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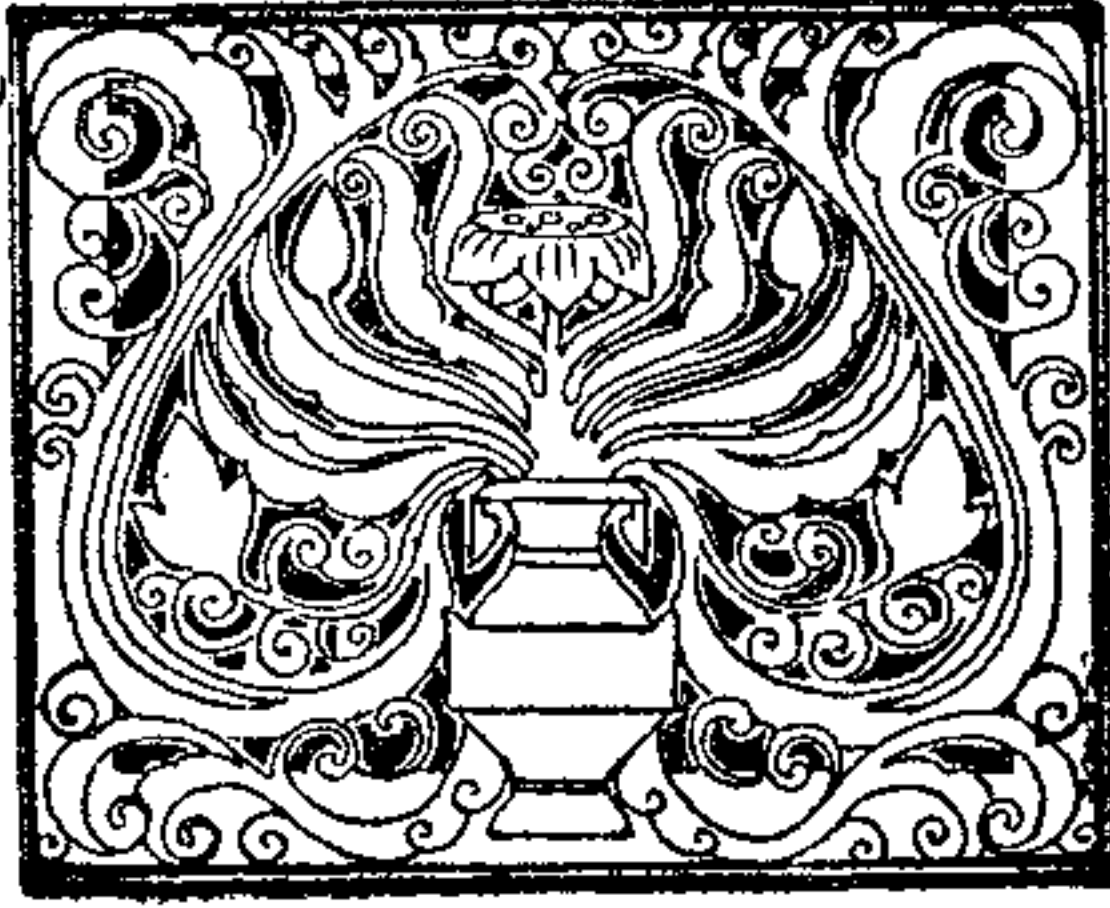
PRABUDDHA BHARATA

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Editorial Office

P.O. Mayavati, Via Lohaghat
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Prabuddha Bharata

Started by Swami Vivekananda in 1896

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RAMAKRISHNA ORDER

SEPTEMBER 1977

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COVER : *On the way to Sri Amarnath—Panchtarni.*



Prabuddha Bharata

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No. 9

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

SRI RAMAKRISHNA REMINISCES

'The moment I came to the Dhruva Ghat¹ at Mathura, in a flash I saw Vasudeva crossing the Jamuna with Krishna in his arms.

'One evening I was taking a stroll on the beach of the river. There were small thatched huts on the beach and big plum-trees. It was the "cow-dust" hour. The cows were returning from the pasture, raising dust with their hoofs. I saw them fording the river. Then came some cowherd boys crossing the river with their cows. No sooner did I behold this scene than I cried out, "O Krishna, where are you?" and became unconscious.'

'At Syamakunda and Radhakunda² I saw the holy men living in small huts. Facing away from the road lest their eyes should fall on men, they were engaged in spiritual discipline. One should visit the "Twelve Grove" [*Dvādashā ban*].

'I went into samadhi at the sight of the image of Bankuvihari.³ In that state I wanted to touch it. I did not want to visit Govindaji⁴ twice. At Mathura I dreamt of Krishna as the cowherd boy. Hriday and Mathur Babu had the same dream.'⁵

'When one gets into such a state of mind, one doesn't enjoy any conversation but that about God. I used to weep when I heard people talk about worldly matters. When I accompanied Mathur Babu on a pilgrimage, we spent a few days in Benares at Raja Babu's house. One day I was seated in the drawing-room with Mathur Babu, Raja Babu, and others. Hearing them talk about various worldly things, such as their business losses and so forth, I wept bitterly and said to the Divine Mother: "Mother, where have you brought me? I was much better off in the temple garden at Dakshineswar. Here I am in a place where I must hear about 'woman' and 'gold'. But at Dakshineswar I could avoid it."⁶

Comp.—Swami Sarveshananda

1. Bathing-place in the Jamuna where, it is said, Krishna's father crossed carrying his new-born child through a stormy night. 2. Places near Mathura, associated with the life of Sri Krishna. 3. A name of Sri Krishna. 4. A name of Sri Krishna: here, a Temple by this name. 5. 'M', *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, trans. Swami Nikhilananda, Madras: Sri Ramakrishna Math, 1969, p. 309. 6. *Ibid.*, p. 47.

SISTER CHRISTINE : THE DEDICATED—I

(EDITORIAL)

In Quest of the Spiritual Teacher :

On a dark, rainy night in early July of 1895, two friends, Miss Christina Greensted and Mrs. Mary C. Funke of Detroit, were wending their way with the help of a hired local guide, to Mrs. Dutcher's cottage at the Thousand Island Park in New York State. Though weary after their journey from Detroit, they could not stop their search in spite of the darkness and the rains. They plodded their path up the hill, though frightened in their hearts that they were encroaching upon the privacy of the Swami at such an odd hour. They even thought that it might be foolish to go in quest of a man who did not know anything about them; 'but,' Mrs. Funke writes, 'he had lighted a fire in our souls that could not be quenched. . . . we could not rest until we had seen him face to face.'¹ Thoughts like: 'Would he accept us? And if he did not, what then could we do?' (*ibid.*) crossed their minds no doubt; but they were persistent in their effort. They reached the cottage at last, where Swami Vivekananda and his students had gathered that summer to spend some weeks, for living a life of retreat.

When Christina and Mrs. Funke met the Swami at the cottage, they forgot whatever they had decided to say to him, and one of them blurted out, 'We came from Detroit, and Mrs. P. [Mrs. Phelps?] sent us to you!' The other said, 'We have come to you just as we would go to Jesus, if he were still on the earth, and ask him to teach us.'² The Swami cast an affectionate glance at them and said, 'If only I possessed the power of the Christ to set you free now!'³ He thought for a while and then requested his hostess to allow them to spend the evening with them. The ladies listened to the Swami's talks till late

at night. Afterwards they were told to come next morning at nine o'clock. Therefore, they took leave of the Swami and his students that night, and came again early next morning. They were gladly accepted by the Swami, and were allowed to become the members of their household.

The Swami was no doubt amazed to see their spiritual hankering; in later years he used to say about these disciples with pride: 'My disciples, who travelled hundreds of miles to find me, and they came in the night and in the rain!'⁴ Christina and Mrs. Funke arrived at the Thousand Island Park on July 6, 1895, and had the privilege of spending the summer in the holy company of the Swami till August 7. Before entering into further details of their life at this Vedanta Retreat, it will be interesting to see, how and where the spiritual fire was kindled in their hearts by the Swami.

Kindling of the Spiritual Fire:

In the second week of February 1894, Swami Vivekananda, who had earned a name for himself by his soul-stirring speeches at the Parliament of Religions at Chicago, in the September of 1893, went to Detroit to deliver some lectures according to the programme arranged by the Slayton Lyceum Lecture Bureau of Chicago. Prior to his arrival, the Detroit papers were full of admiration for him, and had announced his programmes with great interest. This had given rise to curiosity in the minds of the

1. Swami Vivekananda, *Inspired Talks*, Recorded by S. E. Waldo, Madras: Sri Ramakrishna Math, 1921, (hereafter *Inspired Talks*), p. 25.

2. *Inspired Talks*, p. 26.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 26.

4. *Ibid.*, p. 25.

residents of Detroit, and they were eagerly awaiting his arrival in the city. And it was fortunate for Christina and Mrs. Funke that they did not miss the opportunity of attending his first lecture on Wednesday evening, February 14, at the Unitarian Church, where he spoke on 'Hindu Philosophy'. It was this lecture which lighted the spiritual flame in the hearts of these blessed women; and it was kept constantly burning by his further speeches which he delivered in the city. Recalling the first lecture of the Swami in Detroit, Mrs. Funke has written, 'The large edifice was literally packed and the Swami received an ovation. I can see him yet as he stepped upon the platform, a regal, majestic figure, vital, forceful, dominant, and at the first sound of the wonderful voice, a voice all music—now like the plaintive minor strain of an Eolian harp, again deep, vibrant, resonant—there was a hush, a stillness that could almost be felt, and the vast audience breathed as one man.'⁵

In connection with this lecture, Sister Christine has written in her Memoirs, 'Little did I think when I reluctantly set out one cold February night in 1894 to attend a lecture at the Unitarian Church in Detroit that I was doing something which would change the whole course of my life and be of such stupendous import that it could not be measured by previous standards I had known... I went very unwillingly to this particular lecture to hear one "Vivekananda, monk from India", and only in response to the pleading of my friend, Mrs. Mary C. Funke.... Surely never in our countless incarnations had we taken a step so momentous! For before we had listened five minutes, we knew that we had found the touchstone for which we had searched so long. In one breath, we exclaimed—"If we had missed this...!"'⁶

'Pure Seeds Yield Pure and Sweet Fruits':

The reminiscences mentioned above reveal

to us, how the spiritual fire was kindled in the hearts of these two pure souls. As a matter of fact, there were hundreds present on the occasion who had heard the Swami, but his speech affected the hearts of these two fortunate ones. This could not be possible unless they were born of a very pure parentage. 'Pure seeds yield pure and sweet fruits', says one Hindu Saint. And some such was the case with Christina, who is the subject of this Editorial. She was born at Nuremberg in Germany on August 17, 1866. Her parents were German by birth, and her father Frederick Greenstidel migrated to United States, when Christina was only three years old, and the family settled at Detroit. Her father was a noble soul, and a free-thinking German scholar, but lacked business skill, and as a result, he lost all his property. Christina had great regard for her father. At the age of seventeen, Christina had to bear the burden of the whole family—her old mother and five ('some say six') sisters—due to the sudden demise of her father. She took a job in the Detroit Public School as a teacher. From this time onwards, her life was full of struggles and hardships.

Restlessness of the Early Youth:

In early youth, Christina became a devotee of the Christ, and one of the first Christian Scientists of Detroit. But her soul was always aspiring to know the way for salvation. Remembering these days of restlessness, she writes in her Memoirs: 'There are times when life flows on in a steady deadly stream of monotony—eating, sleeping, talking—the same weary round. Commonplace thoughts, stereotyped ideas, the eternal tread-mill. Tragedy comes. For a moment it shocks us into stillness. But we cannot keep still. The

5. *Ibid.*, p. 19-20.

6. *Reminiscences of Swami Vivekananda*, Mayavati: Advaita Ashrama, 1961, (hereafter *Rem.*), p. 154.

merry-go-round stops neither for our sorrow nor our happiness. Surely, this is not all there is to life. This is not what we are here for. Restlessness comes. What are we waiting for? Then one day it happens: the stupendous things for which we have been waiting—that which dispels the deadly monotony, which turns the whole of life into a new channel, which eventually takes one to a far away country and sets one among strange people with different customs and a different outlook upon life, ... a wonderful people who know what they are waiting for, who recognize the purpose of life. Our restlessness is stilled for ever!⁷ And, perhaps, this was what happened to Christina, when she first heard Swamiji on that memorable day of her life, at Detroit; (and more so, when she was accepted by him at the Thousand Islands Vedanta Retreat). Further fuel must have been added to the fire by hearing the Swami in Detroit that year on various occasions. The Swami had stayed for about six weeks then, and given many lectures there. A great sensation was created in the city due to his fiery lectures.⁸ Of these days, Christina writes, 'We missed no opportunity of hearing him. Again and again we heard the "wondrous Evangel of the Self". Again and again we heard the story of India, now from this angle, now from that. We knew we had found our Teacher. The word *guru* we did not know then. Nor did we meet him personally, but what matter? It would take years to assimilate what we had already learnt. And then the Master would somehow, somewhere, teach us again!⁹

At the Thousand Islands :

And that day had dawned in the life of Christina, when she had the privilege of staying with her Master at the Thousand Islands, for about a month. Recalling those blessed days, Sister Christine has written: 'Of the wonderful weeks that followed, it is difficult to write. Only if one's

mind were lifted to that high state of consciousness in which we lived for the time, could we hope to recapture the experience. We were filled with joy. We did not know at that time that we were living in his radiance. On the wings of inspiration, he carried us to the height which was his natural abode. He himself, speaking of it later, said, that he was at his best in Thousand Islands.'¹⁰

We can know much more about the days at the Thousand Islands from the narratives of Sister Christine and Mrs. Funke quoted in Swamiji's *Life*;¹¹ and the *Inspired Talks* written by Miss S. E. Waldo of Brooklyn, who had noted down the talks of the Swami delivered there on various occasions. According to Miss Waldo, about twelve students had stayed with the Swami at the Thousand Islands, though all of them were not present at a time. Some came and went. Of these, two—Leon Landsberg and Marie Louise—were initiated into Sannyasa, and five were initiated into Brahmacharya by the Swami. In the opinion of Marie Louise Burke (alias Gargi), Christina was one of these five¹². About this initiation ceremony, Sister Christine has written: 'Swami Vivekananda had planned to initiate several of those already there on Monday [July 8]. "I don't know you well enough yet to feel sure that you are ready for initiation," he said on Sunday

7. *Rem.*, p. 153.

8. For detailed information on this subject *vide* : Marie Louise Burke, *Swami Vivekananda in America, New Discoveries*, Mayavati : Advaita Ashrama, 1966, pp. 196-376.

