstrate its essential truth in the laboratory.

#### THE UNCERTAINTY PRINCIPLE

Another strange aspect of the new quantum mechanics is called the uncertainty principle. This principle shows that if we try to say exactly where a particle (or object) is, we cannot say exactly how fast it is going and in what direction, all at the same time; or, if we determine its velocity, we can never say exactly what its position is. And so, according to this theory, Laplace was wrong from the beginning. If he were alive today, he would probably understand along with other contemporary physicists that it is fundamentally impossible to obtain the information necessary for his precise predictions, even if he were dealing with only one single particle, rather than the entire universe.

The modern laws of science seem, then, to have turned our thinking away from complete determinism and towards a world where chance plays a major role. It is chance on an atomic scale, but there are situations and times when the random change in position of one atom or one electron can materially affect the large-scale

affairs of life and, in fact, our entire society. A striking example involves Queen Victoria who, through one such event on an atomic scale, became a mutant and passed on to certain male descendants in Europe's royal families the trait of hemophilia. Thus one unpredictable event on an atomic scale had its effect on both the Spanish royal family and, through an afflicted czarévitch, on the stability of the Russian throne.

#### EINSTEIN AND CHANCE

This new view of a world which is not predictable from physical laws was not at all easy for physicists of the older tradition to accept. Even Einstein, one of the architects of quantum mechanics, never completely accepted the indeterminism of chance which it implies. This is the origin of his intuitive response, "*Herr Gott würfelt nicht*"—the Lord God doesn't throw dice! It is interesting to note also that Russian Communism, with its roots in 19th century determinism, for a long time took a strong doctrinaire position against the new physics of quantum mechanics.

When scientists pressed on to examine still other realms outside our common experience, further surprises were found. For objects of much higher velocities than we ordinarily experience, relativity shows that very strange things happen. First, objects can never go faster than a certain speed, regardless of how hard they are pushed. Their absolute maximum speed is that of light—186,000 miles per second. Further, when objects are going fast, they become shorter and more massive—they change shape and also weigh more. Even time moves at a different rate; if we send a clock off at a high velocity, it runs slower.

#### THE CAT-KITTEN CONCEPT

This peculiar behaviour of time is the origin of the famous cat-kitten conceptual experiment. Take a litter of six kittens and

divide them into two groups. Keep three of them on earth, send the other three off in a rocket at a speed nearly as fast as light, and after one year bring them back. The earth kittens will obviously have become cats, but the ones sent into space will have remained kittens. This theory has not been tested with kittens, but it has been checked experimentally with the aging of inanimate objects and seems to be quite correct. Today the vast majority of scientists believe it true.

How wrong, oh how wrong were many ideas which physicists felt were so obvious and well-substantiated at the turn of the century!

Scientists have now become a good deal more cautious and modest about extending scientific ideas into realms where they have not yet been thoroughly tested. Of course, an important part of the game of science is in fact the development of general laws that can be extended into new realms. These laws are often remarkably successful in telling us new things or in predicting things which we have not yet directly observed. And yet we must always be aware that such extensions may be wrong, and wrong in very fundamental ways. In spite of all the changes in our views, it is reassuring to note that the laws of 19th century science were not so far wrong in the realm in which they were initially applied—that of ordinary velocities and of objects larger than the point of a pin. In this realm they were essentially right, and we still teach the laws of Newton or of Maxwell, because in their own important sphere they are valid and useful.

We know today that the most sophisticated present scientific theories, including modern quantum mechanics, are still incomplete. We use them because in certain areas they are so amazingly right. Yet they lead us at times into inconsistencies which we do not understand, and where we must

recognize that we have missed some crucial ideas. We simply admit and accept the paradoxes and hope that sometime in the future they will be resolved by a more complete understanding. In fact, by recognizing these paradoxes clearly and studying them, we can perhaps best understand the limitations in our thinking and correct them.

With this background on the real state of scientific understanding, we come now to the similarity and near identity of science and religion. The goal of science is to discover the order in the universe, and to understand through it the things we sense around us, and even man himself. This order we express as scientific principles or laws, striving to state them in the simplest and yet most inclusive ways. The goal of religion may be stated, I believe, as an understanding (and hence acceptance) of the purpose and meaning of our universe and how we fit into it. Most religions see a unifying and inclusive origin of meaning, and this supreme purposeful force we call God.

Understanding the *order* in the universe and understanding the *purpose* in the universe are not identical, but they are also not very far apart. It is interesting that the Japanese word for physics is *butsurei*, which translated means simply *the reasons for things*. Thus we readily and inevitably link closely together the nature and the purpose of our universe.

What are the aspects of religion and science which often make them seem almost diametrically opposite? Many of them come, I believe, out of differences in language used for historical reasons, and many from quantitative differences which are large enough that unconsciously we assume they are qualitative ones. Let us consider some of these aspects where science and religion may superficially look very different.

### THE ROLE OF FAITH

The essential role of faith in religion is so well known that taking things on faith rather than proving them is usually taken as characteristic of religion, and as distinguishing religion from science. But faith is essential to science too, although we do not so generally recognize the basic need and nature of faith in science.

Faith is necessary for the scientist even to get started, and deep faith necessary for him to carry out his tougher tasks. Why? Because he must have confidence that there is order in the universe and that the human mind—in fact his own mind—has a good chance of understanding this order. Without this confidence, there would be little point in intense effort to try to understand a presumably disorderly or incomprehensible world. Such a world would take us back to the days of superstition, when man thought capricious forces manipulated his universe. In fact, it is just this faith in an orderly universe, understandable to man, which allowed the basic change from an age of superstition to an age of science, and has made possible our scientific progress.

The necessity of faith in science is reminiscent of the description of religious faith attributed to Constantine: "I believe so that I may know." But such faith is now so deeply rooted in the scientist that most of us never even stop to think that it is there at all.

Einstein affords a rather explicit example of faith in order, and many of his contributions come from intuitive devotion to a particularly appealing type of order. One of his famous remarks is inscribed in German in Fine Hall at Princeton: "God is very subtle, but he is not malicious." That is, the world which God has constructed may be very intricate and difficult for us to understand, but it is not arbitrary and illogical. Einstein spent the last half of his life looking for a unity between gravitational

and electromagnetic fields. Many physicists feel that he was on the wrong track, and no one yet knows whether he made any substantial progress. But he had faith in a great vision of unity and order, and he worked intensively at it for thirty years or more. Einstein had to have the kind of dogged conviction that could have allowed him to say with Job, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him."

For lesser scientists, on lesser projects, there are frequent occasions when things just don't make sense and making order and understanding out of one's work seems almost hopeless. But still the scientist has faith that there is order to be found, and that either he or his colleagues will someday find it.

#### THE ROLE OF REVELATION

Another common idea about the difference between science and religion is based on their methods of discovery. Religion's discoveries often come by great revelations. Scientific knowledge, in the popular mind, comes by logical deductions, or by the accumulation of data which is analyzed by established method in order to draw generalizations called laws. But such a description of scientific discovery is a travesty on the real thing. Most of the important scientific discoveries come about very differently and are much more closely akin to revelation. The term itself is generally not used for scientific discovery, since we are in the habit of reserving revelation for the religious realm. In scientific circles one speaks of intuition, accidental discovery, or says simply that "he had a wonderful idea."

If we compare how great scientific ideas arrive, they look remarkably like religious revelation viewed in a non-mystical way.

Think of Moses in the desert, long troubled and wondering about the problem of saving the children of Israel, when suddenly he had a revelation by the burning bush,

Consider some of the revelations of the New Testament.

Think of Gautama Buddha who travelled and inquired for years in an effort to understand what was good, and then one day sat down quietly under a Bo tree where his great ideas were revealed.

Similarly, the scientist, after hard work and much emotional and intellectual commitment to a troubling problem, sometimes suddenly sees the answer. Such ideas much more often come during off-moments than while confronting data.

A striking and well-known example is the discovery of the benzene ring by Kékulé, who while musing at his fireside was led to the idea by a vision of snakes taking their tails in their mouths. We cannot yet describe the human process which leads to the creation of an important and substantially new scientific insight. But it is clear that the great scientific discoveries, the real leaps, do not usually come from the so-called "scientific method," but rather more as did Kékulé's—with perhaps less picturesque imagery, but by revelations which are just as real.

Another popular view of the difference between science and religion is based on the notion that religious ideas depend only on faith and revelation while science succeeds in actually proving its points. In this view, proofs give to scientific ideas a certain kind of absolutism and universalism which religious ideas have only in the claims of their proponents. But the actual nature of scientific "proof" is rather different from such simple ideas.

#### PROVING A SET OF POSTULATES

Mathematical or logical proof involves choice of some set of postulates, which hopefully are consistent with one another and which apply to a situation of interest. In the case of natural science, they are presumed to apply to the world around us,



Next, on the basis of agreed-on laws of logic, which must be assumed, one can derive or "prove" the consequences of these sets of postulates.

How can we be sure the postulates are satisfactory? The mathematician Gödel has shown that, in the most generally used mathematics, it is fundamentally impossible to know whether or not the set of postulates chosen are even self-consistent. Only by constructing and using a new set of master postulates can we test the consistency of the first set. But these in turn may be logically inconsistent without the possibility of our knowing it. Thus we never have a real base from which we can reason with surety. Gödel doubled our surprises by showing that, in this same mathematical realm, there are always mathematical truths which fundamentally cannot be proved by the approach of normal logic. His important proofs came only about three decades ago, and have profoundly affected our view of human logic.

There is another way by which we become convinced that a scientific idea or postulate is valid. In the natural sciences, we "prove" it by making some kind of test of the postulate against experience. We devise experiments to test our working hypotheses, and believe those laws or hypotheses are correct which seem to agree with our experience. Such tests can disprove an hypothesis, or can give us useful confidence in its applicability and correctness, but never proof in any absolute sense.

Can religious beliefs also be viewed as working hypotheses, tested and validated by experience? To some this may seem a secular and even an abhorrent view. In any case, it discards absolutism in religion. But I see no reason why acceptance of religion on this basis should be objectionable. The validity of religious ideas must be and has been tested and judged through the ages by societies and by individual experience. Is

there any great need for them to be more absolute than the law of gravity? The latter is a working hypothesis whose basis and permanency we do not know. But on our belief in it, as well as on many other complex scientific hypotheses, we risk our lives daily.

Science usually deals with problems which are so much simpler and situations which are so much more easily controllable than does religion that the quantitative difference in directness with which we can test hypotheses generally hides the logical similarities which are there. The controlled experiment on religious ideas is perhaps not possible at all, and we rely for evidence primarily on human history and personal experience. But certain aspects of natural science, and the extension of science into social sciences, have also required similar use of experience and observation in testing hypotheses instead of only easily reproducible experiments.

Suppose now that we were to accept completely the proposition that science and religion are essentially similar. Where does this leave us and where does it lead us? Religion can, I believe, profit from the experience of science where the hard facts of nature and the tangibility of evidence have beaten into our thinking some ideas which mankind has often resisted.

First, we must recognize the tentative nature of knowledge. Our present understanding of science or of religion is likely, if it agrees with experience, to continue to have an important degree of validity just as does Newtonian mechanics. But there may be many deeper things which we do not yet know and which, when discovered, may modify our thinking in very basic ways.

#### EXPECTED PARADOXES

We must also expect paradoxes, and not be surprised or unduly troubled by them. We know of paradoxes in physics, such as

that concerning the nature of light, which have been resolved by deeper understanding. We know of some which are still unresolved. In the realm of religion, we are troubled by the suffering around us and its apparent inconsistency with a God of love. Such paradoxes confronting science do not usually destroy our faith in science. They simply remind us of a limited understanding, and at times provide a key to learning more.

Perhaps there will be in the realm of religion cases of the uncertainty principle, which we now know is such a characteristic phenomenon of physics. If it is fundamentally impossible to determine accurately both the position and velocity of a particle, it should not surprise us if similar limitations occur in other aspects of our experience. This opposition in the precise determination of two quantities is also referred to as complementarity; position and velocity represent complementary aspects of a particle, only one of which can be measured precisely at any one time.

Nils Bohr has already suggested that perception of man, or any living organism as a whole, and of his physical constitution represents this kind of complementarity. That is, the precise and close examination of the atomic makeup of man may of necessity blur our view of him as a living and spiritual being. In any case, there seems to be no justification for the dogmatic position taken by some that the remarkable phenomenon of individual human personality can be expressed completely in terms of the presently known laws of behaviour of atoms and molecules. Justice and love may also represent such complementarity. A completely loving approach and the simultaneous meting out of exact justice hardly seem consistent.

These examples could be only somewhat fuzzy analogies of complementarity as it is known in science, or they may indeed be

valid though still poorly defined occurrences of the uncertainty principle. But in any case, we should expect such occurrences and be forewarned by science that there will be fundamental limitations to our knowing everything at once with precision and consistency.

#### CONVERGE THEY MUST

Finally, if science and religion are so broadly similar, and not arbitrarily limited in their domain, they should at some time clearly converge. I believe this confluence is inevitable. For they both represent man's efforts to understand his universe and must ultimately be dealing with the same substance. As we understand more in each realm, the two must grow together. Perhaps by the time this convergence occurs, science will have been through a number of revolutions as striking as those which have occurred in the last century, and taken on a character not readily recognizable by scientists of today. Perhaps our religious understanding will also have seen progress and change. But converge they must, and through this should come new strength for both.

In the meantime, every today, with only tentative understanding and in the face of uncertainty and change, how can we live gloriously and act decisively? It is this problem, I suspect, which has so often tempted man to insist that he has final and ultimate truth locked in some particular phraseology or symbolism, even when the phraseology may mean a hundred different things to a hundred different people. How well we can commit our lives to ideas which we recognize in principle as only tentative represents a real test of mind and emotions.

Galileo espoused the cause of Copernicus' theory of the solar system, and at great personal cost because of the Church's opposition. We know today that the question on

which Galileo took his stand, the correctness of the idea that the earth rotates around the sun rather than the sun around the earth, is largely an unnecessary question. The two descriptions are equivalent, according to general relativity, although the first is simpler. And yet we honour Galileo for his pioneering courage and determination in deciding what he really thought was right and speaking out. This was important to his own integrity and to the development of the scientific and religious views of the time, out of which has grown our present better understanding of the problems he faced.

The authority of religion seemed more crucial in Galileo's Italy than it usually

does today, and science more fresh and simple. We tend to think of ourselves as now more sophisticated, and science and religion as both more complicated so that our position can be less clear-cut. Yet if we accept the assumption of either one, that truth exists, surely each of us should undertake the same kind of task as did Galileo, or long before him, Gautama. For ourselves and for mankind, we must use our best wisdom and instincts, the evidence of history and wisdom of the ages, the experience and revelations of our friends, saints and heroes in order to get as close as possible to truth and meaning. Furthermore, we must be willing to live and act on our conclusions.

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## THE LANGUAGE OF RELIGION

DR. R. BALASUBRAMANIAN

(1) Religion is a way of life ; it also involves a set of propositions about God and the universe. In a very broad sense religion may be defined as 'belief in the existence of God together with the pattern of behaviour which follows from that belief'. (H. A. Hodges: 'What is to become of Philosophical Theology?' in *Contemporary British Philosophy*, Third Series, George Allen and Unwin, London, p. 212)

The language of religion seeks to give expression to the nature of God, the relation between God and man, and God and world; it contains declarations relating to the conduct to be adopted and the practices to be followed to realize God ; it contains expressions which are capable of eliciting suitable emotional responses from the individual in such a way that he will tune himself to attaining God-realization. In some places the religious language is obviously symbol-

ic ; sometimes it is analogical. There are places where it seeks to convey its thought by means of myths and images. There are passages in the religious literature wherein we are told that language is not quite adequate to do the job. The language of religion which seeks to do all these functions is naturally complex.

(2) The language of religion consists of three categories of sentences. (i) The first group consists of sentences which give expression to emotion and seek to evoke emotional responses from those who hear them. They are not statements of fact ; they do not assert anything. Sentences included in this group may be called *emotive sentences*. (ii) The second group will comprise sentences which are *prescriptive* in character. (iii) In the third group we may include sentences which refer to the nature of God ; these are sentences which are taken to be

statements of fact by some philosophers; sentences of this type are dismissed as meaningless, as non-sensical by the logical empiricists either as a result of the application of the verifiability-principle or as a result of linguistic analysis.

(3) Let us first consider the class of sentences which are emotive. Sentences included in this group do not assert anything, and hence are neither true nor false. They are not informative in the generally accepted sense in which a sentence like 'A book is on the table' is said to be informative.

We may include, in this class, thanksgiving-sentences, petition-sentences and exclamations. The list of the sub-species mentioned here is only representative and not exhaustive. As an example of thanksgiving-sentence we may consider a passage from the *Tiruvācakam*. Saint Māṅikkavācagar expresses his grateful thanks to the Lord for the care and consideration that has been shown to him. He says that the love He has shown him is more than that of a mother who nurses the child; He has freed him from the clutches of bondage and has bestowed on him the saving knowledge; He has showered on him the honey which is beatitude and has accompanied him wherever he goes. (*Tiruvācakam*, Pidithapattu, verse 9, Rathinanayagar & Sons, Madras, 1953)

Petition-sentences are innumerable in religious literature. The whole of *Tiruppugal* and Saint Māṅikkavācagar's *Nīttalvinnappam* contain passages of petition. In a moving passage Saint Arunagirinathar requests the Lord to come to his help when the problems of old age and symptoms of diseases are appalling, when mental agony and physical torture in the last minutes of existence are overwhelming. The description of the condition of man when he is with one foot on the grave is as graphic as it is poignant. Anyone who reads the passage cannot help reading it over again after a

little pause for a while. (*Tiruppugal*, verse 47)

As an example of exclamation, we can cite a passage where, with reference to God who is infinite, the Vedas declare in sheer exclamation 'O Lord!', finding that He is indescribable. ('Śivapurāṇam' in *Tiruvācakam*, verses 34-35)

(4) There is no controversy with regard to the sentences included in this group in respect of their emotive meaning. The person who utters these sentences gives expression to emotions; and the person who listens to it feels the effect of the utterance in so far as it directly goes to his feelings and emotions. It is true they are not statements of fact; but they cannot be brushed aside as meaningless and irrational. These utterances which are not 'statements of facts' presuppose certain statements of facts; the emotions expressed by these passages, so long as they are genuine and not irrational, are based on rationally founded objective beliefs.