9. *Rem.*, p. 158-59.

10. *Rem.*, p. 159.

11. For detailed narrations, *vide* : Eastern and Western Disciples, *The Life of Swami Vivekananda*, Mayavati : Advaita Ashrama, 1965, pp. 355-370. i

12. Marie Louise Burke, *Swami Vivekananda: His Second Visit to the West, New Discoveries*, Mayavati : Advaita Ashrama, 1973, p. 417.

afternoon. Then he added rather shyly, "I have a power which I seldom use—the power of reading the mind. If you permit me, I should like to read your mind, as I wish to initiate you with the others tomorrow." We assented joyfully. Evidently he was satisfied with the result of the reading, for the next day, together with several others, he gave us a *mantra* and made us his disciples.¹³ We do not, however, know any other occasion in connection with Sister Christine, when she was initiated into Brahmacharya by the Swami, either in India or abroad; as we know definitely with regard to Sister Nivedita. He trained his disciples at the Thousand Islands with patience and benignity; and the students felt it as a benediction.

The Swami left the Retreat on Wednesday, August 7 evening at about 9 o'clock; but Christina and Mrs. Funke stayed on a little longer. On August 9, the Swami wrote to Christina from New York, 'You must be enjoying the beautiful weather very much. Here, it is extremely hot, but it does not worry me much. ... What is Mrs. Funke doing, and Miss Dutcher? Do you go to meditate on the mountains as usual?'¹⁴

After the Swami's departure from the Thousand Islands, Christina was always in touch with her Master through correspondence. He wrote her inspiring letters from time to time giving her spiritual guidance and a bit of chat. The Swami left for England by the middle of August, and in his letter of October 4, from Reading, he had written to her, 'I received your beautiful note regularly enough, but I was so busy in many things as to be unable to reply sooner. ... Purity, patience, and perseverance overcome all. All great things must of necessity be slow. ... May the blessings of the Lord be ever and ever on you, dear Christina; and may your path in life be ever one of peace and purity, is the conti-

nuous prayer of your ever loving friend, Vivekananda.'¹⁵

After his return from England, the Swami had a plan to go to Detroit. In his letter to Christina from New York, he had written, 'I am once again on American soil, ... Sometime after Christina, I intend to make a tour through Detroit and Chicago. I do not care for the public lecturings at all; and do not think I shall have any more public lectures charging admission. If you will see Mrs. Phelps and others of our friends and arrange some classes (strictly on non-payment basis) it will facilitate things a good deal.'¹⁶ Two days later, the Swami wrote again asking her to arrange classes in Detroit with the help of Mrs. Phelps. A month later, he wrote about his tour programme to Mrs. Bull, 'My idea now is to make a tour in Boston, Detroit, and Chicago in March [1896], and then come back to New York a week or so and then start for England.'¹⁷ He again wrote about his plan of visiting Detroit in early March to Christina, in his letter of 24 January.

Second Visit to Detroit :

According to his plan, the Swami reached Detroit on March 3rd, 1896. This time he was the guest of Mrs. Steers, at the Richlieu, 2nd Avenue, Detroit. During this visit, the Swami did not intend to deliver any public lectures, but circumstances took such a turn that he had to give up his resolve. About this Mr. Goodwin, who had accompanied him there, wrote to Mrs. Bull on March 5, '...yesterday [the Swami] gave two lectures—

13. *Rem.*, p. 169.

14. Unpublished Letters of Swami Vivekananda from Mrs. Boshi Sen's Collection (hereafter *U.L.*), dt. 9 August 1895.

15. *U.L.*, dt. 4 October 1895.

16. *U.L.*, dt. 8 December 1895.

17. *U.L.*, dt. 10 January 1896.

morning and evening, both of them "The Ideal of Universal Religion". ...When we arrived we found that a newspaper war had been in course of progress. Charges had been made against the Swami, and they had been injudiciously refuted. The consequence was that...the classes which he had intended as entirely private to friends, degenerated into public classes. ... It has been decided—to overcome the difficulty—to give three public classes, and to confine the remainder to his friends.¹⁸ From Mr. Goodwin's letters of this period, it is known that he had met Miss Christina Greenstidel, Mrs. Funke, and other friends of the Swami at Detroit this time. About this visit of the Swami, Mrs. Funke has written, 'He gave us a most brilliant and masterly discourse. Never had I seen the Master look as he looked that night. There was something in his beauty not of earth.'¹⁹ The Swami stayed in Detroit for about two weeks and then went to Boston, and thence to Chicago, reaching New York by April 11. He stayed there for four days, supervising the editing of the *Karma Yoga*, and writing notes for his lecture on 'Vedanta Philosophy' delivered at the Harvard University; and afterwards left for England on April 15.

Christina Through Swamiji's Letters :

In England, the Swami worked till the middle of December 1896, and then left for India via Europe. Hereafter he did not meet Christina till the July of 1899, but he was always in touch with her through correspondence. Swamiji's letters to Christina throw a flood of light on their intimate relationship as a guru and a disciple. He used to write Christina very freely about his personal matters for the sake of having a chat with her. He always wrote her in a light vein about his health, his itinerary, his programmes, and many sundry things, about which he seldom wrote to any other disciple. He often inquired about her health and gave

her advice in spiritual and secular matters. Following extracts from the Swami's hitherto unpublished letters written to Christina on various occasions, will give us some idea of his loving relationship with his disciple.

On March 16, 1897, he had written from Darjeeling, India, 'The work I had to do to reach Calcutta from Ceylon was so immense that I could not earlier acknowledge your precious gift. The work has broken me down completely and I have got "Diabetes" an incurable disease, which must carry me off at least in a few years. ... How are things going on with you all?'²⁰ Again he wrote from Almora on June 3, 1897, 'This disease brought about by hard work has nearly disappeared with rest. At Darjeeling it entirely disappeared. ... I feel much stronger and better. ... How are you? What are you doing? How things are going on with you and Mrs. Funke? Are you getting your bank account started bit by bit? *You must do that. Do for me. I am much worn out; and you will have to give me food and shelter; will you?*'²¹

If we study Swamiji's letters written to her during 1898, we find that he is warning her not to overwork for the sake of carrying out the responsibility of her family consisting of five sisters and the mother. He advises her to take rest in order to save herself from exhaustion. When she argues that she has to do her duty to the family, the Swami writes her on May 20, 1898, 'Don't you work yourself out, dear Christina; take long long rest. Duty has no end and

¹⁸. Mr. J. J. Goodwin's Letters (unpublished), dt. 5 March 1896.

¹⁹. *Inspired Talks*, p. 33.

²⁰. *U.L.*, dt. 16 March 1897. *U.L.s* quoted hereafter in this Editorial have been reproduced in full in this issue of the *Prabuddha Bharata*,

²¹. *U.L.*, dt. 3 June 1897.

the world extremely selfish.’²² Again he warns her on August 27, 1898, ‘Do not work yourself out. It is no use. Always remember: “Duty is the midday sun whose fierce rays are burning the very vitals of humanity.”’²³ And in his letter of October 25, 1898, the Swami asks her: ‘How do you manage your family—the expenses etc.? Write me all you like to write. Give me a long chat. Will you? Do!’²⁴

Another significant teaching Swamiji gave her through his letters was to infuse into her heart the spirit of surrender at the feet of the Divine Mother. For instance, in his letter of December 15, 1898, he had written, ‘The “Mother” is our guide. Whatever happens or will happen will be under

her ordination. Goodbye for the present and do not worry yourself the least about the three mysterious years. They will all unravel their mysteries, and will be laid to your account and benefit. No good thought is ever lost, and I am sure, your thoughts have been always very good.’²⁵

Thus we have seen, how free and loving Swamiji was to Christina, whom, as we shall see later, he dedicated to the ‘Mother’ and Her work for the poor women of India.

(To be continued)

22. U.L., dt. 20 May 1898.

23. U.L., dt. 27 August 1898.

24. U.L., dt. 25 October 1898.

25. U.L., dt. 15 December 1898.

SCIENCE AND RELIGION—IV

SWAMI RANGANATHANANDA

31. India’s Spiritual Vision of Unity in Diversity

It is in this context, against this background, that the Indian approach to religion becomes significant. From the time of the Upaniṣads to our own times, India has sought in religion, not a finished dogma to believe in, but a method and a means to pierce the veil that hides the ever-present truth behind man and nature. The Upaniṣads glowingly register this passion of the Indian mind to seek and find truth through a penetrating study of experience. In the appreciative words of the American missionary Robert Ernest Hume (*The Thirteen Principal Upaniṣads*, p. 30, footnote):

‘The earnestness of the search for truth is one of the delightful and commendable features of the Upaniṣads.’

The sages of the Upaniṣads, after a critical and penetrating search into the depth of man—‘by means of the subtle *buddhi*, or reason, that had been trained by the sages in the search and discovery of subtle truths’, as one of the Upaniṣads puts it—*agryayā buddhyā sūkṣmayā sūkṣma-darśibhiḥ* (*Kaṭha Upaniṣad*, III. 12)—had discovered that imperishable reality as the one and non-dual Self, the Ātman. The opening verse of the *Isā Upaniṣad* proclaims this sublime truth in a verse which has inspired the philosophy of the *Gītā* and innumerable spiritual seekers thereafter: *Isāvāsyam idaṁ sarvaṁ yat kīṅca jagatyāṁ jagat*—‘All this universe, in all its changing forms, is enveloped by the Lord.’ The second verse of chapter five of the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad*, which Śaṅkarācārya introduces in his commentary in the words: ‘The Ātman is not a dweller

in the "city" of one (the human) body only; what else? He is the dweller in all bodies', says :

*Hamsaḥ śuciṣat vasurantarikṣasat
hotā vediṣat atithir-duroṇasat ;
Nṛṣat varasat ṛtasat vyomasat
abjā gojā ṛtajā adriajā ṛtaṁ bṛhat—*

'He is the swan dwelling in the heaven (in the form of the sun), the air filling the atmosphere, the fire dwelling on the altar, the holy guest in the house ; (He is) in man, in gods, in the sacrifice, in the immensity of space ; (He is) born in water (as the aquatic creatures), on the earth (as insects, reptiles and mammals); (He is) born as (the fruit of) sacrifice, born of the mountains (as rivers flowing from the mountains to the ocean); (He is) the True, the Infinite.'

This great verse, conveying a profound spiritual vision, occurs also in the *Rig-Veda* (IV. 40. 5), with the last word omitted. This is the vision that determined the Indian attitude to nature, to the physical, botanical, zoological, and human environments, not as an enemy to be conquered, as in the West, but as a friend to be understood and respected and wisely used. As an enemy, man plunders and ravages nature ; that attitude inevitably passes on to other human beings also, resulting in wars and colonial exploitations and slave trade ; it also produces serious ecological imbalances, until violated nature begins to violate and mutilate the perpetrator himself. This is the tragedy that is being experienced by modern man, and that is posing a serious challenge to human wisdom today.

32. Sir J. C. Bose and the Scientific Vision of Unity

The Indian vision of the spiritual unity of all existence is, accordingly, receiving responsive echoes from increasing numbers of thinkers and scientists in the post-war West. Criticisms of economics of affluence,

of GNP as the false god of economic growth, of the unbridled pursuit of organic satisfactions, and the ravaging of nature are increasing in volume and intensity ; and books about nature, upholding the Indian vision and quoting Upaniṣadic passages, are coming out in the West more and more. One such recent book is *The Secret Life of Plants* by Peter Tompkins and Christopher Bird, the sub-title of which reads : *Astounding discoveries about the physical, emotional, and spiritual relations between plants and man*. It is a fascinating account of the researches on the subject conducted in the United States, Soviet Russia, and other countries. Concluding their 'Introduction' to the book, the authors say :

'Evidence now supports the vision of the poet and the philosopher that plants are living, breathing, communicating creatures, endowed with personality and the attributes of soul. It is only we, in our blindness, who have insisted on considering them automata.'

What is of special interest to us in India is its chapter 6, entitled 'Plant Life Magnified a Hundred Million Times', containing a moving and vivid account of the pioneering work of the late Sir Jagadish Chandra Bose in this vital field between eight and five decades ago. The authors present, in the opening paragraph, the Bose Institute in Calcutta as the 'Indian Temple of Science' bearing the inscription : 'This temple is dedicated to the feet of God for bringing honour to India and happiness to the world.'

Starting his work of scientific research, initially in the field of physics, in a small twenty-foot square room for a laboratory, and creating his own tools and instruments, Bose demonstrated the existence and propagation of wireless waves in 1895 in Calcutta. His work in physics led him imperceptibly to botany and physiology, which convinced him of the tenuous nature of the boundary

line between 'non-living' metals and 'living' plants and humans, and of the truth of the 'fundamental unity among the apparent diversity of nature'. And on 10th May 1901, he addressed the Royal Institution in London, ending his lecture and experimental demonstration before a mixed, appreciative, sceptical, scientific audience with these words (*The Secret Life of Plants*, pp. 86-87) :

'I have shown you this evening autographic records of the history of stress and strain in the living and non-living. How similar are the writings ! So similar indeed that you cannot tell one apart from the other. Among such phenomena, how can we draw a line of demarcation and say, here the physical ends, and there the physiological begins? Such absolute barriers do not exist.

'It was when I came upon the mute witness of these self-made records, and perceived in them one phase of a pervading unity that bears within it all things—the mote that quivers in ripples of light, the teeming life upon our earth, and the radiant suns that shine above us—it was then that I understood, for the first time, a little of that message proclaimed by my ancestors on the banks of the Ganges thirty centuries ago: "They who see but One, in all the changing manifoldness of this universe, unto them belongs Eternal Truth—unto none else, unto none else".' (italics not by the authors)

Giving a sample of the Western reactions to these revolutionary scientific revelations presented by Bose during his trips to Europe in 1919 and 1920, the authors quote, what they term, the 'usually reserved' *Times* of London (*ibid.*, p. 94) :

'While we in England were still steeped in the rude empiricism of barbaric life, the subtle Easterner had swept the universe into a synthesis and had seen the *one* in all its changing manifestations.'

The authors conclude the book in these words :

'The attraction of the seer's supersensible world, or worlds within worlds, is too great to forego, and the stakes are too high, for they may include survival for the planet. Where the modern scientist is baffled by the secrets of the life of plants, the seer offers solutions which, however incredible, make more sense than the dusty mouthings of academicians; what is more, they give philosophic meaning to the totality of life.'

33. Science and Religion Complementary

Religion expounded as a verified and verifiable science has a message for all humanity. Physical science, through its technology, may build for man a first class house, and equip it with radio, television, and other gadgets; the social security measures of a modern welfare state may provide him with everything necessary for a happy fulfilled life in this world, and even, through the state church, in the world beyond; the man himself may give his house such arresting names as Śāntī Kuñj (Peace Retreat), or Sukha Vilās (Happy Home). Yet none of these can ensure, by themselves, that he will live in that house in peace or happiness. For that depends, to a large extent, on another source of strength and nourishment, another type of knowledge and discipline—the knowledge and discipline proceeding from the science and technique of religion. If man can have the help of the positive sciences to create a healthy external environment, and the help of the science of spirituality to create a healthy internal environment, he can hope to achieve total life-fulfilment; not otherwise. This is the testament of the Upaniṣads.

But, today, this is not the picture that modern civilisation presents. Man in this technological civilisation is feeling inwardly impoverished and empty in an environment of wealth, power, and pleasure; he is full of tension and sorrow, doubt and uncertainty, all the time. Juvenile delinquency, drunkenness, suicide, and an increasing

variety of other maladies and individual and social distortions are ever on the increase. Why? Because man is not inwardly satisfied; he is smitten with ennui and boredom arising from the limitations of his sense-bound *Weltanschauung*. Indian thinkers foresaw this predicament of modern man ages ago. Says the ancient *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad* about the modern space age (VI. 20):

*Yadā carmavad ākāśaṁ
veṣṭayisyanti mānavāḥ;
Tadā devaṁ avijñāya
duḥkhasyānto bhaviṣyati—*

‘Even though men may (through their technical skill) roll up space like a piece of leather, still there will be no end of sorrow for them without the realisation of the luminous One within.’

Schopenhauer said a hundred years ago (*The World as Will and Idea*, Vol. I, p. 404):

‘All men who are secure from want and care, now that at last they have thrown off all other burdens, become a burden to themselves.’

34. Religion is Realisation

Today, man is his own major burden and problem. He can tackle and solve his problem, not just by going in for more positivistic science, more technology, more life’s amenities, more socio-political or microbiological manipulations of human conditions, but by the cultivation of the science of religion. Says Swami Vivekananda (*Complete Works*, Vol. IV, eighth edition, p. 35):

‘You must bear in mind that religion does not consist in talk, or doctrines, or books, but in realisation; it is not learning, but being.’

It is in this sense that India understood religion; and it is this idea of religion that Swami Vivekananda expounded in the West and the East through his powerful voice.

The end and aim of religion, as our ancient teachers put it, is the experience, *anubhava*, of God, through the steady growth in man’s spiritual awareness. That is the touchstone of religion. There is such a thing as the *spiritual growth* of the individual, step by step. We experience this growth, just as we see a plant growing, or a building rising up step by step, brick by brick. When we live the life of religion, strength comes to us, consciousness becomes expanded, sympathies grow and widen, and we feel that we are growing into better men and women. It is only the strength that proceeds from such inward spiritual growth and development that will enable man to digest and assimilate and discipline the energies released by the progress of scientific technology. Such a man alone has the strength and wisdom to convert the chaos of life into a pattern of peace and happiness and general welfare. If religion is taken away from human society, what remains is simple barbarism. Ancient civilisations were destroyed by barbarians bred outside those civilisations. But modern civilisation, if it is to go the same way, will be destroyed by barbarians bred within the civilisation itself. What can save us from this predicament is a little ‘Christian love’ in our hearts for our neighbours, in the words of the late Bertrand Russell (*Impact of Science on Society*, p. 114), or a little more altruism, in the words of the late Pitirim S. Sorokin, of Harvard University (*Reconstruction of Humanity*, especially part V). This love comes from the practice of religion, as defined by the world’s authentic spiritual teachers. Says Swami Vivekananda, giving a scientific definition of religion (*Complete Works*, Vol. IV, eighth edition, p. 358):

‘Religion is the manifestation of the divinity already in man.’

‘Now comes the question: Can religion really accomplish anything?’ asked Swami

Vivekananda, and proceeded to answer (*ibid.*, Vol. III, eighth edition, p. 4):

‘It can. It brings to man eternal life. It has made man what he is and will make of this human animal a god. That is what religion can do. Take religion from human society and what will remain? Nothing but a forest of brutes. Sense-happiness is not the goal of humanity. Wisdom, *jñāna*, is the goal of all life. We find that man enjoys his intellect more than an animal enjoys its senses; and we see that man enjoys his spiritual nature even more than his rational nature. So the highest wisdom must be this spiritual knowledge. With this knowledge will come bliss.’

35. Significance of Homeostasis in Evolution

Nature has endowed man with the organic capacity to understand the world as well as himself. From the stage of the higher mammals up to man, says biology, as referred to earlier, nature has been developing and perfecting the mechanism of a built-in equilibrium, thermostatic to begin with and homeostatic later, within the organism itself. Dealing with the evolutionary significance of this mechanism, the neurologist Grey Walter says (*The Living Brain*, p. 16):

‘The acquisition of internal temperature control, thermostasis, was a supreme event in neural, indeed, in all natural history. It made possible the survival of mammals on a cooling globe. That was its general importance in evolution. Its particular importance was that it completed, in one section of the brain, an automatic system of stabilisation for the vital functions of the organism—a condition known as homeostasis. *With this arrangement, other parts of the brain are left free for functions not immediately related to the vital engine or the senses, for functions surpassing the wonders of homeostasis itself.* (italics not by the author)

And quoting the significant words,

referred to earlier, of Claude Bernard, that a *fixed interior milieu is the condition for the free life*, Grey Walter continues, (*ibid.*, pp. 16-17):

‘Those who had the privilege of sitting under Sir Joseph Barcroft at Cambridge owe much to him for his explanation of this dictum and its application to physiological research. We might otherwise have been scoffers; for “the free life” is not a scientific expression. He translated the saying into simple questions and guided us to the answers.

“What has the organism gained”, he asked, “by the constancy of temperature, constancy of hydrogen-ion concentration, constancy of water, constancy of sugar, constancy of oxygen, constancy of calcium, and the rest?” With his gift for quantitative expression, it was all in the day’s work for him to demonstrate the individual intricacies of the various exquisitely balanced feedback mechanisms. But I recall in his manner a kind of modest trepidation, as if he feared we might ridicule his flight of fancy, when he gave us this illustration of homeostasis and its peculiar virtue:

“How often have I watched the ripples on the surface of a still lake made by a passing boat, noted their regularity and admired the patterns formed when two such ripple-systems meet; ... *but the lake must be perfectly calm.* ... To look for high intellectual development in a *milieu* whose properties have not become stabilised, is to seek ... ripple-patterns on the surface of the stormy Atlantic.”

Homeostasis as a fixed interior *milieu* is not an end in itself. It is just a condition, a necessary condition, for life forging ahead to higher and higher evolutionary levels. And the highest level to be reached is the perfect freedom of the human spirit, by detaching the new significant datum of the self from its organic limitations and making it realise its true nature. Nature has achieved physical homeostasis for man; man has now to achieve for himself, by himself, through the organic capacities which

nature has endowed him with, says Vedānta, a mental homeostasis, with a view to realising the Ātman that is behind the mind. After explaining that, through homeostasis, 'the upper brain is freed from the menial tasks of the body, the regulating functions being delegated to the lower brain', Grey Walter significantly remarks, as referred to earlier, that for mammals, homeostasis meant only survival; but for man, it points the way to his spiritual freedom.

36. Homeostasis versus Yoga

And relating this physical homeostasis of organic evolution to the mental and spiritual homeostasis of *yoga*, Grey Walter concludes :

'And once again, as new horizons open, we become aware of old landmarks. The experience of homeostasis, the perfect mechanical calm which it allows the brain, has been known for two or three thousand years under various appellations. It is the physiological aspect of all the perfectionist faiths—*nirvāṇa*, the abstraction of the Yogi, the peace that passeth understanding, the derided "happiness that lies within"; *it is a state of grace in which disorder and disease are mechanical slips and errors.*' (italics not by the author)

The struggle to go beyond organic pulls and limitations, and realise the freedom of the spirit in Self-realisation, needs to be supported and sustained by a stable moral life; only when this base is secured can man carry forward the struggle directly into the inner world and fashion relevant disciplines and forge newer instruments out of his psycho-physical energy system, among which a tough *manas* (mind) and a pure *buddhi* (reason and will) are the most important. This results in that second homeostasis, mentioned earlier, which is acquired by man himself with the help of his higher brain after freeing it from thraldom to the organic system, and which is

comprehensively called, in Vedānta and Yoga, *śama* and *dama*, discipline of the mind and discipline of the sense organs. This is beautifully brought out in the chariot imagery of the third chapter of the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad*, where *buddhi*, enlightened reason and pure will, is presented as the charioteer of man's journey to freedom and fulfilment.

37. The Nature of Yoga

The state in which the mind succeeds in stilling the clamour of the sense organs and itself becomes pure, steady, and still, is called *yoga*. This is the inner condition which spiritual seekers down the ages have striven to attain, and which many have attained, and in which many have realised God, the innermost Self of all, as affirmed by Śrī Kṛṣṇa in the *Gītā* (IV. 10).

*Vīta-rāga-bhaya-krodhā
manmayā mām upāśritāḥ;
Bahavo jñāna-tapasā
pūtā madbhāvam āgatāḥ—*

'Freed from attachment, fear, and anger, absorbed in Me (the one Self in all), and taking refuge in Me, very many people, purified by the *tapas* of *jñāna*, or discipline of spiritual knowledge, have attained to oneness with Me.'

The same truth is affirmed by Gauḍapāda also in his *Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad Kārikā* (II. 35) :

*Vīta-rāga-bhaya-krodhaiḥ
munibhiḥ veda-pāragaiḥ;
Nirvikalpo hyayam dṛṣṭaḥ
prapañcopaśamo' dvayaḥ—*

'This transcendental non-dual state, in which relative existence is overcome, has been attained by sages who were free from attachment, fear, and anger, and who had gone beyond (the mandate of) the Vedas (i.e. of all scriptures, in view of their entering the field of *experiment*, and getting the *experience* of spirituality).'

From the time of the Upaniṣads, about four thousand years ago, and probably even earlier, our country has developed a full-fledged science and technique of this subject, the subject of *yoga*. In the words of Yama in his teaching to the boy Naciketā (*Kaṭha Upaniṣad*, VI. 10-11) :

*Yadā pañcāvatiṣṭhante
jñānāni manasā saha ;
Buddhiśca na viceṣṭate,
tām āhuh paramām gatim.
Tām yogam iti manyante—*

‘When the five sense organs of knowledge remain steady, along with the *manas*, and even the *buddhi* does not act—that is the supreme state, say (the sages).

‘They (the sages) consider that (state) as *yoga*.’

38. Religion and Science in the Vedantic Perspective

Modern civilisation has overrated science and technology, just as the older civilisations had underrated it. There is need today to view science in its proper perspective—the perspective of total human knowledge and welfare. This is one of the several vital contributions of Swami Vivekananda to modern thought. Dealing with the complementary character of Eastern contributions to religion and Western contributions to science, he said in his lecture on ‘My Master’ delivered in New York in 1896 (*Complete Works*, Vol. IV, eighth edition, p. 155) :

‘Each of these types has its grandeur, each has its glory. The present adjustment will be the harmonising, the mingling of these two ideals. To the oriental, the world of spirit is as real as to the occidental is the world of senses. In the spiritual, the oriental finds everything he wants or hopes for ; in it, he finds all that makes life real to him. To the occidental, he is a dreamer ; to the oriental, the occidental is a dreamer play-

ing with ephemeral toys, and he laughs to think that grown-up men and women should make so much of a handful of matter which they will have to leave sooner or later. Each calls the other a dreamer. But the oriental ideal is as necessary for the progress of the human race as is the occidental, and I think it is more necessary. Machines never made mankind happy and never will make. He who is trying to make us believe this will claim that happiness is in the machine ; but it is always in the mind. That man alone who is the lord of his mind can become happy, and none else. And what, after all, is this power of machinery? Why should a man who can send a current of electricity through a wire be called a very great man and a very intelligent man? Does not nature do a million times more than that every moment? Why not then fall down and worship nature?’

39. Need for a Synthesis of Science and Religion in Education

Education has to enable all students to achieve at least a fraction of the synthesis of East and West, spirituality and science, contemplation and action. It is the science of spirituality, the *parā vidyā*, the supreme science, that fosters in man ethical, aesthetic, and spiritual values, including the moral values associated with pure science. The harmony of all these values, and the intrinsic harmony between science and religion, always upheld in Vedānta, became revealed in our time in the deep spiritual kinship between Narendra (the later Swami Vivekananda), the representative of *aparā-vidyā*, and Sri Ramakrishna, the full embodiment of *parā-vidyā*. All such values emerge from out of the depths of the human spirit at a certain stage of human evolution and after the achievement of some measure of mastery of the environment by him ; they do not emerge from physical nature itself. It is folly, therefore, to believe, or to expect, that they

will automatically result from industry or from technological manipulations of physical nature, and from the wealth resulting from such achievements. Protesting against such widely held modern folly, the late Bertrand Russell said (*Impact of Science on Society*, p. 77) :

'The machine as an object of adoration is the modern form of Satan, and its worship is the modern diabolism. . . .

'Whatever else may be mechanical, values are not, and this is something which no political philosopher must forget.'

It is thus obvious that, if the current secular school and university education is high and higher education, spiritual education that Swami Vivekananda received from Sri Ramakrishna in our times, bearing the wonderful fruits of character, strength and compassion, deep as the ocean and broad as the skies, and harmonising East and West, religion and science, the sacred and the secular, is the highest education into which the other two, to fulfil themselves, must lead a child. Sri Ramakrishna's experience and example also make it clear that man can enter into, and benefit from, this spiritual education from any stage or level of his school or college education. Wisdom can accompany, and enliven, and creatively stimulate, knowledge at any level—primary or secondary, under-graduate or post-graduate. It is also equally clear that, without a little of that wisdom, knowledge at any of these levels can become, in the long run, not a blessing but a curse to oneself and to society, a breeding ground of pride, selfishness, exploitation, and violence, on the one hand, and alienation, loneliness, and psychic breakdowns, on the other. These have afflicted societies and civilisations in the past, and led them to decay and death. And modern Western civilisation is also facing that challenge today. As our

own country also is absorbing the energies of this modern civilisation at a fast pace today, and is already experiencing some of its distortions, we shall be wise if we open ourselves up also to the eternal message of our *adhyātma-vidyā*, or science of man in depth, and generate a fresh capital of our spiritual energy resources, with a view to digesting, assimilating, and transforming the physical and mental energy resources of our highly technical age.