(5) Let us now consider *prescriptive* sentences which constitute the second group. The word 'prescriptive' is *not* here used in the restricted sense to refer to imperatives alone. Rather it is used in a very general way to stand for exhortations, commendations, declarations of (ethical) principles as well as commands. The term 'prescriptive' has been used in such a general sense to include imperatives as well as value-judgments by R. M. Hare in his *The Language of Morals*. Hare considers that moral language is prescriptive rather than descriptive. (Oxford University Press, 1952, pp. 102, 118)

(6) Sentences of this type play a vital role in religion. Religion is not a theoretical affair; it is practice. In religion there is a goal, and there is a way to it. Prescriptive sentences are concerned with the 'way' or the 'path' that will lead to the goal; they

contain principles to guide human conduct ; and hence their importance.

There is, for example, the 'noble eight-fold path' in Buddhism. The sentences relating to this prescribe the discipline to be followed in order to remove suffering or attain *nirvāna*. Again, there is the injunction: 'One's own Veda should be studied'. (*Taittirīya Āraṇyaka*, II. 15)

It must be emphasized here that the sentences need not be in the imperative form always. It is enough if they indicate what has to be done if one wants to reach the goal. There is the Upaniṣadic text: 'The Brāhmaṇas seek to know it through the study of Vedas, sacrifices, chastity and austerity consisting in a dispassionate enjoyment of sense-objects.' (*Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*, IV. iv. 22) It does *not command*, but states the means to realize God ; even in the absence of an injunction it serves the purpose. In the case of a person who is keen on attaining a certain goal, who has a genuine longing for it, all that is required is just a reference to the discipline or the code of conduct to be practised ; and he follows the path. In the absence of deep-seated desire for the goal, an injunction—even hundreds of them—cannot put him on the path. Whether the sentence is in the form of an injunction or not is not of importance here. What is relevant here is the path it indicates, the discipline it suggests, the principles of conduct it formulates. There is, for instance, the Śruti text: 'The Self should be realized—should be heard of, reflected on and meditated upon'. This sentence, though apparently in the form of an injunction, is not considered to be an injunction. It is a commendatory declaration which brings out the *worthiness* of the Self as an object of realization: the Self is worthy of hearing, is worthy of reflection, is worthy of meditation. This sentence indicates that hearing (*śravaṇa*), reflection (*manana*) and meditation (*nididhyāsana*) are

the means to realize the Self. (Vide Śaṅkara's commentary on *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*, II. iv. 5)

(7) When we come to the third group of sentences dealing with God, we get into an area of controversy. It is the controversy between those who maintain that God-sentences like 'God exists', 'God is bliss', 'God is love', etc., are meaningful and those who argue that they are meaningless.

First, let us make clear what kind of object that God is or is supposed to be, and this will enable us to follow the meaningful *versus* meaningless controversy with regard to God-sentences. God is not an empirical object like a stone or a tree. If it were an empirical object, there would not have been any controversy with regard to the meaning of God-sentences ; what they mean can easily be settled by observing, sensing and testing the object. But the difficulty arises because God is said to be trans-empirical.

A careful examination of the scriptural texts will reveal to us that God or the ultimate Being about which they speak is trans-empirical. It makes sense when we say with reference to an empirical object that it is near or that it is far ; with reference to one and the same empirical object we cannot say that it is both far and near. Again, it does not make sense when we say that an empirical object is *invisible*, but also can be *seen*. Scriptural texts do speak of God in a paradoxical way as both far and near and thereby indicate that spatial predicates do not apply to God. Again, they speak of God as invisible and also as that which can be seen. It only means that God is not an empirical entity. If so, God-sentences do not make any assertion about an empirical object.

(8) What is the sense in which God-sentences are said to be meaningless? A sentence like 'God is' or 'God is bliss' is not meaningless in the way in which 'Bax, cax...', 'Triangle square circle' etc., are

said to be meaningless: the examples cited are not only cases of meaningless noise but also are not sentences. Again, God-sentences are not meaningless in the sense in which a sentence like 'There is an invisible and intangible wooden chair in this room' is said to be meaningless. The example mentioned is no doubt a sentence; still it is not a meaningful sentence because we cannot understand what an invisible and intangible wooden chair would be like. If it is a wooden chair, it cannot be intangible and invisible. There is no such difficulty in the case of God-sentences.

(9) Then, on what ground are God-sentences dismissed as meaningless? Logical empiricists maintain that these sentences do not have *factual or cognitive meaning*. By factual or cognitive meaning the logical empiricists mean empirical meaning. Their standpoint with regard to empirical meaning can be summarized as follows: words are labels for things; sentences are labels for states-of-affairs. To know the cognitive meaning of a sentence is to know what states-of-affairs it stands for: more precisely (i) what states of affairs it denotes and (ii) what characteristics it designates, in other words, what characteristics some states of affairs must have for the sentence to apply to it, just as knowing the meaning of the insignia on a pharmaceutical label is knowing what the bottle must contain in order for the label to belong to it. This is the way in which we have to find out the cognitive meaning of a sentence. And this procedure is stated in terms of *verifiability* or the much-talked-about *verifiability principle*.

(10) It is necessary to make a few observations on this principle before we refer to its application to God-sentences or religious assertions. The verifiability principle has been formulated in different ways from time to time. From the 'strong' sense of verifiability, some of the thinkers of this

school have come down to the *weak* sense of verifiability. When they say that a statement has meaning only if it is verifiable, what they mean is the *logical possibility of its verification* and not its *empirical* possibility. Some of them restate the principle by substituting for the word 'verifiability' the word 'confirmability'. This change does not alter the fundamental standpoint of these thinkers. Professor J. O. Wisdom (of the University of London) refers at very great length to the metamorphoses of the verifiability criterion of meaning. In the course of the discussion Wisdom remarks that so far there has been no satisfactory formulation of this principle and that it is impossible by means of this principle to drive a wedge between the meaningful and meaningless. 'Metamorphoses of the verifiability Theory of Meaning', *MIND*, Vol. LXXII, No. 287, July 1963, pp. 335-347). The same thing holds good, according to him, with regard to the procedure about words and statements having a use, which tends to replace the verifiability principle.

(11) The following is the main line of reasoning adopted by the logical empiricists in order to show that God-sentences or religious assertions have no factual or empirical meaning. First of all, God-sentences are not testable by direct observation in the way in which a sentence like 'There is a book on the table' is testable by sense-experience. Secondly, they cannot be treated as explanatory hypotheses comparable to scientific hypotheses. It is no doubt true that God-sentences have been put forward as providing an explanation of our experience, and in this sense they are treated as being on a par with scientific hypotheses. But this contention is not acceptable to the logical empiricists. They argue that while it is possible for us to think of certain states of affairs which would refute the scientific hypothesis, no such possibility can be

thought of with regard to God-sentences. The logical empiricists, therefore, contend that there is no comparison between religious assertions and scientific hypotheses. Thirdly, religious assertions are not *a priori* statements, and so they cannot assert the existence of God or anything about God. If religious assertions are not *a priori* statements or explanatory hypotheses or statements whose truth or falsity can be verified by sense-experience, they must be dismissed as having no factual meaning.

(12) It is true that God-sentences are not testable by means of sense-experience. But on this account they cannot be dismissed as meaningless. By 'experience' or 'direct observation' the logical empiricists mean sense-experience or observation of things given in sense-experience. There are different levels or kinds of experience, and sense-experience is only one among them. The truth of religious assertions is discoverable only by religious experience; it cannot be justified by means of sense-experience. Further, as Ewing points out, it looks quite reasonable to treat God-sentences as comparable to scientific hypotheses. Religious men treat God-sentences as providing an explanation of our experience. They insist that nothing that could happen in our limited experience could serve to refute the explanation. The same thing holds good in the case of scientific hypotheses. In the words of Ewing: 'Many hypotheses in science are justified as explanation of a whole extremely complex set of facts, and it would be impossible, I imagine, to obtain an agreed account as to precisely how much evidence to the contrary would require the abandonment of the hypothesis.'

(13) Any reference to religious experience is looked down with a scornful and sceptical frame of mind. The logical empiricists, as pointed out earlier, do not admit of any experience other than sense experience. *But there is no argument to exclude reli-*

gious experience *a priori* as a possibility. Religious experience is cited as an evidence for, or as that which testifies to the existence of, God. The empiricists criticize this claim on the ground that we cannot assert the objective existence of anything beyond our experience. An experience of a distinctively mental kind, says MacIntyre, cannot of itself yield us any information about anything other than the experience. This standpoint of the empiricists would certainly not enable them to deny the possibility of religious experience. The experience which I have cannot tell me anything about what is not my experience; I cannot pass on with any justification from my experience to what is not my experience. If so, how am I justified in denying or challenging a certain experience which some one claims to have? It is for this reason that Śaṅkara asks how one's own intimate experience of God-realization can be denied by another.

(14) It is true that many statements about God are used to stimulate emotional reactions. Sometimes they are also used to evoke conduct-responses. This aspect we stressed when we discussed emotive and prescriptive sentences. We cannot treat all religious assertions or statements about God as emotive. Some are obviously emotive, and some are not. Even in those cases where a statement is expressive of the speaker's emotions, it must be pointed out that the emotion requires some objective belief, true or false, about the real to support it for long, and if it exists without knowledge or a rationally founded objective belief with which it is in agreement, it is to be condemned as irrational and unfitting. That the element of belief is essential to religion has been emphasized by many. In the course of his discussion on the meaningfulness of religious language, Raphael Demos observes: 'Always religion includes belief; the word God is used referentially.'