40. *Vastu-tantra-jnana* versus *Purusa-tantra-jnana*

The modern age demands that we meet the challenges of life with the challenge of an adequate philosophy; that adequacy can be ensured only if that philosophy dares to achieve a happy synthesis between the physical sciences and the science of spirituality. And this is the speciality of our Vedānta among the passing philosophies of the world. Vedānta is the only philosophy that is not only unafraid of the advance of scientific knowledge, but also warmly welcomes it. Truth is its passion—*satyameva jayate*—and not any pleasing opinion or dogma. Like modern physical science, Vedānta fosters the critical inquiring spirit, along with detachment, objectivity, precision, and the challenge of verification. No field of knowledge can foster these moral and intellectual virtues and graces, unless it is on the track of objective truth, and not of mere personal subjective fancies and satisfactions.

This scientific characteristic of Vedānta is boldly brought out by Śaṅkarācārya, while presenting the great theme of *Brahma-jijñāsā*, or inquiry into Brahman, in his commentary on the *Brahma-sūtrās*, and while expounding the scientific frame of mind in his commentary on the *Gītā*. In the former, he makes a distinction between *vastu-tantra-jñāna*, knowledge depending on, and arising from, the *vastu* or existing

reality, and *puruṣa-tantra-jñāna*, knowledge depending on the *puruṣa*, the person, on the moods and fancies and interests of the person concerned. *Vastu-tantra-jñāna*, being knowledge of an existing fact, is independent of the knowing person; that knowledge is only the discovery of the fact, but it does not create it; whereas *puruṣa-tantra-jñāna* is knowledge dependent on the person, and is, accordingly, susceptible of being held, altered, or abolished, depending on the person concerned—*kartum, akartum, anyathā-kartum śakyate, puruṣa-tantratvāt eva*, as observed by Śaṅkarācārya. There is a vast field of human preferences constituting such *puruṣa-tantra* knowledge, and they have their legitimate role to play in human life. But God and soul, as understood in Vedānta, are not mere subjective fancies, but belong to the field of *vastu-tantra* inquiry and knowledge; 'Brahman, immediate and direct, which is the innermost Self of all', as we have heard before, the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* describing the truth of God. Brahman as the Self of all, or as the *pratyag-ātman*, is the only rational sanction for ethics and morality. It is an ever-present Reality, as the knower behind all acts of perception and knowledge, who cannot be made an *object* of knowledge, but yet whose negation also is an impossibility; for He or It is the very Self of him who does the negation: *ya eva nirākartā tasyaiva ātmatvāt*. This Brahman is not any extra-cosmic deity of the usual run of monotheism, which is a logical postulate equally capable of being enthroned or dethroned by human reason, or merely held by faith, but is not capable of verification. But the Brahman of the Upaniṣads, being the one Self of all, is the very basis and consummation of experience—*anubhavāvasānatvāt bhūta-vastu-viṣayatvāt ca brahma-jñānasya*—'because the knowledge of Brahman is consummated in experience and refers, therefore, to an existing *vastu*, or fact.' It is

unknown, in the state of spiritual ignorance, but it is not unknowable; for it is the very Self of the knower, and, hence, is more intimately known than any sense object. But this knowledge is obstructed and obscured by the self-not-self mix-up in normal experience, calling for a discriminative inquiry.

The sages of the Upaniṣads realised, through such a penetrating inquiry and search, this infinite and immortal Ātman in themselves, behind the five ever-changing *kośas*, or sheaths, of the body, the nervous system, the mind, the intellect, and the bliss of egolessness. Says Yama, the teacher, to Naciketā, the young student (*Kaṭha Upaniṣad*, III. 12) :

*Eṣa sarveṣu bhūteṣu
gūḍho ātmā na prakāśate ;
Dṛśyate tvagryayā buddhyā
sūkṣmayā sūkṣma-darśibhiḥ—*

'This Ātman, (being) hidden in all beings, is not manifest to all. But it *can be realised* by all who are trained to inquire into subtle truths, by means of their sharp and subtle *buddhi* or pure Reason.'

We get an echo of this concept of the sheaths covering reality in twentieth-century biology, with respect to the first three, including the *Taittirīya Upaniṣad* emphasis of 'infilling of the succeeding by the preceding' : *tenaiṣa pūrṇaḥ*—'this is infilled by that'. Says the American biologist George Gaylord Simpson (*The Meaning of Evolution*, p. 312) :

'A broad classification of the sciences into physical, biological, and social corresponds with three levels of organisation of matter and energy, and not levels only, but also quite distinct kinds of organisation. The three are sharply increasing orders of complexity, and each includes the lower grades. Vital organisation is more intricate than physical organisation, and it is added to and does not replace physical organisation, which is also fully involved in vital organisation.'

Social organisation retains and sums the complexities of both these and adds its own still greater complexities.

The impurities of the mind constitute the obstructions to the knowledge of this ever-present divine immortal dimension of man. These impurities are centred in the ego, in its attachments and aversions and bondage to the organic system. Search for truth, either in the external world which yields scientific knowledge, or in the internal world which yields spiritual experience, calls for the elimination of these impurities which alone gives the mind the power to penetrate from the surface to the depths of nature, external or internal. This is the scientific spirit and temper which is highlighted in Śrī Kṛṣṇa's exhortation to Arjuna in the *Gītā*, and which is amplified in Śaṅkarācārya's commentary on the same (VII. 27-28):

*Ichhā-dveṣa-samutthena
dvandva-mohena bhārata ;
Sarvabhūtāni saṁmoham
sarge yānti parantapa—*

'By the delusion of the pairs of opposites arising from attachment and aversion, O descendant of Bharata, all beings are

fallen into deep delusion at birth. O scorcher of foes.'

*Yeṣāṁ tvantagatāṁ pāpāṁ
janānāṁ puṇya-karmaṇām ;
Te dvandva-moha-nirmuktāḥ
bhajante mām dṛḍhavrataḥ—*

'But those men of virtuous deeds whose impurities have been destroyed—they, freed from all the delusions of the pairs of opposites, worship Me with firm resolve.'

Commenting on the first, Śaṅkarācārya observes :

'For it is well known that knowledge of *things as they are*, even in the external world, cannot rise in the minds of those who are under the thralldom of attachment and aversion ; if this is so, what wonder is there that knowledge of the inner Self, which is faced with many obstacles, does not arise in those who are enslaved by them and consequently are deeply deluded ! Hence all beings, *whose reason is obstructed and deeply deluded* by the delusion of these pairs of opposites, do not know Me, who am their very Self, and, hence also, they do not worship Me as their own Self.'

(To be concluded)

EARLY DAYS AT SHANTI ASHRAMA—II

GARGI

On the afternoon of Thursday, August 2, just a week after his arrival in San Francisco, Swami Turiyanānda and eight students set out for the Ashrama. These pioneers were Emily Aspinall, Ida Ansell, Dr. Milburn H. Logan, George Roorbach, Mrs. Bertha Petersen, Dr. Lucy A. Chandler, Mrs. Agnes Stanley, and a Mrs. Jackson. The first four had been well known to Swami

Vivekananda. Mrs. Aspinall had helped to keep house for him in San Francisco ; Ida Ansell had been with him at Camp Taylor in Marin County ; Mr. Roorbach was a leader of the Alameda Home of Truth where he had lived for several weeks in April of 1900 ; and Dr. Logan had served for a time as his physician and host in San Francisco. Mrs. Petersen, Dr. Lucy

Chandler, and Mrs. Stanley were members of the San Francisco Vedanta Society, and Mrs. Jackson, of whom one hears no more, was a Theosophist friend of Dr. Chandler's. Four days earlier, Lydia Bell and Minnie Boock had gone on ahead to get things ready for the arrival of the group.

Swami Turiyananda and the eight students, carrying luggage, provisions, tents, and other bulky equipment of divers kinds, travelled by train to San Jose, a town some sixty miles south of San Francisco. They stayed overnight at a small hotel (the Rita) and the next morning at daybreak set out by horse-drawn stagecoach for Mount Hamilton, some twenty miles southeast. This second step of the journey was the most pleasant. The road, a fairly good and well-travelled one, wandered through fragrant fruit orchards, through vineyards and olive groves, past well-kept farms and dairies and, at length, wound—twisting three hundred and sixty-five times in five miles—up Mount Hamilton to Lick Observatory, from which summit of 4,200 feet one could see on a clear day—and this day of August 3, 1900, would most surely have been clear in Santa Clara County—for a hundred miles in all directions.

But just here, at the peak of the journey, the aspect of things alarmingly changed. Waiting for the party of nine was a Mr. Paul Gerber, a young Italian-Swiss homesteader, whom Miss Boock had sent. He had brought the only available conveyance in the valley—a small, four-seated spring wagon, drawn by four mules, which could accommodate seven people, including himself: four on the seats, three on the floor with legs dangling, country-style, over the back. But with the space thus filled there was no room for the luggage, the provisions, the tents, and the equipment—all of which, Mr. Gerber explained, would have to be left at the mountaintop. Further, his mules could make only one trip every other day up the steep, diffi-

cult road; thus it would be some time before the baggage could be recovered. As for the three remaining people, two horses were borrowed from the Observatory, one for Mrs. Stanley, the other for Dr. Logan. Mr. Roorbach, who had brought along a bicycle, had perforce to ride it. Disheartening as this turn of events was, a look to the east of Mount Hamilton was more so. Here were no orchards, no vineyards, no well-irrigated fields, no shaded farmhouses or well-kept barns. A rugged confusion of mountains, partly covered with chaparral—a scratchy small-leaved scrub—and dotted with oak and scraggly digger pine, shimmered in the heat. Nowhere was there a sign of human life. At the base of the farthest range stretched what appeared to be a long, narrow strip of brownish grass. This, as Mr. Gerber could have pointed out, was the San Antonio Valley, somewhere in which lay Miss Boock's homestead. (One should not, incidentally, confuse this valley with the equally arid and deserted, but much better known, Valley of the Oaks farther south, where the San Antonio de Padua Mission is located. The valley upon which Swami Turiyananda may have gravely gazed from the top of Mount Hamilton was not—nor is it today—to be found on an ordinary map; few Californians could have said where it was, what it was, or how to get there.) 'Mother,' Swami Turiyananda murmured, 'where have You brought us? What have You done!'

Overhearing, Mrs. Agnes Stanley promptly reproved him. 'Swami,' she said, 'why are you dejected? Have you lost faith in Mother? You have less faith than even Baby [Ida Ansell]!' So saying, she emptied her purse into his lap, a gesture which seems to have been somewhat inappropriate at that moment. But Swami Turiyananda appreciated her spirit, and then and there gave her the Sanskrit name of 'Shraddha,' which

can be translated roughly as 'one who has firm faith in God'. It was the first Sanskrit name he had bestowed in California. Taking heart, the little group proceeded on.

The road that twisted some fifteen miles down, around, up, and over the mountains and into the valley has been described in her memoirs by Mrs. French, who travelled it several years later, as 'almost impassable—rocks, fallen trees, in some places almost washed away. Only a cowboy on horse-back could traverse it with safety.' Indeed, for long distances this road was no road at all but a long-dry, gravelly creek bed, overgrown here and there with brush. As the afternoon wore on, the heat became oppressive, and at length Shraddha fainted dead away and tumbled from her horse. Though unhurt, she was shaken, and the Swami insisted upon giving her his place in the wagon beside the driver. He himself now rode the horse.

It was seven o'clock. the sun had set behind the western range, and the mountains in the east were a deep and lovely mauve when the party arrived at the Ashrama at the south end of the valley. There they found a small (twelve-by-twelve-foot) log cabin, a shed, a tent, and Miss Boock and Miss Bell.

These two women had been having troubles of their own. During her absence much of Miss Boock's furniture and equipment, such as cots, camp-stools, lamps, and utensils, had been appropriated by other homesteaders whose cabins, now deserted, were located at long distances one from another. Miss Boock, accompanied by Miss Bell and Mr. Gerber, had driven about the sweltering valley in the spring wagon, discovering and repossessing some, if not all, of her property. These foraging trips, together with cleaning out the long-unused cabin and shed, re-equipping them, putting things in order, must have been arduous

tasks. But on the evening of August third all was in readiness, and the rudiments of dinner—boiled rice and brown sugar—were waiting for the Swami and his party. The rest of the meal, which was to have come with the group and been cooked upon arrival, was sitting atop Mount Hamilton.

That night, when the air had grown cool, as it often did in the evening, the party sat around a camp-fire while Swami Turiyananda chanted in Sanskrit. 'We felt only a sublime tranquility,' Miss Ansell recalled in her 'Memories of Swami Turiyananda' (*Vedanta and the West*). 'The air was so soft and it was so still, the night so black and the stars so near and bright. It seemed as though the past with all its hours of tragedy and moments of foolish joy had been blotted out—a sort of vague dream—and real life began at this moment.' One can see this scene, which for two months or more was repeated nightly, through the eyes of one who stood outside it. Blanche Partington, a newspaper reporter who had earlier interviewed Swami Vivekananda, was to spend a day or two at the Ashrama late in August. Arriving in the evening, Miss Partington came upon a sight that seemed to bear out the weird tales of 'the mysterious doings of this new cult' that she had been hearing en route from the 'denizens of San Antone Valley':

In a stillness almost absolute [she wrote], broken only by the light hiss of the living flame leaping upwards to the velvety blue-black sky and the faint murmur of far pines, the worshippers of the divine, as known to the Hindoos, sat in a charmed circle. At one side, immobile as a bronze Buddha, and in the immemorial position assumed by that ancient teacher of men, sat the Swami Turiyananda, and about him his disciples, all with closed eyes, and a look of rapt contemplation upon their quiet faces. Now and again

the deep musical chant of a Sanskrit hymn, intoned in a rich, low voice, broke the silence; then again only the song of the pines was heard, and the worshippers sat in as utter an unconsciousness of the stranger in their midst and the mundane world as if they had been in the innermost recesses of the Himalayan mountains....

It was in such a deep and meditative silence, sitting with his small group of students around such a fire that Swami Turiyananda, 'garbed', as Miss Partington wrote, 'in a robe of elusive gray, dark as is the wont of children of the sun, with bright, black eyes, a brow covered with fine lines of thought, a mild and gracious mien, yet withal an indefinable air of an absolute aristocracy,' inaugurated Shanti Ashrama, lifting the minds of those in his charge to sublime heights, as he was to do again and again throughout the coming months.

It will not be amiss to ask ourselves at this point what Swami Vivekananda expected of the retreat and what Swami Turiyananda, in consequence, hoped to establish there. As they have come down to us, Swamiji's instructions to his brother were of the briefest sort. But no doubt he had said more, and in any event Swami Turiyananda would have had an awareness of his wish.

What was it Swamiji had in mind? Did he expect the retreat to be open the year round for permanent occupancy—a place where advanced students, such as Gurudasa, could live an austere, contemplative life, free from all worldly distractions, a place where they could put his teachings into practice and realize the ideals he had set before them, where, in short, the mind stilled through the practice of renunciation and meditation, they could discover the shining freedom of the Self? Or, on the other hand, did he envision Shanti Ashrama as a place

open only for a month or two each year, where spiritual students could escape at least for a time from worldly duties and tensions?

In writing to Mrs. Hansbrough from New York about the proposed retreat, Swami Vivekananda had spoken of it as 'nice for a Summer gathering'. And again, in his letter of July 3, as 'a centre for quiet and rest and meditation'—implying relatively short stays. But these passages would not mean that Swamiji envisioned the retreat *solely* as a summer place. On the contrary, if a sojourner is to benefit from a stay at a retreat, the place itself must be steeped in holiness, its very air touching and quieting the mind like a blessing. It must be a place where a special manifestation of divinity has been evoked, where monastics have practised austerity and contemplation for long periods of time, a place where some exceedingly subtle force has been set in vibration and where, when one steps inside its boundaries, something deep within oneself at once vibrates in response. The residence of a great soul can create a great retreat, and this, one thinks, is why Swamiji asked so very great a soul as Swami Turiyananda ('one who lives what I talk about') to 'go to the land [and] establish the centre.' From these few words Swami Turiyananda had certainly understood what his brother had wished. Further, to maintain a great retreat and to take the best advantage of it, the continuous residence of competent students is also essential.

One might say, then, that Swamiji envisioned Shanti Ashrama as a permanent retreat where the ideals of Vedanta—particularly those ideals upon which he had laid so much stress in California, the divinity of man and the worship of the Spirit by the Spirit—could be practised and realized by a few dedicated people. In addition to this, he must have seen it as a place where many

other students could go in the summer months and benefit from its living spiritual atmosphere. Such a power-generating, soul-restoring retreat, where theories could be put into concentrated practice and ideals quickly become realized facts, was indeed a necessary corollary to Swamiji's work in the West, and it was in the effort to establish such a full-time Ashrama where some people could live the year round and others visit periodically, that Swami Turiyananda traveled into the San Antonio Valley with a group of raw students.

He was an ideal Swami to conduct a retreat. A younger monk of the Ramakrishna Order, who met him in India in later years, has said that he seemed to be the very embodiment of the Upanishads. He could quote from them by the hour, and as he did so, his very appearance would change. One can imagine that when he was in Shanti Ashrama, chanting from the Upanishads and the *Gita*, meditating, talking for hours on end about 'Mother', how deeply he must have stirred the hearts and minds of the devotees. Years later Swami Atulananda recalled in his book *With the Swami's in America*: "To live with the Swami was a constant joy and inspiration and it was an education, for one was learning all the time. And we all felt that spiritual help came through him. Sometimes gentle, sometimes the "roaring lion of Vedanta", the Swami was always fully awake. There was not a dull moment in the Ashrama."

Even as Swami Turiyananda was an ideal leader, so the San Antonio Valley, except for its water problem and its extremes of heat and cold, was an ideal place for a contemplative retreat where advanced spiritual aspirants, able to stay away from the city for long stretches of time, or for ever, could live an intense life of solitude, meditation, and austerity. The valley had not always been uninhabited. Several years earlier

Swiss-Italians and Germans had settled on this free government land with the hope of cultivating it or of establishing dairy farms and cheese factories. But the scarcity of water soon proved an insurmountable problem, as did the expense of transportation to the nearest railway, some forty miles distant. Thus, as Miss Partington was to write, 'the little colony left the beautiful valley in despair. Now [1900] there are houses without inhabitants, a school house without scholars, wells without water, and barns without grain. Great stock ranches have grown up in their stead, one near by 44,500 acres in extent."

In 1900 one could walk through this country for long miles without meeting another human being. But abundant life was there: rangy jackrabbits would bound across one's path; a doe, startled, might leap from the chaparral; or a bevy of quail whir up from one's feet with heart-stopping suddenness. More heart-stopping still, one might hear nearby in the dark-gold grass an angry, warning rattle snake. High overhead, a great golden eagle or two would circle endlessly on out-stretched wings, and, now and then, the notes of a meadowlark would flood the sky, as with some clear and golden liquid. Even at night, one was aware of the country's life—and of its death as well—when coyotes, near and far, singly and in chorus, howled and yelped in their hunt for food.

The valley, some ten miles long, north to south, and one mile wide at its widest point, was surrounded on all sides by mountains—not the towering, majestic and well-forested peaks of the Sierra, but the more rounded, billowy hills of the Coast Range, which rose at their highest about a thousand feet above the valley floor. Foothills and mountains were clad largely in chaparral, digger pine, and oak, although in canyons and gullies, where moisture gathered and was held, one

could find feathery willow, horse chestnut, and elderberry. In the autumn the valley was gold and brown, turning slowly in winter frosts to a grayish mauve, the only green the sparse, wispy pines and the dark clumps of mistletoe, hanging like huge nests in the hundreds of drab-leafed oaks. Then, suddenly, April would bring a riot of colour. The valley's rolling floor would become an emerald sea, its swells transfixed and overlaid with masses of wild flowers—yellow, blue, white, and crimson. But this rapture was short-lived; the summers, coming soon

and lasting long, were brown and rusty green; tarweed took the place of spring flowers; leaves grew dusty, and the days were oven-hot. It was hot outside and hot inside; hot in the sun, hot in the shade. Yet the altitude of the Ashrama was 2,200 feet above sea level, and the air, though roasting, was dry: even at midday one could breathe and move. And the evenings!—when the evenings fell crystal cool, as they often did, they were like benedictions or reprieves.

(To be continued)

THE GREAT WOMEN OF INDIA

SWAMI SIDDHINATHANANDA

'The Great Women of India' is a very vast subject, as the concept of greatness differs from man to man, and country to country. No universally acceptable standard for measuring greatness has ever been provided. Moreover, greatness can be of different kinds. So, I have to make a measure first and then cite certain typical examples while dealing with the subject. Probably, the measure was not suggested because it was thought to be obvious. What is obvious in the Indian context is that God is the measure of greatness for us. The greatness of a man or a woman is measured in accordance with the godliness that a person personifies and manifests. Indian life, whether personal, domestic, social, or political was organized with one supreme ideal in view, and that is the realisation of God. Only an ideal can make one's life great. That is why the whole of human life in India has been organized round that supreme goal.

The Soul being sexless, the goal for both men and women is the same. There have

been great women who became Rishis and Brahmavadinis (the knowers of Brahman). Even some of the seers of the Vedic Mantras were women. In the Upanisads we can see great women saints challenging even the reputed Rishis.

In ancient days girls also had the right for *upanayana*, and the studying of the Vedas; and they could even teach the Vedas.¹ But in course of time, the situation changed due to foreign invasion and other historical reasons, and certain restraints were put on women. Manu says: 'A girl is to be protected by the father till she is a virgin; after her marriage, the husband should protect her. In advanced age, when the husband is no more, she is to be taken care of by her sons. Thus, a woman should never be left to herself without any support.'²

1. Quoted by Madhvācārya in his commentary on the *Pārasara Samhitā*. Vide p. 83 of the Bombay Sanskrit Series Edition.

2. *Manusmṛiti*, 9.3.

Manu's dictum that '*Na strī swātantryam-arhati*—a woman does not deserve independence'—is often cited by some critics as an example of man's tyranny over woman. As a matter of fact, it is not tyranny, but a measure for woman's security and society's welfare. According to Indian tradition, nature has intended man and woman to be complementary, and not competitors of each other. Each has his or her own special duties and responsibilities to perform. Each has to find his or her own fulfilment of life, and contribute to society's welfare through proper discharge of their respective duties. In India, personal pleasure was never considered as the goal of life, either for a man or for a woman. Indian view of life is idealistic. The critics who plead for unbridled freedom for woman have no higher conception of woman than of her being simply a means of reproduction and enjoyment. India never considered woman in that light. God is worshipped as woman in India, and woman is considered as a manifestation of the Godhead. A mother is a visible God. So, Indians look upon a woman as a mother, and not as a wife. Wifehood is only a preliminary stage to motherhood. A house belongs to the mother. No sensible man can be unmindful of the love and respect due to the mother. The first word the child utters is 'mā' and the last word a man or a woman would like to utter while surrendering the mother's gift of life is either 'O God', or 'O Mother'. So Manu's injunction is intended to insure security of life for woman, the giver of life and the custodian of mankind. Only a perfect wife can be an ideal mother; and only a pure virgin can be an ideal wife. So, Manu in order to preserve the purity of a woman's life has enjoined certain restraints on her, especially on the wife; because it is the woman who cherishes and nourishes a nation's culture. If a woman goes astray, society will go to ruin.

So Manu again says: 'The issues will take after the man that a woman weds. For the sake of the purity of the progeny, a woman should be well-guarded.'³ Moreover, the wealth and welfare of the society and the home are in the keeping of women. So women should be well-protected.

A householder is the originator and protector of all the other Ashramas. The student, the aged and the mendicant, all depend on the householder for everything. So Manu calls *Grihastha-āśrama* (householder state) as the '*Jyeṣṭhāśrama*—the highest Ashrama'. He says, 'As all creatures live depending on air, so do all Ashramites live depending on the householder.'⁴ Hence, the purity and stability of the society as a whole depend on the character of the householder. No wonder the Indian sages attached great importance to building an ideal home. The mother is the light of the home. Manu says, 'The gods are pleased with the family where the women are honoured. Where they are not honoured, all the actions become futile.'⁵ Only a chaste wife can be an ideal mother. Hence chastity is considered the highest virtue of a woman. Manu says, 'That family will ever be prosperous where the man and the wife are mutually contented and faithful.'⁶ This fidelity is a binding on both the man and the woman.

Yet, more stress is laid on woman's purity. A chaste woman is called a *pativrata*, one devoted to her husband. Who is a *pativrata*? It is said: 'One who is sad when her husband is sad; happy when he is happy; unadorned and fasting when he is away; one who ends her life when her lord is dead—such a woman is known as a *pati-*

3. *Ibid.*, 9.9.

4. *Ibid.*, 3.77.

5. *Ibid.*, 3.56.

6. *Ibid.*, 3.60.

vrata.⁷ In short, a *pativratā* has no other interest or existence apart from her husband's. According to the Indian tradition, a couple is a single soul in twin bodies, and chastity is considered as woman's greatest ornament and protection.

In this connection, let us remember one of India's noblest of daughters, that paragon of chastity, the immortal Sita. She was chastity and purity personified. We can only get a glimpse of the same through certain critical situations of her life which bring into bold relief her incomparably noble life. Sita was wedded to Rama when she was six years old and Rama thirteen. They lived together happily for twelve years in Ayodhya. Then Dasharatha proposed to anoint Rama heir-apparent. But it was foiled by the machinations of Kaikeyi. Rama was asked by her to go the forest. But he did not want Sita to undergo the rigours of a forest life. He wanted her to stay back and serve his parents. When he went to take leave of Sita, Rama said, 'Dear, I proceed to the woods. You stay on here.'⁸ Sita said, 'Husband is the only refuge for a woman here or hereafter.'⁹ 'Beloved, if you are proceeding to the woods now, I precede you and shall render your path smooth treading down the stubble and thorns.'¹⁰ Rama told her several times the severity, dangers and handicaps of the forest life, and pleaded that she should not go with him. But Sita was deaf to all that. In the beginning she begged and prayed to him; and when she found that Rama was not yielding to her, she even ridiculed Rama's hesitancy and questioned his manliness in taking care of his wife. In spite of all that Rama was not impressed. Finally she said,

she would take poison and put an end to her life if left behind. Thus she won her case and followed Rama like a shadow into the dense forests. Rama approved of her decision and complimented her, saying: 'Follow me, dear, and share my fate. You have taken a very proper decision. It is befitting the families of us both.'¹¹ Sita was no fair-weather spouse; she was a *sahadharma* *cārini*, a true partner in life.

The exiles—Rama, Lakshmana, and Sita—were wandering about in the woods. In Rama's company Sita was happy as a dove. Then came the first bitter experience of the woods, of which Rama had warned her. A demon Viradha by name encountered them. The brothers destroyed his weapons. The demon then caught hold of them and taking them on his shoulders, started running. Rama said: 'Oh, we are getting a free ride. Let us not disturb him now. We shall be saving some trouble of tramping.' But what about Sita? For the nonce, the brothers had forgotten her. Seeing them being carried away by the demon, Sita screamed, 'Ah! Rama and Lakshmana are being carried away by a demon. O noble demon, leave them and swallow me up. Anyway I am going to be devoured by wild animals.'¹² The usual human instinct in such a situation is to try to save one's own life. To Sita, however, her own life was nothing, and her husband's life was everything.

Once, having spent a night at Sutikshna's hermitage, the royal exiles took leave of the sage, and started on their journey early morning. Sita brought the bows and arrows from inside the hut and handed them over to the brothers. Sita had something on her mind: She had heard her husband promising protection to the sages from the demons. But the demons had done no wrong to the exiles. Was it proper on the part of Rama

7. *Ibid.*, *Vide Śabdakalpaprāma*, under the word 'पतिव्रता'.

8. *Vālmiki-Rāmāyaṇam*, *Ayodhyākāṇḍa*, 26.38.

9. *Ibid.*, 27.6.

10. *Ibid.*, 27.7.

11. *Ibid.*, 30.40-41.