Convince a man that in praying he is not addressing an existing being and he will cease to pray'. ('The Meaningfulness of Religious Language', *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, Vol. XVIII, 1957-58, p. 101) There are no convincing arguments to show that statements about God have no factual meaning. In the words of A. C. Ewing, 'There is no case at all for ruling them out *en masse* as devoid of factual meaning and so incapable on principle of being true'. ('Religious Assertions in the Light of Contemporary Philosophy', *Philosophy*, Vol. XXXII, 1957)

## NOTES AND COMMENTS

### IN THIS NUMBER

The Vedic view 'The universe arises from the Word' has its parallel echoes in the scriptures of the other religions too. Swami Satprakashananda, Head of the Vedanta Society of St. Louis, U.S.A. presents in his article 'The Creation from the Word' a learned and convincing study on the subject.

By the remark 'Time must have a stop' Shakespeare made a significant study on life. Swami Shraddhananda of the Vedanta Society of San Francisco, Northern California U.S.A., thoughtfully elaborates the idea in his present short article on the above celebrated remark of Shakespeare and draws an illuminating conclusion.

Swami Nityabodhananda is the Head of the Ramakrishna Vedanta Centre, Geneva, Switzerland. In his present article 'I and I am', the Swami resolves a basic philosophical problem that has always centred round the two concepts: individual 'I' and the cosmic 'I'.

S. K. Nandi M.A., L.L.B., D.Phil. (Cal.), Sāhityabhāratī (Visva-Bharatī) and a Griffith scholar of the Calcutta University is at present a Senior Research Fellow at the Indian Institute of Advanced Study at Simla. He was previously the Assistant Professor of Philosophy, Presidency College,

Calcutta, and was for some time Professor and Head of the Department of Philosophy, Krishnagar Government College, West Bengal, before he was selected for this present assignment in April last year. In 'An Examination of Sartre's Existential Humanism', Dr. Nandi offers a scholarly critical study on the thoughts and theories of Sartre.

Swami Vivekananda's visits to France are marked with many significant events. Next to America and England France became the historic meeting ground where many great thinkers of Europe converged together and exchanged their views with those of the great Swami on questions of far reaching impact and implications. Many are the episodes that are known and there are, undoubtedly, many which are yet to be discovered. In the illustrated article 'Swami Vivekananda in France' Swami Vidyatmananda has embarked on that much needed venture to make his new discoveries on the life and activities of Swami Vivekananda in France and Europe.

Swami Vidyatmananda joined the Hollywood branch of the Ramakrishna Order and served that Centre as one of the Editors of *Vedanta and the West*, the Journal of the Centre till 1965 when he came to Centre Védantique Ramakrichna, the other Centre of the Order at Gretz in France to take up his new assignment. It may be recalled that



he has written one book entitled *Yankee and the Swamis* and has edited several others as *What Vedanta Means to Me* and *What Religion Is : In the Words of Swami Vivekananda*. All these books bear the Swami's pre-monastic name John Yale.

In compiling the present paper Swami Vidyatmananda has rummaged many old and new records in various official and non-official quarters in France, met many persons of eminence and examined many evidences to discover many new facts that may further enlarge the dimension of our understanding about Swami Vivekananda in Europe. The research work, when completed, is sure to make a signal contribution towards the great cause the Swami has undertaken. We acknowledge our all gratefulness to him.

Humanitarian activities of the Ramakrishna Mission had their humble beginning in a far off village in the district of Murshidabad, West Bengal and the great hearted man who first translated Swami Vivekananda's dream of worshipful service into a mighty reality was no other than Swami Akhandananda, the worthy brother disciple of the great Swami. At a time when there was no national Government and the national development schemes of today in India this penniless wandering

monk boldly experimented with his many-sided projects of service to render help to the suffering millions around and set examples which would continue to inspire the posterity. Swami Lokeswarananda, Secretary of the Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, Narendrapur, 24 Parganas, West Bengal recalls in his article 'An early Non-official Experiment in Community Development in India' that unforgettable history of the past.

Dr. Charles H. Townes of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, U.S.A., won the Nobel Prize Award in 1964 for his fundamental work on maser. His present article, 'The Convergence of Science and Religion' concerns a vital question of our time and it is a significant review on the subject. The article first appeared in THINK Magazine of U.S.A. in 1966. We acknowledge our deep gratefulness to Mr. James B. O'Connell, Editor, THINK for his kind permission to us to reprint the article in *Prabuddha Bharata*.

R. Balasubramanian M.A. Ph.D. is the Reader in Philosophy, Centre of Advanced Study in Philosophy, University of Madras. Dr. Balasubramanian puts forward a logical analysis on the meaningfulness of 'The Language of Religion' and refutes the arguments of the empiricists in that regard.

## REVIEWS AND NOTICES

THE SAINT OF SHEGAON ; SRI GAJANAN MAHARAJ (A Biographical Sketch). By M. D. DESHPANDE. Malti Madhav Deshpande, Mudholkarpet, Amravati (Vidharba). Pages 84. Price Rs. 3.

This ardent life-sketch of the Saint, Sri Gajanan Maharaj, whose birth, pedigree etc. are not known, begins with his adolescence and sudden appearance on 'the 7th day of Magh (February) Vadya of Saka 1800' at Shegaon, eating out of the refuse of leafplates together with dogs similarly

busy, and it is an interesting and instructive piece of devotional literature.

The Saint of Shegaon has been described as an incarnation of Śrī Rāmdās, the *guru* of Sivāji. The learned author interprets the life with quite a religious unction.

Though neatly printed the book bristles with printer's devils. The price is heavy for our commoner.

SRI P. SAMA RAO

RAMAKRISHNA MISSION VIDYAMANDIRA,  
BELUR

SILVER JUBILEE CELEBRATION (1966-67)

The Ramakrishna Mission Vidyamandira (a Residential Three-year Degree College run by the branch centre Ramakrishna Mission Saradapitha at Belur, West Bengal) completed the twenty-fifth year of its eventful existence on Monday the 4th July, 1966. The inaugural functions in connexion with the Silver Jubilee of this residential college were held on that day at its own premises in the morning. Srimat Swami Vireswaranandaji Maharaj, President of the Ramakrishna Order, hoisted the Vidyamandira flag in the presence of a distinguished gathering to the accompaniment of the simultaneous blowing of twenty-five conchs in front of the college and lit up twenty-five lights in the Hostel shrine to commemorate the twenty-fifth year of the institution. This was followed by a special *pūjā* and a *vidyārthi-homa* at noon and the singing of the *Rāmanāma* in a chorus by the *sannyāsins* and *brahmacārins* of the Saradapitha in the evening.

Subsequently, a five-day-long programme of this Celebration was gone through with due *eclat* and solemnity from the 28th December, 1966 to the 1st January, 1967, in the following manner:

On Wednesday the 28th December, 1966, at 3-30 p.m. the unveiling of a relief bust of Swami Vivekananda at the entrance of the Vidyamandira main building by Srimat Swami Gambhirananda Maharaj, General Secretary of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission, marked the beginning of the second phase of this Jubilee Celebration. On this occasion a largely attended public meeting was held with Swami Gambhiranandaji as President and Dr. Ramesh Chandra Mazumdar, the eminent historian and educationist, as the Chief Guest. At the outset, Swami Abjajananda, Secretary of the R.K. Mission Saradapitha, extended a cordial welcome to the President and the Chief Guest and to all others who attended the meeting and gave a detailed account of the functions to be held during this period of the Celebration.

Swami Tejasananda, Principal of the Vidyamandira and Swami Gokulananda, Vice-Principal, also spoke about the educational ideals of this residential college.

Dr. Mazumdar, the Chief Guest, in the course of his illuminating speech, paid eloquent tributes to the Vidyamandira which, in his opinion, had captured the admiring attention of all lovers of education by its character and remarkable results. In the Presidential address Swami Gambhiranandaji referred to the nation-wide student-unrest and

suggested that the solution of this hydra-headed problem did not lie in repression or argumentation but in the love and sympathy of the teachers of exalted character and unimpeachable conduct for the students committed to their care in schools, colleges and universities.

The meeting was followed by a dramatic performance named '*Mahāsamar*' which was staged by the boys of the Rahara R. K. Mission Boys' Home.

On Thursday, December 29, 1966, the Annual Prize-giving Ceremony which formed a part of this Silver Jubilee Celebration, was held in the Vikas-Bhavan (Gymnasium) at 3-30 p.m. Dr. Kalidas Bhattacharyya, Vice-Chancellor of the Visva-Bharati, presided over this function. The Principal Swami Tejasananda read out the Annual Report of the Vidyamandira for the year 1965-66. Dr. Bhattacharyya referred to the similarity of ideals of education for which both the Visva-Bharati and the Vidyamandira stood in certain respects. He concluded his thoughtful speech by making an impassioned appeal to the public and the Government to actualize the dream of Swami Vivekananda to establish a university at Belur; for he was strongly of opinion that such a university as conceived by Swamiji, was an imperious necessity to set the wheel of education on the right track in these days when there was a terrible crisis and turmoil in this particular regard. He strongly believed that the younger generation taught properly in such a university would be a beneficent influence in the society and would help build the national life on a surer foundation.

After the speech, he gave away the prizes and medals to the students for their proficiency in various subjects.