12. *Ibid.*, *Araṇyakāṇḍa*, 4.2-3.

to harass the demons who had done no harm to them? She gently called Rama's attention and expostulated with him about it. She said: 'A man is liable to three transgressions due to selfishness. Telling lies is a serious transgression. The other two are worse. They are: violating others' wives, and unprovoked aggression.'¹³ Sita continued: 'No false word ever escaped your lips in the past, nor will any do so in the future. You will never violate others' women even in dream; you are solely devoted to your own wife.'¹⁴

'But', Sita added, 'the third evil, unprovoked slaughter of other creatures, seems to befall you. You have promised the sages the destruction of the demons. Both of you are well equipped with arms. We are in the forest. We are here for penance. Killing is improper in this sacred place.'¹⁵ And she concluded her remarks with a note of humility: 'Out of my love and regard for you, I am only reminding you of this; I do not mean to teach you. I am only a humble, simple woman. Who can presume to teach you? You both consider the matter together and do what is best.'¹⁶ To this, Rama replied: 'O Devi, you have yourself told me that the Kshatriyas carry arms in order to protect the innocent from the wicked. I shall give up everything, even you and Lakshmana and my very life in order to fulfil my promise. Out of love and goodwill you have spoken. I am glad that you said this.'¹⁷ Rama then complimented her saying: 'Your words are worthy and befitting to your family and mine. You are complementary to me in my ideals. You are dearer to me than my life itself.'¹⁸

Later on, Ravana abducted Sita and kept

her captive in his garden. He tried all his arts and wiles to win her over; but she would not even look at him. Ravana entrusted the work of taming Sita to cruel Rakshasa women. They pleaded, teased, and tortured her; all to no purpose. One day Sita told Ravana to his face: 'O thou wicked one, thou oughtest to be reduced to ashes; I can, if I would, do that by my power of penance. But I refrain from doing that because I do not want to waste any *tapas* on you and because I have no permission from my lord to defend myself.'¹⁹ Steeled by the power of chastity and penance, Sita could withstand the severest adversities and face the very devil.

Later on when Hanuman set fire to Lanka, he thought: 'Oh, what have I done! What has happened to Sita?' Then a truth was revealed to him. He pondered, 'No, the fire cannot burn her. Perhaps she, by her penance, truthfulness and devotion to her lord, may burn the very fire.'²⁰ Yes, Sita was such a burning fire of purity.

In due course Ravana was killed by Rama in the battle, and at the instance of Rama, Hanuman went to Sita and conveyed the news to her. She was happy and thanked the messenger. In order to amuse Sita, Hanuman asked her permission to beat to death the cruel Rakshasis who had been tormenting her. Sita said: 'No, nothing of the kind. They were helpless; they were only the tools of their wicked master. No blame attaches to them. No more will they do any harm to me. I have none to blame but my evil karma for all that has befallen me. Why should they be punished? Even if they are guilty, they should not be dealt with vengefully. Haven't you heard the story?

'Once a man chased by a tiger got upon a tree. When he looked up, there was a

13. *Ibid.*, 9.3-4.

14. *Ibid.*, 4-6.

15. *Ibid.*, 9.

16. *Ibid.*, 24.

17. *Ibid.*, 10.2-4.

18. *Ibid.*, 22.

19. *Ibid.*, Sundarakāṇḍa, 22.20.

20. *Ibid.*, 55.29.

bear sitting. The tiger requested the bear to send down the man, their common foe. The bear refused to oblige him saying that the man was his guest. And the bear dozed off unconcerned. Then the tiger told his prey: "You are a fool. Who but a fool will put faith in that furry fellow? He is not hungry now. He knows you cannot escape. He has reserved you for his next meal. You push him down; I shall eat him up and go my way." The biped did as he was bid. The startled bear caught hold of another branch. Such treacheries he had had before also. Hence he was not surprised or enraged. The tiger changed his tactics. He asked the bear to push down the traitor. The bear refused his request.'

Quoting the reply of the bear Sita told Hanuman: 'A good man does not take on the evil of a wicked man. One's code of honour should never be violated. Character is the ornament of the good. The good, the bad or the death-deserving, all should be treated with mercy. There is none above error.'²¹ Hanuman bent down in reverence before that personified mercy.

Later on when Sita was brought before Rama, he was in a strange mood. He told Sita: 'The stain on my family has been removed. My honour has been vindicated. You have been touched by another. I have no use of you. You can go anywhere as you please.' This was a veritable bolt from the blue to Sita. With flowing eyes and faltering voice she said: 'Lord, your words are unbecoming of you. You know me from childhood, and yet you suspect me! It is an insult to woman-kind as a whole. If this were your intention, you could have saved yourself of a lot of trouble. Had you given me a hint through Hanuman, I would have put an end to my life long ago. You say I have been touched by that fiend. He dragged me by force. What could I do

then? I was not physically strong enough to resist. My mind was under my control and I swear by my honour that I have not violated my loyalty to you even in dream.'²²

Finding Rama unrelenting, Sita turned to Lakshmana and said: 'Lakshmana, prepare a pyre for me. That is the only remedy for my misery. I do not care to live under a cloud of scandal. I shall enter fire.'²³

Lakshmana looked at Rama who seemed to approve of the proposal. He made a pyre. Sita circumambulated Rama thrice, went round the fire, and with folded hands prayed: 'O God, you are the universal witness. You very well know that my heart has never strayed from Rama. Me of unsullied chastity Rama thinks adulterous. But you know the truth. May you protect me.'²⁴ Saying so, she jumped into the flaming fire.

Then the God of fire came up with her and told Rama: 'O Rama, here is your Sita; she is stainless. She is pure, innocent. Accept her.'²⁵ With his words Rama was pleased. He said, he knew Sita was pure, but made her go through the fire ordeal to save her and himself from unkind criticism later.

Afterwards they returned to Ayodhya, where Rama was crowned as a king of Ayodhya. All were happy. Rama and Sita lived happily for a while. In due course, Sita became pregnant. Rama became happy, and he asked her as to what she would have as her *dohada*, (i.e., the fond wish of a woman in the family way). She said, she would like to spend some time in the holy places on the Ganga banks in the company of the sages. Rama agreed to it.

Though the people of Rama's kingdom were prosperous and happy, there was a mur-

²¹. *Ibid.*, Yuddhakāṇḍa, 116.42-44.

²². *Ibid.*, 119.9.

²³. *Ibid.*, 18.

²⁴. *Ibid.*, 24-25.

²⁵. *Ibid.*, 121.5.

mur against Sita going around. In spite of the baptism of fire, idle tongues were casting aspersions against Sita. Thereby Rama's heart was pained. He summoned his brothers and told them: 'Sita of the noble family of Videhas is pure. I know it in my heart.'²⁶ Yet, to preserve the honour of the king, and to set an example to the subjects, he decided to banish her. He asked Lakshmana to take her to the other bank of the Ganga and leave her there.

Lakshmana had no other go but to obey, and he did as he was ordered. On the way, Sita saw evil portents, and Lakshmana too was weeping; but she could not guess the cause of his grief. At last Laksmana informed Sita of Rama's decree. On hearing it, she fell down unconscious. Regaining consciousness after a long while, she told Lakshmana through her sobs and despair: 'O Lakshmana, this body of mine has been created only to burn and boil. I died long ago. What you see is only the image of my grief. What answer shall I give to the sages when they ask me why I was cast away by the righteous king? I would have ended my life this instant in the river. What holds me back is the thought that my husband's family would become an object of ridicule if I did so. O Lakshmana, you do as you have been bidden. To a woman the husband is her lord, master, and god. It is the duty of the wife to safeguard the husband's well-being even at the cost of her life. It is only proper that I have been banished for a scandal concerning me. I am neither sad nor angry that Rama did this to me for the sake of Dharma. May he be happy! He knows very well that I am pure. You please remind him of it, touching his feet in my name. Convey my humble salutations to all my mothers. Lakshmana, you do your duty. Let me work out my karma.' Saying so, she wept. At last

Lakshmana left her alone and went away. Later on, Valmiki came and accosted her: 'O daughter of Janaka, O thou pure one, welcome to thee.'²⁷ And the sage took her to his hermitage and looked after her.

Few years later, Rama performed Rajasuya Sacrifice and invited many sages and noblemen to attend it. Two young boys, who had accompanied Valmiki, sang the story of Rama composed by the sage before the King. Rama soon discovered that they were his own sons by the banished Sita. He sent a word to Valmiki to ask Sita to come to his presence and swear her purity before the public. Sita had had enough of this world and its ordeals. When she came to Rama's presence, with bent head and folded hands she prayed to her Mother Earth: 'O Mother, you know I have never, not even in dream, thought of anyone except Rama. I adore Rama in mind, deed, and word. If this be true, O Mother, give me refuge.'²⁸

Surprisingly enough, up came a throne with Sita's mother, the Earth. The mother welcomed her daughter with both hands and Sita disappeared in the bosom of her Mother Earth. The gods showered flowers over them. What the world had rejected, the gods welcomed.

Rama installed Sita in his heart and carried on his kingly duties. The Ramayana is Sitayana as well. Sita's life is a series of tragedies. But never does she swerve from her Dharma in the least. No word of complaint against Rama escapes her lips. She always wishes well of him. Sita is purity and patience personified. She has been inspiring Indian women in chastity and purity ever since she was born.

Valmiki and Vyasa are the two great sage-poets who have given shape to popular

²⁷. *Ibid.*, 49.12.

²⁸. *Ibid.*, 97.15-16.

²⁶. *Ibid.*, Uttarakāṇḍa, 45.4, 10.

Hinduism. Of them, Valmiki's superb ideal of womanhood, we had a glimpse of. Now let us have a look at Vyasa's daughters. Unlike Valmiki, Vyasa was prolific. He had innumerable sons and daughters, and it is a hard task to make a choice. Kunti, Gandhari, Satyawati, Draupadi, Savitri, Damayanti, Devahuti, Devaki, Yasoda, Sati, Aditi and a host of others flit across the mind. Each is a shining example of the feminine virtues. Whom to choose? Let us look into the life of Kunti, the mother of the Pandavas. Why on her? Human life is a tragedy unless fixed on God. Sita was the spouse of an Incarnation of God. So, in spite of all the tragedies that befell her, her ultimate deliverance was more or less assured. But Kunti is an ordinary woman though of royal descent; her life was a progression of calamities; yet she did not give way to despair. She by her sheer fortitude and surrender to God transformed the tragedies into spiritual disciplines, and attained divine illumination.

Kunti's misfortunes started very early in life. She was the eldest daughter of a Yadava king, Sura by name. Sura called her Pritha. Shri Krishna's father Vasudeva was a brother to Pritha. Sura had a cousin by name Kuntibhoja who had no issue. Sura gave Pritha to Kuntibhoja for a daughter who thus came to be known as Kunti. She was deputed to serve the sage Durvasa. Pleased with her service and anticipating her fate, he gave her a sacred *mantra* by which she could summon any of the gods for the gift of a son. She, out of girlish curiosity, fixed her mind on the Sun God, chanting the *mantra*, and lo, he came. She prayed to be excused for her foolishness. But no. The inevitable happened. A child was born to the girl. She set it afloat in a river secretly, and a fire started burning in her heart which was never more to be quenched. In course of time, the cast away child grew into the mighty Karna, the relentless foe of the Pan-

davas. (The rivalry between Karna and Arjuna was the main cause of the Mahabharata War, for, Duryodhana relied mainly on Karna to vanquish the Pandavas. So the war was fought between Kunti's cast-off son Karna and her beloved son Arjuna.)

In due course Kunti was married to Pandu. Pandu also had another wife Madri by name. Once while hunting in the woods Pandu shot a deer who was a sage in disguise. The sage pronounced a curse whereby Pandu would die, if he touched his wife. Pandu was sorely grieved. He requested Kunti to raise up issue through others. In an emergency such a deputation is sanctioned by the Smritis. It is called *niyoga*. Kunti strongly protested. But after repeated requests of Pandu, she agreed and using the Durvasa's *mantra* she had three sons; Madri also got two sons. Pandu wanted to have more issues. But Kunti refused. She said that would make her a loose woman. Even in an emergency, more than three sons is not allowed. Kunti was a unique woman. She had preserved the purity of her mind and chastity even though she had under peculiar circumstances physical contact with other persons. She had the unreserved permission of Pandu and she had the secret *mantra* to summon anyone she wished. That Kunti checked herself in spite of such favourable conditions for indulgence speaks worlds of her purity and greatness.

Unmindful of the curse, Pandu once touched Madri and died. Kunti being the senior queen, it was her privilege to enter the funeral pyre of the dead husband. Madri claimed the right for herself on the ground that Pandu breathed his last in her lap. But Kunti would not agree. When Madri said that she would not be able to bring up their children with equal love, Kunti yielded. Her duty by the children prevailed, and she consented to forgo her privilege of accompanying her dead husband. To Kunti to remain

alive was a greater ordeal than entering the fire.

Later on, deceived and defeated in the game of dice, the Pandavas went into exile, while Kunti stayed in Hastinapura with Vidura. After the stipulated period, the Pandavas returned and claimed their share of the kingdom. The Kauravas refused to yield. Both the parties started preparing for war. As a last resort Krishna himself came to Hastinapura to plead for a peaceful settlement. That too proved futile. Through Krishna Kunti sent a burning message to her sons to regain their kingdom through the force of their arms as befitting valiant Kshatriyas and not to beg for five villages like cowards. The Pandavas were roused to their honour; they fought, and won the war ultimately. It was a very disastrous war. On the Pandava's side, only the five brothers, Krishna and Satyaki had survived. While on the opposite side only three, viz, Asvathama, Kripa and Kritavarma remained alive. Of the eighteen Akshauhīnīs²⁹ army who had joined the war, only ten were left alive.

After the war, the Pandavas got the kingdom, and in natural course the blind pair, Dhritarashtra and Gandhari, were taken care of by them. Kunti also served them like a devoted daughter. Later on, when Dhritarashtra and Gandhari decided to go to the forest to spend the evening of their lives in prayer and penance, Kunti also started along with them. Yudhishtira requested her to return to the palace; but she said, she would spend her days in penance and in serving the elders. All the sons pleaded with her one by one. Yudhishtira asked her, why she had goaded them to war, if her intention was to go to the forest? Thus,

when the wisdom of her advice to them to do their duty as Kshatriyas was called in question, she rose to her royal stature, wiped her tears, turned round and told them: 'True O Prince, I goaded you to war when you were in despair; when you were driven away into the woods deprived of your rightful patrimony, I advised you to fight. When I found you princes prepared to eat the bread of beggary, I urged you on to fight; and now you are asking me, why? Hear: In order that the noble line of Pandu may not become extinct; in order that you sons of gods and valiant heroes may not wait upon your inferiors; in order that this tender daughter-in-law of mine may not fall again a victim to the vile molestations of the accursed devils; in order that the royal family of Pandu may not come to an end with my sons, I encouraged you to fight. Now, go back and do your duty. May you be steadfast in Dharma! May you be noble!'³⁰

All her life Kunti did only what she felt to be right; she did her duty. When that was called in question, the royal blood in her boiled; she drew herself to her full royal stature; turned on the accusing sons like an enraged tigress; and poured forth words of fire, honour, duty, nobility and charity. And when her duty as a mother was over, off she went to the forest, performed severe penance along with the blind pair, and calmly ended her life in the forest fire that enveloped them—a fitting denouement to a burning life. As a matter of fact, a fire of grief was burning in her heart since she had cast off her first-born; and her subsequent life had poured more and more oil into that fire; and her final sacrifice was in the forest fire. With all that fire, she did not swerve a jot from her chosen path of Dharma. It was her hold on Dharma that sustained her. Then there is an under-

²⁹. One Akshauhīnī army consists of: '21,870 chariots, as many elephants, 65,610 horses, and 1,09,350 foot-soldiers.'