In the evening (i.e. at 6-30 p.m.) a musical soiree was held. Sri Buddhadeb Ganguli (a well-known musician) and Sri Soumen Mukherjee (a famous radio-guitarist) who took part in it, entertained the audience with their respective delightful performances.

This ended with the instrumental music of Sri Nikhil Banerjee, a sitar-player of all-India fame, who kept the audience spell-bound for about two hours by his creditable performance.

On Friday, December 30, 1966, at 6-30 p.m. Physical Feats were arranged under the auspices of the Howrah Janakalyan Samity and displayed according to the direction of Sri Lakshmi Kanti Das, Recipient of 'Arjuna-Award' in the presence of a vast gathering. A good number of athletes of Tokyo-Olympic-fame participated in these physical feats.

On Saturday, December 31, 1966, a Symposium on

'Education—Its present-day Problems' was held at 3-30 p.m. under the Chairmanship of Dr. Satyendranath Sen, Head of the Department of Economics, Calcutta University. The following distinguished educationists participated in the discussion:

(a) Sri Janardan Chakraborty, Principal of the Maharani Kashiswari Mahavidyalaya of Calcutta.

(b) Swami Mumukshananda, Principal of the Narendrapur R. K. Mission Residential College.

(c) Principal Tamas Ranjan Roy, R. K. Mission Post-Graduate Basic Training College, Rahara.

(d) Sri Sibsankar Chakraborty, Principal of the R. K. Mission Social Education Organisers' Training Centre (of R. K. Mission Saradapitha), Belur.

Swami Gokulananda, Vice-Principal of the Vidyamandira, introduced them to the audience in a suitable speech.

Principal Janardan Chakraborty discussed the 'Problems of Collegiate Education', Swami Mumukshananda dealt with 'Education and Crisis in Values,' Sri Tamas Ranjan Roy spoke on the 'Problems of Secondary Education' whereas Sri Sibsankar Chakraborty dwelt on 'Education and Social Reconstruction'. Dr. Satyendranath Sen in his Presidential address summed up the view-points of the different speakers and opined that Economics, in the true sense of the term, far from making one materialistic in his outlook, helped him build a fuller life of a synthetic character and advanced the interests of a nation for its harmonious growth and development.

The Symposium was followed by a variety Performance organized by the students of the Vidyamandira. Besides the boys, Sri Hiralal Sarkhel of Bally and Sri Sukhendu Goswami of Calcutta (well-known radio-artists) took part in it and gave an excellent account of themselves in their respective devotional and classical music.

On Sunday, January 1st, 1967, Ex-students' Re-Union Day was observed from early morning in a befitting manner. About one hundred and twenty-five ex-students attended this function. Special *pūjā* and *homa* were performed in the shrine in the forenoon. A friendly volleyball match was played between the present alumni and the ex-students at 10 a.m.

After meal, all the ex-students assembled in the Vivekananda Hall in a special business meeting at 2-00 p.m. with Swami Tejasananda in the chair. A general meeting of the present and the past students was thereafter held at 3-30 p.m. in the Vikas-Bhayan Hall with Dr. Sachchidananda Dhar

(an ex-student), Principal of the R. K. Mahavidyalaya, Kailasahar (Tripura), as the President and Dr. Subimal Kumar Mookherjee, Head of the Department of Political Science, Calcutta University, as the Guest-in-Chief.

The following ex-students viz. Principal Jagadish Chandra Das, M.A. (of the Bagnan College, Howrah), Prof. Baburam Banerjee, M.A. (of the Barasat Govt. College, West Bengal) and Sri Amulya Kumar Mandal, M.A., I.A.S. spoke feelingly about how they built up their life and character through the all-round training they received from their almamater (this Temple of Learning). Swami Tejasananda (Principal) discussed, in telling terms, the type of training given to the younger generation in this college and the valuable contribution the Vidyamandira had made to the cause of education in the country during these twenty-five years of its eventful existence.

Dr. Subimal Kumar Mookherjee dwelt upon the various aspects of the education and training imparted to the students of the Vidyamandira under the loving care and guidance of the highly educated monastic members and a brilliant group of teachers who formed a fraternity devoted to the well-being of the alumni committed to their charge.

He concluded by saying that he himself was one of the teachers of this residential college for about five years at the initial stage and was very much benefited by his close and intimate association with this institution.

Dr. Dhar (Chairman) who belonged to the first batch of students, while expressing his whole-souled satisfaction at being in a position to meet many past and present students on this memorable occasion, gave an account of the positive moral and intellectual benefit he derived during the period of his study in this residential college, and exhorted the students to actualize the ideals of the Vidyamandira in their life and conduct for their own welfare as also for the good of the society.

The ex-students presented an Album of Swami Vivekananda to the Home Library of the present students of the Vidyamandira. Srīnan Ashish Banerjee (a second year student) accepted it with grateful thanks on their behalf, whereas the present students offered a bouquet of flowers to the President Dr. Dhar who accepted it with great joy on behalf of the ex-students.

Thus the five-day-long Jubilee Celebration ended in the midst of universal rejoicing and jubilation.

#### SRI RAMAKRISHNA'S BIRTHDAY

The one hundred and thirty-second birthday of Sri Ramakrishna falls on Monday, the 13th March, 1967.



Swami Vivekananda (November, 1900)



I. Number 6 Place des Etats-Unis. The salon is the room with the three long windows on the first floor.

Le port est gratuit

Indications de service.

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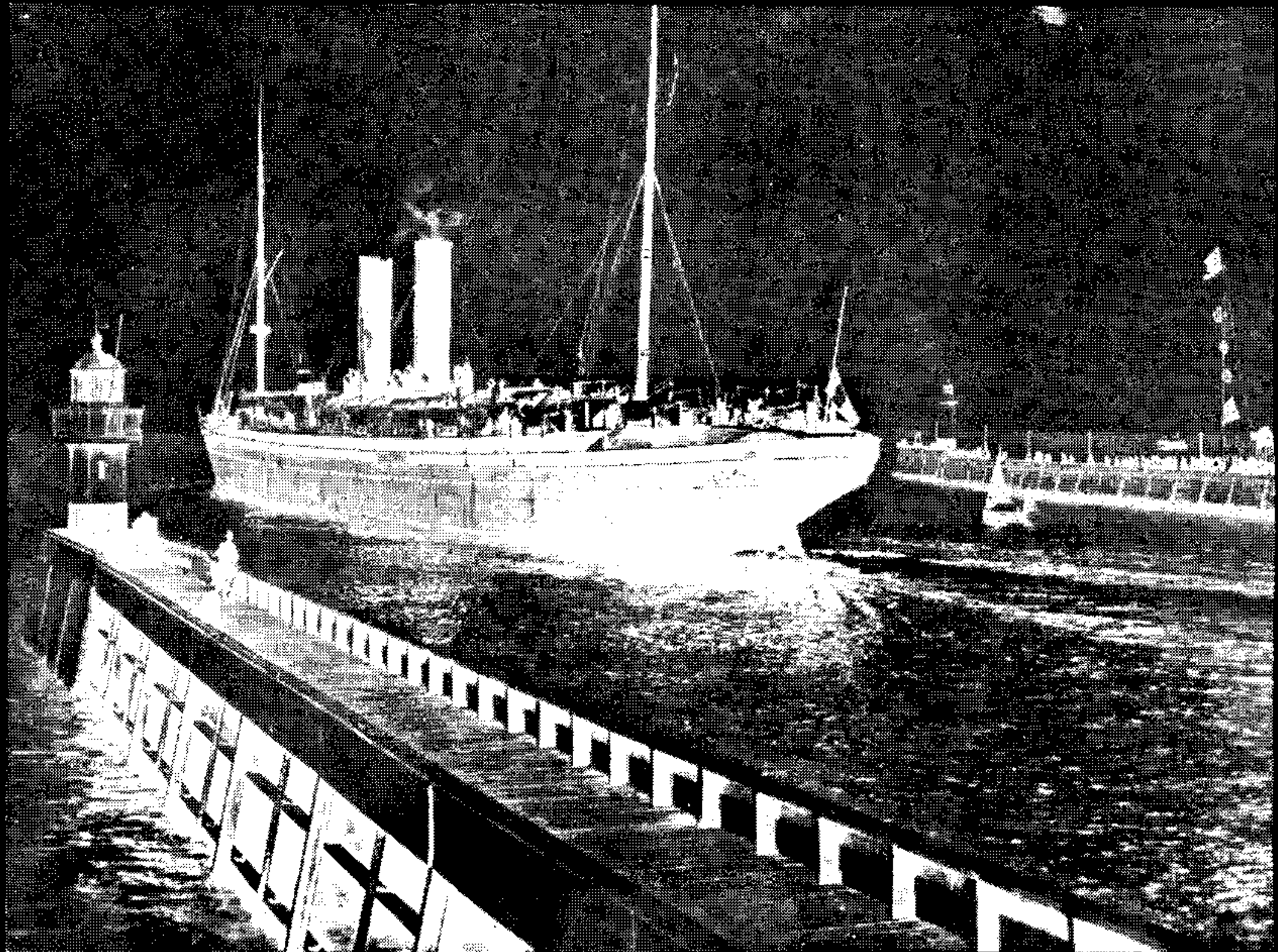
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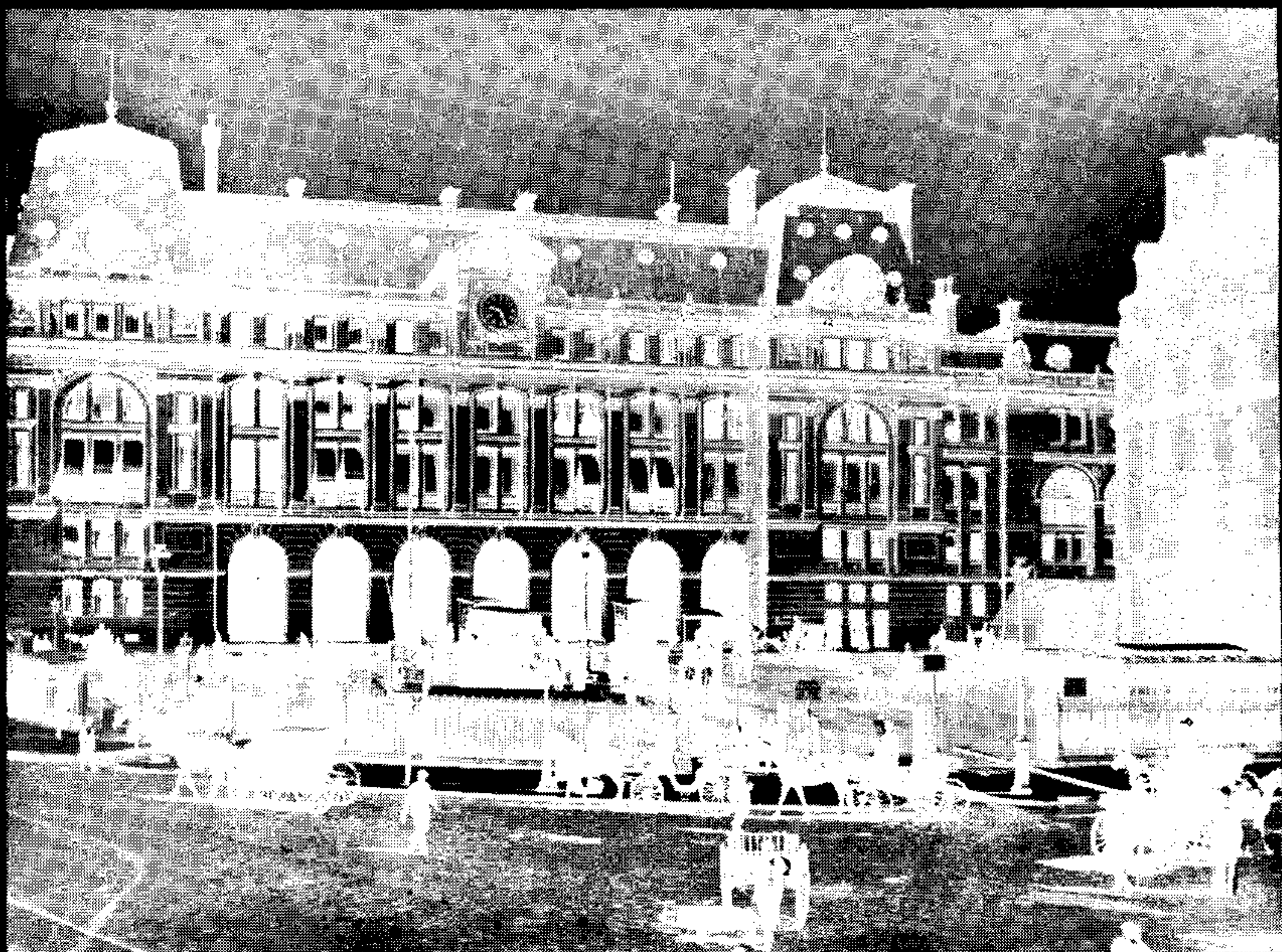
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II. Facsimile of telegram from Swami Vivekananda indicating his arrival in France on August 3, 1900.

Courtesy : Centre Védantique Ramakrichna, Gretz, France



III. The 'La Champagne' about 1900 at the entrance to Le Havre.



IV. St. Lazare station, about 1900. It was at this station that passengers from ships landing at Le Havre arrived in Paris.

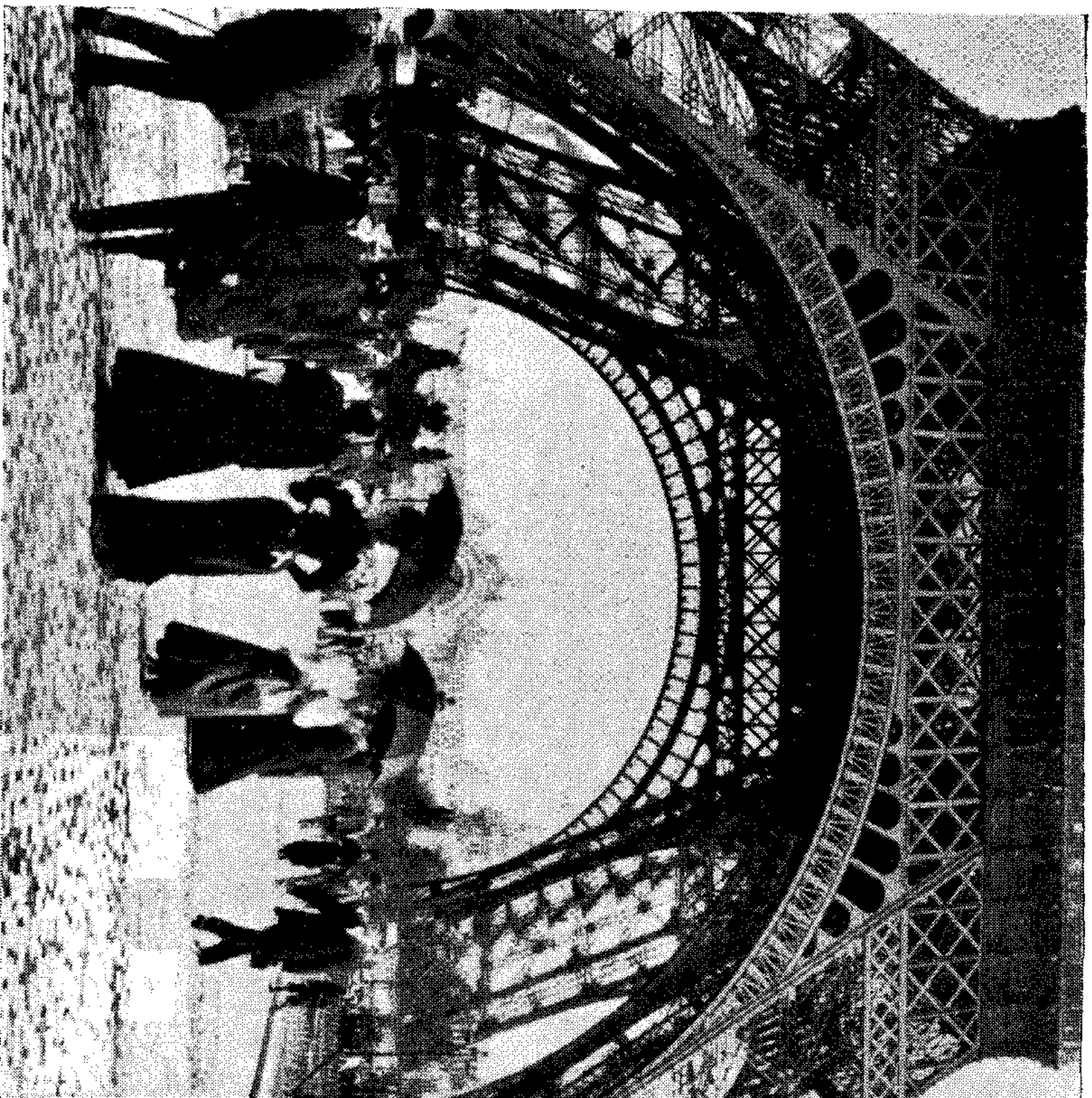
*Courtesy : Centre Védantique Ramakrichna, Gretz, France*