³⁰. *Mahābharata*, Asramavāsa, Ch. 17. (In our edition this occurs in Chapter 19—*Ed.*)

current, an inner current of self-surrender to God. She had dedicated everything to Krishna. Vyasa has described Kunti's spiritual glory in the *Bhagavata*, where she prays to Krishna for misery evermore so that she could have Krishna come to her rescue. Thus, Dharma and Bhakti are the warp and woof of her noble life.

Both Sita and Kunti were born in royal families. They may be considered legendary and not historical. That in no way diminishes their influence on the people. Now let us pay our respects to one who, though born in the recent past in a lowly thatched hut, rose in stature to become verily a goddess. I mean, Sri Sarada Devi, the spouse of Sri Ramakrishna. She was born in a remote village of Bengal and brought up in poverty. She was married when she was a little girl and that too to one who was rumoured to be out of his mind. Not only that: it was as a remedy for his insanity that this marriage was arranged. But his relatives hardly knew that his insanity was of a different kind. It was not of the type that could be remedied by the bond of wedlock. After the marriage the husband went away to Dakshineswar, and the child-bride grew up in her parental home. As she grew to womanhood, she heard the village gossip that her husband was a madman. Many an idle tongue waxed in sympathy of the madman's bride. Sarada wanted to know the situation for herself, and if things were as they were reported to be, her duty was to serve him. She started for Dakshineswar on foot escorted by her father. It was an anxious journey for Sarada. She had no idea as to what sort of welcome she would get at Dakshineswar. In the first place, he, whom she was going in search of, was said to be mad. Then, he was reported to have taken Sannyasa. She knew that one who takes Sannyasa has no social obligations,

and he shuns the company of women. The scriptures and traditions absolve him from all worldly responsibilities. In either case, whether mad or renounced, Sarada had not much to hope for.

Prepared for the worst, she reached Dakshineswar, and to her surprise and joy she was cordially welcomed by her husband. He did all he could to make his wife comfortable. Soon she discovered that no woman had a greater husband than she, for, she was espoused to a veritable God on earth. One day Sri Ramakrishna said to her: 'Well, I have given my mind completely to God. It is not possible for me to take it away from Him and fix it on the world. You being my wedded wife have certain rights and claims over me. Have you come here to drag me down to the world?' 'Oh no,' came her spontaneous reply, 'no, I have come to serve you, to help you on your way. I only pray for the privilege of serving you.' Sri Ramakrishna was exceedingly glad at her reply. Only a super-human soul could say these words. She was as good as her word. And Sri Ramakrishna transformed his bride into a goddess, the Mother of the universe. She served him as a devoted wife, disciple and devotee.

After his passing away, she carried on the spiritual ministrations to innumerable weary souls. It was her prayer that was the seed of the present-day mighty mission of Sri Ramakrishna. It was her blessings that enabled Vivekananda to carry the banner of Vedanta triumphantly all over the world. It was to her that the apostles of Sri Ramakrishna ran for solution of any perplexing problem. Even though she lived in her village home in the midst of her quarrelling kinsmen, she kept up her poise and spiritual eminence; and in the thick of trials and turmoils, she lived in God. She has saved innumerable grief-stricken souls, and even now she is continuing to win souls for God

all over the world. Her last advice to a grieving devotee was: 'Why do you fear? You have seen the Master. But I tell you one thing: if you want peace of mind, do not find fault with others. Rather see your own faults. Learn to make the whole world your own. No one is a stranger, my child: this entire world is your own!' That is her last word and testament to humanity at large. Sri Sarada Devi, or the Holy Mother as the devotees call her, was a devoted wife, humble disciple, an ideal mother and a perfect nun, all in one, in full measure without any conflict. No wonder she is considered as 'Sri Ramakrishna's final word as to the ideal of Indian womanhood.'

We have studied the lives of three great women of India: one, the wife of an Incarnation; second, the mother of heroic princes; and third, a saint who was the wife of a saint. All were devoted to Dharma (righteousness) and to God. Therein lies their greatness. These are just three of the innumerable noble women of India. India has been blessed with a large number of such

great souls, with the result that every Indian Mother is great in her own way. It is their silent suffering, fasting, vigils, and prayers that have produced and preserved the spiritual culture of India. No son or daughter can repay his or her debt to the mother. The great Sankaracharya has said, '*Kuputro jāyeta kvacidapi kumātā na bhavati*—A son may go bad, but never will there be a bad mother.' And rightly the Rishi, giving his final instruction to the student who is about to return home says: '*Mātrdevo bhava, Pitṛdevo bhava Ācāryadevo bhava*³¹—Consider your mother, father, and teacher as God.' Here the first place is given to the mother. Verily mother is a visible God, and so all mothers are great.

'Let alone the racking pains of labour, nausea, anaemia and a year long soiled bed: no one, however great he may be, is able to repay the debt he owes to the mother for the single ordeal of bearing him for ten months. Prostrations at the mother's feet.'³²

³¹. *Taittiriya Upaniṣad*, I.xi.2.

³². *Mātrvandanam* composed by Śrī Śankarācārya.

UNPUBLISHED LETTERS OF SWAMI VIVEKANANDA* -II

To Sister Nivedita

11

The Math,
P.O. Belur, Howrah,
12th November 1901.

My dear Margo,

Since the Durga Puja, I have been very ill, and so could not reply to your letter earlier.

We had a grand Puja here of Durga, lasting nearly four days, but alas, I was down with fever all the time.

* © The President, Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, Belur Math,

We had a grand image, and a huge Puja it was. Then we had the Lakshmi Puja following close, and then night before yesterday we had the *Kali*¹ Puja. It is always after midnight—this Puja. I am better now, and we will find a house for you as soon as you come.

I am so glad you are accompanying Mrs. Bull. She requires all care; and she always thinks of herself the last. Joe² is coming to India shortly at Christmas time with some Japanese friends. I am expected to meet her in Madras.

I am going off to the N.W.P.³ etc. soon, as Bengal is malarious—now that the rains are over.

Mrs. Bull has been a mother to us all, and any time and service spent for her is as nothing to what she has been doing for us all. Remain with her as long as she wants you, the work can wait well; 'Mother' sees to her work. We needn't be anxious.

By the by, Miss Müller is here in Calcutta. She wrote a letter to Akhandananda—with whom she has been in regular correspondence—to the care of the Math. So I sent some flowers and fruits and a letter of welcome to her hotel. I have not had a reply yet.

Mrs. Sevier, I expect, has already started. Swarupananda had his heart weakened by the constant up hill and down hill. He is here and improving.

Things are going on well with us, slowly but surely. The boys of late have been very active, and it is work only that tells and nothing else.

Yours with all love and blessings,
VIVEKANANDA.

12

Gopal lal Villa,
Benares Cantonment,
4th March 1902.

My dear Margo,

It is night now, and I can hardly sit up or write, yet still feel duty bound to write to you this letter, fearing lest it becomes my last, it may put others to trouble.

My condition is not at all serious, but it may become [so] any time; and I don't know, what is meant by a low fever, that almost never leaves me, and the difficulty of breathing.

Well, I sent Christina £100 from Mrs. Sevier for a travel to India, as she lost her mother at that time. Her last letter informs me, that she sails on February 15th. In that case her reaching India is very near. I expect, of

1. Swamiji had underlined 'Kali'. It might be because Sister Nivedita had developed a special fascination for Her.

2. Another nickname of Miss Josephine MacLeod.

3. In those days the present Uttar Pradesh and other provinces were together, and were known as North-Western-Provinces. Here he meant Almora, which was then in N.W.P.

course, some information as to the port and steamer next week. In case I pass away, which I would like very much to do in this city of Shiva, do you open her letters directed to me, receive the girl, and send her home back. If she has no money to go back, give her a passage, even if you have to beg.

I have spent the little money I brought from Europe in feeding my mother and paying her debts. What little remains, I cannot touch, as that is the expense for the pending law suit.

In case I rally, I will inform you of the time of her arrival, and in that case you will have to see that she comes in safe to some station in Bareilly,⁴ where I meet her, and she is to be the guest of Mrs. Sevier. I am also going to take another chance in Almora.

Ramakrishnananda came a few weeks before I came away, and the first thing he did was to lay down at my feet Rs. 400 he had collected in so many years of hard work !!! It was the first time such a thing has happened in my life. I can scarcely suppress my tears. Oh Mother !! Mother ! there is not all gratitude, all love, all manliness dead !!! And dear child, one is enough—one seed is enough to reforest the world.

Well, that money is in deposit in the Math. I never meant to touch a penny of that. When I asked Ramakrishnananda to give that money to his people, he replied, he did not care a hang to give to anybody except me, and was only sorry he could scrape that little in four years ! Well, if I pass away, see that Rs. 400 is paid back every Rupee to him. Lord bless you and Ramakrishnananda.

I am quite satisfied with my work. To have left two true souls is beyond the ambition of the greatest.

Ever your loving father,
VIVEKANANDA.

4. In his letter, Swamiji had written 'near Bareilly' first ; but later he crossed out 'near' and wrote 'in' which confuses the meaning. Perhaps he meant that if Miss Christina Greenstidel should come to some station 'near or like' Bareilly, it will be easier for him to meet her there, and later on she could straightway go to Mrs. Sevier, who was then at Mayavati in the Himalayas.

*To Sister Christine*⁵

1

On board Prinz Regent Luitpold⁶
3rd January 1897.

Dear Christina,

By two p.m. today I reach Port Said. Asia once more. I have not heard from you long. Hope everything is going on well with you. How are Mrs.

5. Sister Christine was an American disciple of Swami Vivekananda, who had dedicated her life for the cause of her beloved Master. Her name was Christina Greenstidal. For further details about her life see the Editorial of this month.

6. After his brilliant success in America and England, Swami Vivekananda boarded this German liner at Naples on December 30, 1896, on his way to India.

Funke,⁷ Mrs. Phelps,⁸ and all the other friends? My love to all. Write when you feel like it.

VIVEKANANDA.

2

Darjeeling,
(Return Address : Alambazar Math, Calcutta.)
16th March 1897.

Dear Christina,

Many many thanks for the photograph and the poem. I never saw anything half as beautiful. The work I had to do to reach Calcutta from Ceylon was so immense that I could not earlier acknowledge your precious gift. The work has broken me down completely, and I have got 'diabetes', an incurable disease, which must carry me off at least in a few years.

I am now writing to you from Darjeeling, the nearest hill station to Calcutta, with a climate as cool as London. It has revived me a bit. If I live, I will come to America next year or so.

How are things going on with you all? How are Mrs. Funke and Mrs. Phelps?

Are you laying by a few dollars whenever you can? That is very important.

I am in a hurry for the mail. You will be glad to know that the Indian people have, as it were, risen in a mass to honour me. I am the idol of the day. Mr. Goodwin is going to publish in a book form all the addresses given to me, and the speeches in reply. The demonstrations all over have been simply unique.

Yours with all love,
VIVEKANANDA.

39

Almora,
3rd June 1897.

My dear Christina,

You need not be so much afraid about me. My body has been full of all sorts of complaints again and again, and phoenix-like I have been reviving. It is the vigorous brain that helps recovery in my case; yet, it is that too much vigour that brings on the disease. In everything I am extreme, even in my physical health. Either I am like an iron ball, or I am low down in the valley of death.

7. Mrs. Funke, the wife of Mr. Charles Funke of Detroit, was a disciple of Swami Vivekananda.

8. Mrs. Phelps, a resident of Detroit, was an admirer of Swami Vivekananda and his teachings.

9. A part of this letter has been published in *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, Mayavati : Advaita Ashrama, VI, 1972, pp. 398-99, as addressed to Miss Noble (Sister Nivedita) by mistake. The published portions have been omitted here.

This disease brought about by hard work has nearly disappeared with rest. At Darjeeling it entirely disappeared. So you see, I am now at Almora. I am all right now except for a bit of dyspepsia, for which I am trying hard 'Christian Science'. I got myself round with mental treatment at Darjeeling taking lot of exercise, climbing up mountains, hard riding. Eating and sleeping are about all my occupations now. I feel much stronger and better. The next time you see me, I would be an athlete. So far so good. . . .

How are you? What are you doing? How things are going on with you and Mrs. Funke? Are you getting your bank account started bit by bit? *You must do that.* Do it for me. I am much worn out. I will strike work for good and come to America, and you will have to give me food and shelter; will you? . . .

I am wishing hard that this will find you in peace and health.

I remain yours with all love,
VIVEKANANDA.

PS—My love to all our friends also. What about Baby?

V.

4

Khetri,
13th December 1897.

My dear Christina,

How funny all these dreams and evil prognostications of yours! You don't want to send me evil influences by thinking that way of me! I will be only too glad to lose 50 lbs. of my weight. A little rest puffs me up, and I am the same bloated monk as ever.

I am all right except a bad cold last few days, owing to exposure and travel in the desert. I thank you for the letter though. I am pleased with it enormously, as it shows the mind.

Give Mrs. Funke, Baby, and all the rest my love, and as you know yourself—

Yours ever in the Lord,
VIVEKANANDA.

PS—I will write a better note when this cold has left.

V.

5

Jodhpur, Rajputana,
4th January 1898.

Love and greetings etc. to thee Dear Christina and a happy New Year. May it find you younger in heart, stronger in body, and purer in spirit.

I am still travelling in season and out of season. Lecturing some, working a good deal.

Have you seen Mr. Sturdy¹⁰ of England, who, I learn, has been to Detroit? Did you like him?

I am quite well and strong. Hope to meet you this blessed year again in America.

I am going to Calcutta in a few days, where I intend to be the rest of this cold weather. Next summer, I start for England or America most probably.

Yours ever in the Lord,
VIVEKANANDA.

6

The Math, Beloor, Howrah Dist.,
Bengal, India,
11th May 1898.

My dear Christina,

I simply wonder what has become of you. It is an age I did not hear from you, and I expected so much after Sturdy's visit to Detroit. How did you like the man? What about Baby and the Davandorfs? How is Mrs. Funke? What are you going to do this summer? Take rest, Dear Christina; I am sure you require it badly.