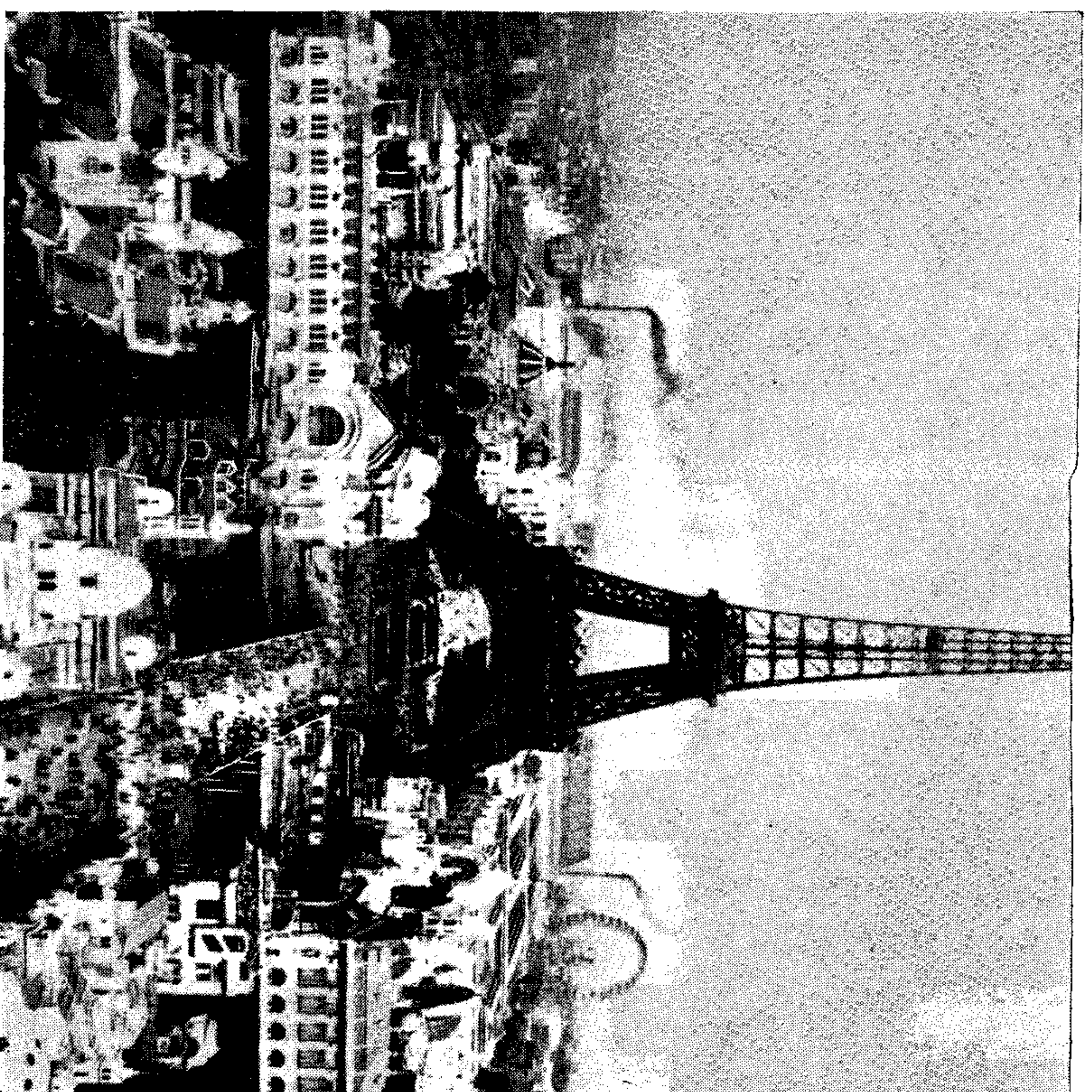
V. Francis H. Leggett in 1895 or slightly before.  
He was born in 1840.



VI. Besse MacLeod Leggett in 1895 or 1896.

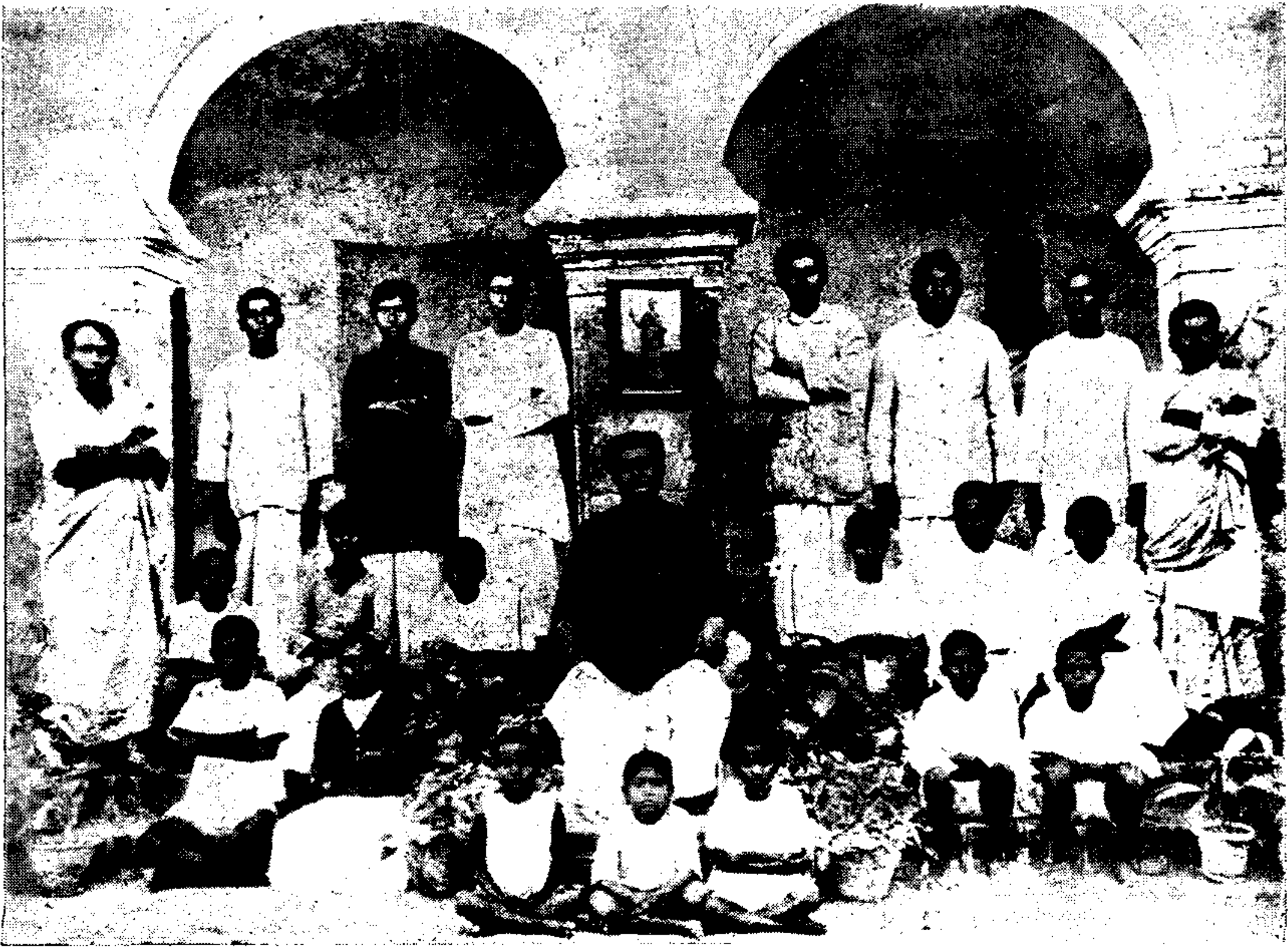


VII. Exposition Universelle Internationale of 1900. This is the Paris observed by Swami Vivekananda.



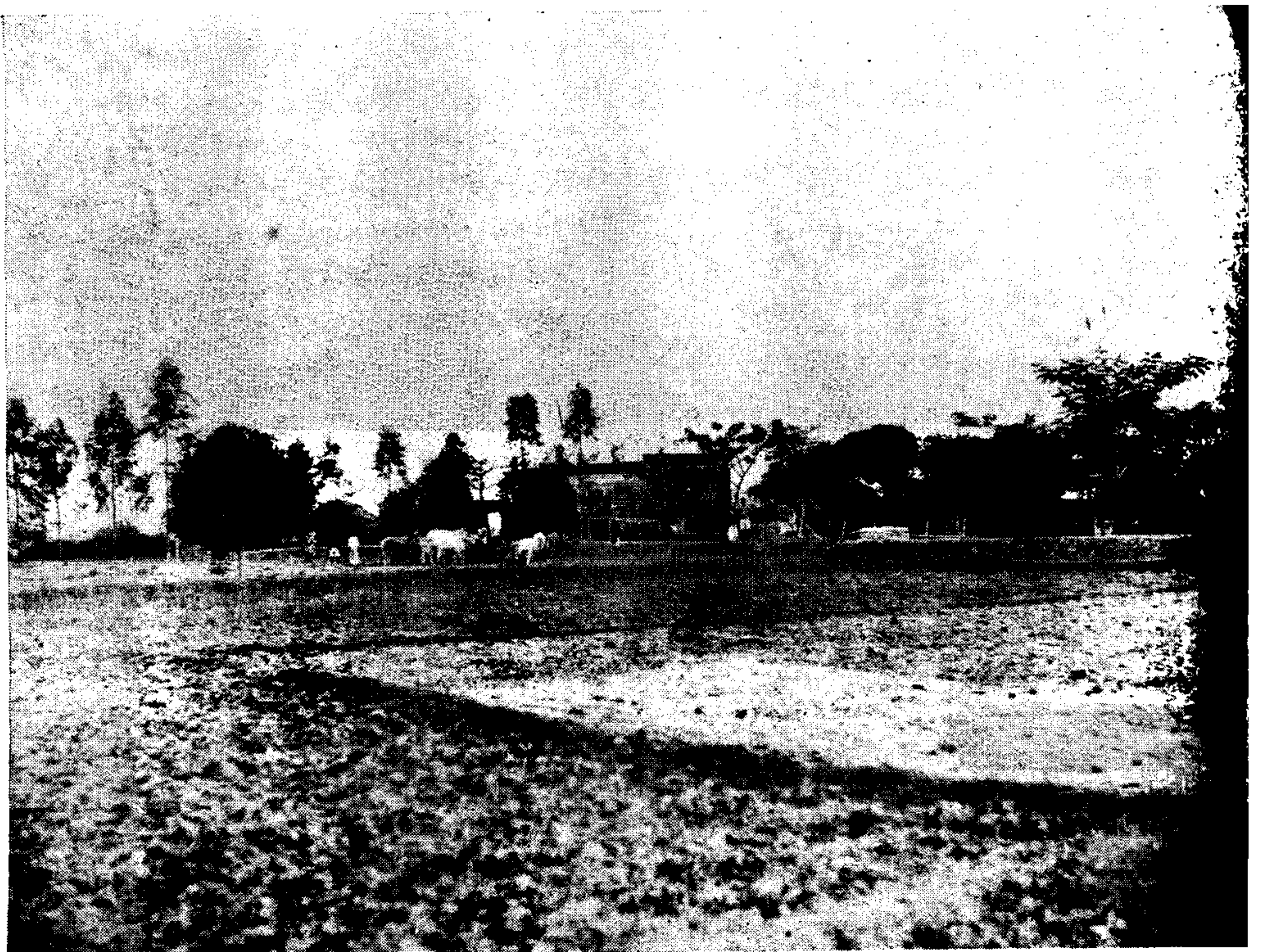
VIII. Exposition Universelle Internationale of 1900, Paris. The Restaurant Russe was located on the first stage of the Eiffel Tower.





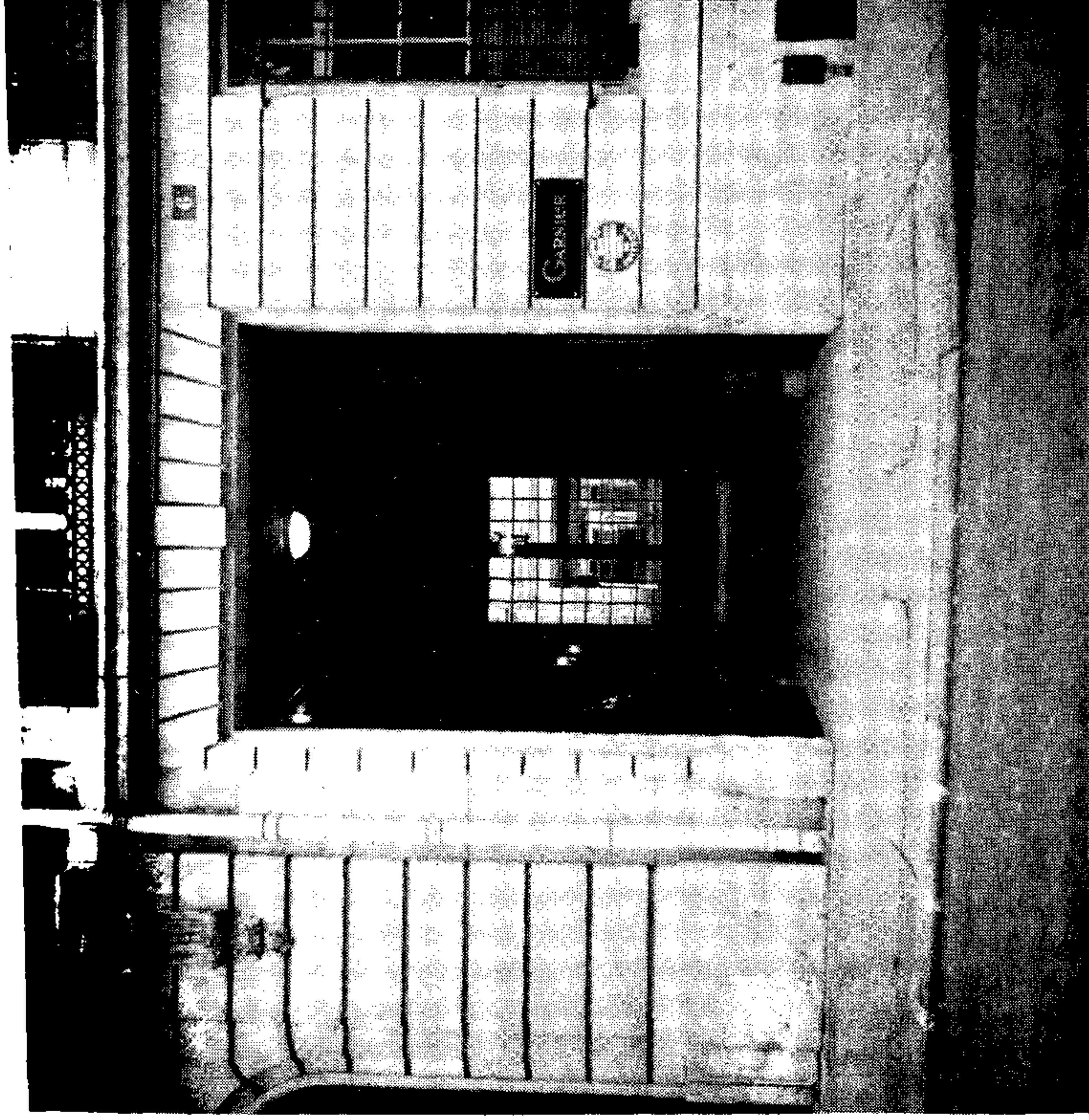
I. Swami Akhandananda with the orphan boys and other inmates of his centre.

*Courtesy : Udbodhan*

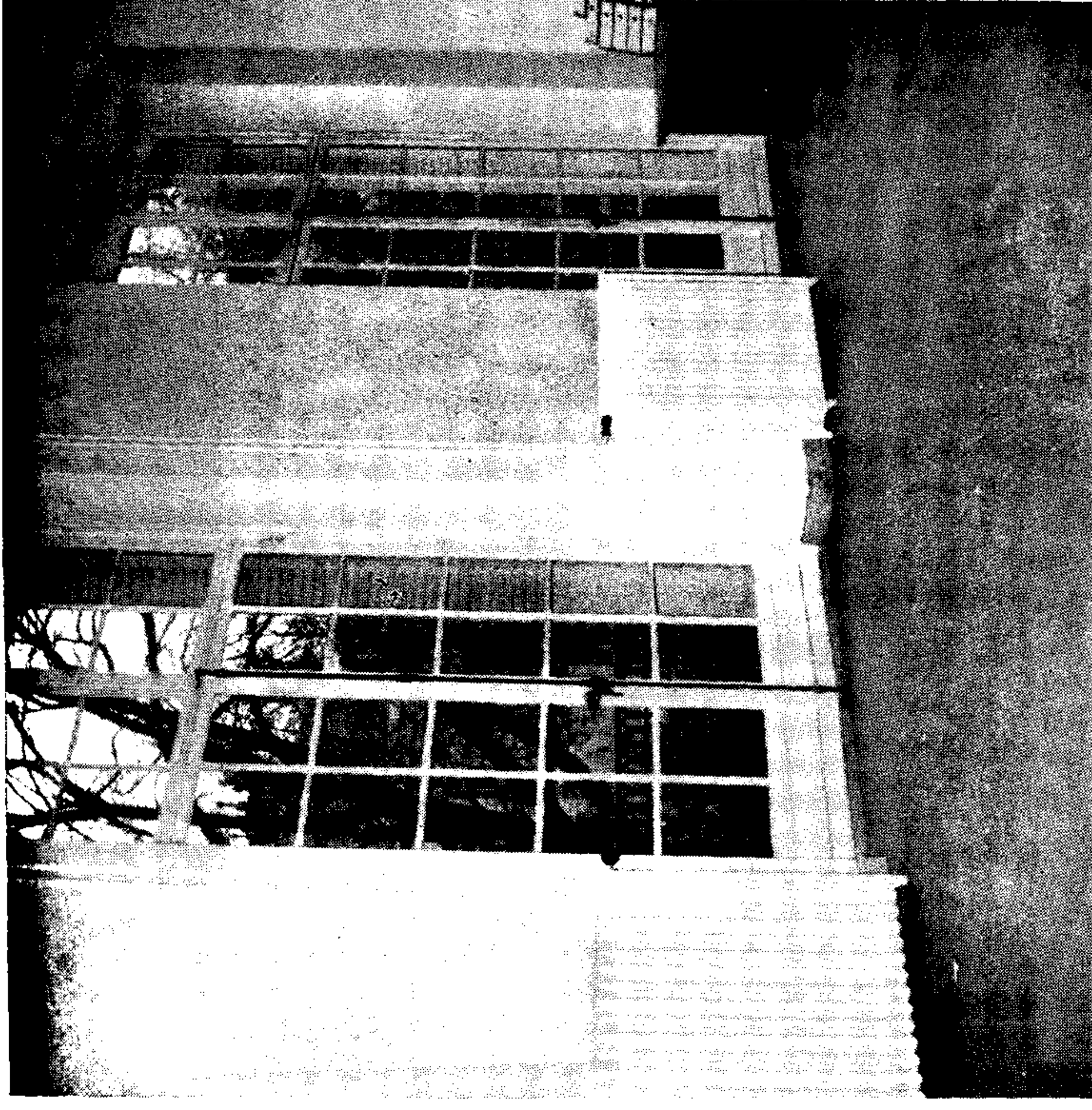


II. Swami Akhandananda surveying his farm from the top of a building

*Courtesy : Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, Sargachi*



IX. Entrance to 6 Place des Etats-Unis, showing the porte cochere. The actual 'front door' of the house is inside the porte cochere, to the right.



X. The former salon, with the trees of the Place shown beyond. Scene of the 'cranks' congress and the at-homes of the Leggetts.