Mrs. Bull of Boston and Miss MacLeod of New York are now in India. We have changed our Math from the old nasty house to a house on the banks of the Ganges. This is much more healthy and beautiful. We have also got a good piece of land very near on the same side, where Mrs. Bull and Miss MacLeod are putting up now. It is wonderful how they accommodate themselves to our Indian life of privation and hardship; my, these yanks can do anything. After the luxuries of Boston and New York to be quite content and happy in this wretched little house!! We intend to travel a bit together in Kashmir, and *then* I come to America with them and am sure to get a hearty welcome from my friends. What do you think? Is it welcome news to you? Of course, I cannot undergo the same amount of work as before—that, dear Christina, I am sorry, I will no more be able to do. I will do a little work, and take a good deal of rest. No more getting crowds and making noise, but quite silent personal work will be all I intend to do.

This time I will quietly come and quietly go away, seeing only my old friends, and no noise.

Write soon, as I am so anxious.

Ever yours in the Lord,
VIVEKANANDA.

PS—'There are two sorts of persons—one sort have the heart of water, the other of stone. The one easily takes an impression, and as easily throws it off, the other seldom takes an impression, but once it takes, it is there for ever. Nay, the more they struggle to cast it off, the more it cuts deep into the soul.'

Ramakrishna Paramahansa.

¹⁰. Mr. Edward T. Sturdy of England, who was at one time a devoted follower of Swami Vivekananda, had organized the Swami's work during and after his visits to London in 1895 and 1896.

Almora,
20th May 1898.

My dear Christina,

Your very consoling letter just to hand. I am with the American ladies now once more in the Himalayas, and intend from here to go to Kashmir. My health had again suffered from several attacks of influenza last year, and I hope the mountain air will refresh me quite.

The old complain has become like an old friend—steady, but not exciting. After Kashmir we come back to Calcutta, and then 'bound for America once more'. Yet all these depend upon the plague not visiting our Calcutta in an epidemic form. In that case, I will have to remain and work, the best I can, in my native city.

I am sorry, the state of mind of Baby is so unsettled. I hope to find a house for her in India very soon, and one for you, if you like, and your duties permit.

I am sure you will be glad to hear that I have got a big piece of land on the banks of the Ganges near Calcutta, and the outlook for the Monastery is very hopeful. I hope to start a home on the Himalayas somewhere near Almora for my western friends very soon. I will work between Calcutta and the Himalayas. I am tired of trudging about at any rate, and just want a real rest and repose; would I find it sooner.

Don't you work yourself out, dear Christina! Take a long long rest. Duty has no end, and the world extremely selfish.

After this visit to America and Europe, I end my travels and come back to Calcutta for quiet work and repose, and training the workmen of the future. Please give my love to Mrs. Funke and all the rest of our friends. I am so sorry to learn of the death of Mrs. Bagley.¹² She was a good friend. My next visit to America will not be a lecture tour, I am determined; and if you give me a quiet home for a few days in Detroit, I will come to see you. You need not be afraid for my needs. They are all Indian now, that is, next to nothing. The style, in which even you live, is positive luxury with us here.

I do not think that we can start for America this summer, but it must be autumn next, I am sure.

Be of good cheer. 'Never a worker of good came to grief.'

With everlasting love,

Ever yours in the Lord,
VIVEKANANDA.

11. Three sentences from this letter have been published in the *Complete Works*, VI, p. 415; and wrongly addressed to 'Margot' (Sister Nivedita). In our opinion those lines are from this letter of Sister Christine, because on 20 May 1898 Sister Nivedita was at Almora with Swami Vivekananda. The letter has been reproduced here in full.

12. Mrs. John J. Bagley, the widow of the ex-Governor of Michigan, and a lady of some culture, was a great admirer of Swami Vivekananda. She was Swami's host during his visits to Detroit in the year 1894.

Kashmir,
27th August 1898.

My dear Christina,

I am late in reply to yours ; could not help. So many things rush out at the tip of the pen when I want to write you, that I have to stop and think over before I write, till I am toned down as they say. . . . Yet the mind at times boils with thought and, since last three years, with human memory more than anything else. Is it Fate? Or is it the deep-rooted memory of the past, which even new bodies cannot throw off? Life is ebbing away ; time is flying ; every particle in the body is changing ; faces are crowding past every day as in a dream ; yet among the crowd are some who strike us and wake up the memory in such a fashion as to upset the whole being, and turn back the rushing current of life to a new direction in spite of power of opposition and strong will. And then, you know, it is sometimes better to rest on one's oars after a hard pull. It is better to let the mind take its own course and see the fun. So let it run wild if it likes. I do not resist. It has been dealing in bubbles since eternity. Let it do it sometime yet, and I have been told by one, who has been the personal God to me, that I am to come once more yet. Let it be then, and every effect must have a cause—the tightened bow-string must loosen itself once more —, and it must be somebody's touch. The mirror is not destined to reflect its own self—just as it is in this birth. Some face must throw its shade over it. Let it come ; One little footstep must slip to give the pretence of a cause to a travel anew through another body—be it as it will. These are my present thoughts. I am watching developments. So far, about me.

I had a very beautiful letter from Baby. I am so so glad she is happy, and has helping friends. Lord bless the dear child ! . . .

It will be at least three months yet before I can start for America again. Then we go via China and Japan—that takes a little time. *Take* the greatest care of your health, dear Christina, and do not worry about anything. It is worry that kills mankind, *nothing else*. Write to me whenever you can ; and whatever you can pen. Kindly convey my love to all my friends.

Ever yours in the Loord,
VIVEKANANDA.

9

The Math, Beloor, Howrah Dist.,
25th October, 1898.

My dear Christina,

How are you? I am very anxious about your health. I have not had long any letter from you.

13. Some excerpts from this letter have been published in the *Complete Works*, VI, pp. 416-17; and wrongly addressed to 'Margot' (Sister Nivedita), and the date has been wrongly given as 25th August 1898. As a matter of fact, on this day Sister Nivedita was with Swami Vivekananda in Kashmir. For the omitted portions readers are requested to refer to the *Complete Works*.

My health again failed badly. I had, therefore, to leave Kashmir in haste and come to Calcutta. The doctors say, I ought not go tramping again this winter. That is such a disappointment, you know. However, I am coming to the United States this summer. Mrs. Bull and Miss MacLeod enjoyed this year's trip to Kashmir immensely, and now they are having a glimpse of the old monuments and buildings of Delhi, Agra, Jaipur, etc.

Do write a nice long letter, if you have time; and do not work yourself to death. Duty is duty no doubt, but we have our duties, not only to our mother etc., but to others also. Sometimes one duty asks for physical sacrifice, whilst the other insists on great care for our health. Of course, we follow the stronger motive and do not know which will prove stronger in your case. Anyhow, take great care of your body, now that your sisters have come to your help.

How do you manage the family?—the expenses etc? Write me all you like to write. Give me a long chat; will you? do!

I am getting better every day, and then the long months before I can start for the U.S. Never mind, 'Mother' knows what is best for us. She will show the way. I am now in Bhakti. As I am growing old, Bhakti is taking the place of Jnana. Did you get the new *Awakened India*?¹⁴ How do you like it?

Ever yours in the Lord,

VIVEKANANDA.

(To be concluded)

¹⁴. The *Awakened India* or *Prabuddha Bharata* was then printed and published at Madras by the disciples of Swami Vivekananda. It was later shifted to Almora in 1898; and then to Mayavati in the March of 1899.

NOTES AND COMMENTS

Sister Christine: The Dedicated—I (Editorial): Some men and women, though great in their heart and deeds, and pure like flowers in their character, come in this world unseen and unheard like dew drops, and pass away after blossoming some nicest flower-buds on earth. So came Sister Christine, the beloved disciple of Swami Vivekananda, into this world to dedicate her life for the sake of her Master's mission—the education of poor Indian women. She belonged to that class of American women, about whom Swamiji had said: 'How pure, independent, self-relying, and kind-hearted! It is the women who are the life and soul of this country.' Swamiji wrote her numerous letters, which reveal his fondness for his disciple. These letters are being published in a series in our Journal in this issue and hereafter.

Science and Religion—IV: In this instalment of the series, Swami Ranganathananda is elucidating various points like: 'India's spiritual vision of unity in diversity, the complementary nature of science and religion, significance of homeostasis in evolution,' and so on. He also stresses the need for a synthesis of Science and Religion in the field of education. In this connection he says: 'Education has to enable all students to achieve at least a fraction of the synthesis of East and West, spirituality and science, contemplation and action. It is the science of spirituality, the *parā vidyā*, the supreme, science, that fosters in man ethical, aesthetic, and spiritual values, including the moral values associated with pure science.' we hope, the readers have found this series illuminating and interesting.

Early Days at Shanti Ashrama—II: In

this part of her article the author is describing the hazardous journey of Swami Turiyananda and his students from San Francisco to the site of the Shanti Ashrama. Miss Boock, Miss Bell and one Mr. Paul Gerber had already gone there to make the necessary preparations. It was in the deep and meditative silence of the first night of their arrival there, sitting with the small group of students around a fire that the Swami 'inaugurated Shanti Ashrama, lifting their minds to sublime heights'.

The Great Women of India: There is a natural difference—physiological and psychological—between a man and a woman. They have, as it were, their own fields of thought and action—'each being great in his or her own place'. There is, however, a craze in modern times, especially amongst the women of the West, to imitate and compete with the men in various professions. Their struggles are no doubt justified to some extent; but there is every chance thereby of disturbing the nature's balance: making the human society something unnatural. Moreover, the standard of morality and modesty has gone very low these days, at least in some sections of the modern society, and the law in some countries is becoming

more and more favourable to the evil doers. This is, no doubt, a sure sign of human degradation. In this illuminating article, Swami Siddhinathananda has placed before the women of the world the brilliant ideal of the Great Women of India, with a view to raise them from human to the divine level.

Unpublished Letters of Swami Vivekananda—II: In this part of the series, Swamiji's hitherto unpublished letters, written during the years 1897-98, to Sister Christine, have been published with minor, but necessary editing. Sister Christine, as Sister Nivedita puts it, 'is wonderful. . . . beyond words—soothing, gracious, lovely.' Had this not been the case, she would not have come all the way from Detroit to the Thousand Island Park in New York State, in the year 1895, in search of Swami Vivekananda, climbing the hills of the Island in dark night, and rains. Needless to say, she was a beloved disciple of the Swami, to whom he wrote many long and affectionate letters, which reveal the hitherto unknown aspect of Swamiji's divine personality.

Some hitherto unpublished letters of Swamiji to Sister Nivedita, which could not be published in the last issue due to shortage of space, are being reproduced in this issue.

REVIEWS AND NOTICES

INDIVIDUALS AND WORLDS (Essays in Anthropological Rationalism): BY D. P. CHATTOPADHYAYA, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, pp. 219, Price : Rs. 50/-.

The cardinal idea underlying this scholarly work, by philosopher-politician Shri D. P. Chattopadhyaya, is that whatever be the results from human endeavour, every form of thought and action is subject to human limitations. Human capacity is limited. The limit is set, both by the world wherein man lives, and by the individuals among whom he lives. The limitations imposed on thought and action enables him to identify

himself and change his identity in history without destroying its recognizability or re-identifiability.

The nucleus of the book is the first research work of the author—*History, Society and Polity: Integral Sociology of Sri Aurobindo*. The ideas presented have appeared in various articles of the author, and also in his two books *Individuals and Societies: A Methodological Inquiry* and *Societies and Cultures*.

Dr. Chattopadhyaya discusses that thought and action not only interpenetrate each other, but also interact in the human constitution—one

influences, and is influenced by the other. There is a criticism about the contribution of Kant, Lobachevsky, Gauss, etc. Concepts of man and human purpose with particular reference to Tagore, Aurobindo, Gandhi, Vivekananda and Radhakrishnan are also there.

It is revealed that implicit anthropological presupposition underlies all types of philosophy. Unless this presupposition is carefully studied and understood, the deeper implication of philosophy cannot be grasped. The book is concluded by saying that once we sufficiently realize the importance of practical considerations, underlying theoretical activities, the 'richness of the world'

assumes another and perhaps, a deeper significance.

Notes and references at the end of each chapter, including the page numbers of the original work by many eminent writers, are a good effort done by the author which deserves special appreciation from the reading public. In fact this is a scholarly work for scholars to depend upon and consult at moments of doubt, and for men of letters and erudition to place reliance on.

A. S. PARAMESWAR
Advocate, Ernakulam North,
Kerala.

NEWS AND REPORTS

THE UNITED CULTURAL INSTITUTE
35, RHODES AVE., SALISBURY, RHODESIA
REPORT : OCTOBER 1975—15 MARCH 1977
SECRETARY : SWAMI NISREYASANANDA

On October 25, 1976, Swami Nisreyasananda of the Ramakrishna Order began his 18th year of service in Africa. During the period under review the usual programmes were carried out in Salisbury and Bulawayo. Two visits were made to a dozen important towns in the Republic of South Africa, each lasting about 20 weeks. People everywhere appreciated the special show of the 16 mm. full-length film on The Holy Mother. The return trip from South Africa in December 1975 was by car. A dozen enthusiastic friends accompanied the Swami, halting at many places and having meetings. They held a Retreat in the Bulawayo Ashrama, about 9 miles away on the road to Victoria Falls.

Mr. C. B. Patel, President of the Ramakrishna Vedanta Society of Cape Town, followed up his previous donation of 5000 copies of *Essentials of Hinduism* by 5000 copies of the *Life of Sri Saradadevi*, written by Swami Apurvananda, the Head of the Ramakrishna Advaita Ashrama, Varanasi.

Swami Bhashyananda, Head of the Vivekananda Vedanta Society of Chicago, very kindly arranged for Swami Nisreyasananda's visit to U.S.A. On 9th June 1976, the Swami reached Washington, the Capital. He spoke at the Seminar of the local Vedanta Society. From that time onwards, the Swami was sent to the different Ramakrishna

Math Centres in U.S.A., and to Vedanta groups including those in Vancouver, Calgary, Saskatoon, Winnipeg, and Toronto in Canada. His stay has been extended until 1st November 1977. This unexpected trip has enabled the Swami to add to his existing stock over 1000 coloured slides, and 1200 feet of Coloured Super 8 films for the benefit of the work in Africa. Slides and films of the work in Africa were shown in American Centres. About two dozen useful books from the monastic probationer's Library of the Chicago Centre were acquired and posted for use in the Centres in Africa.

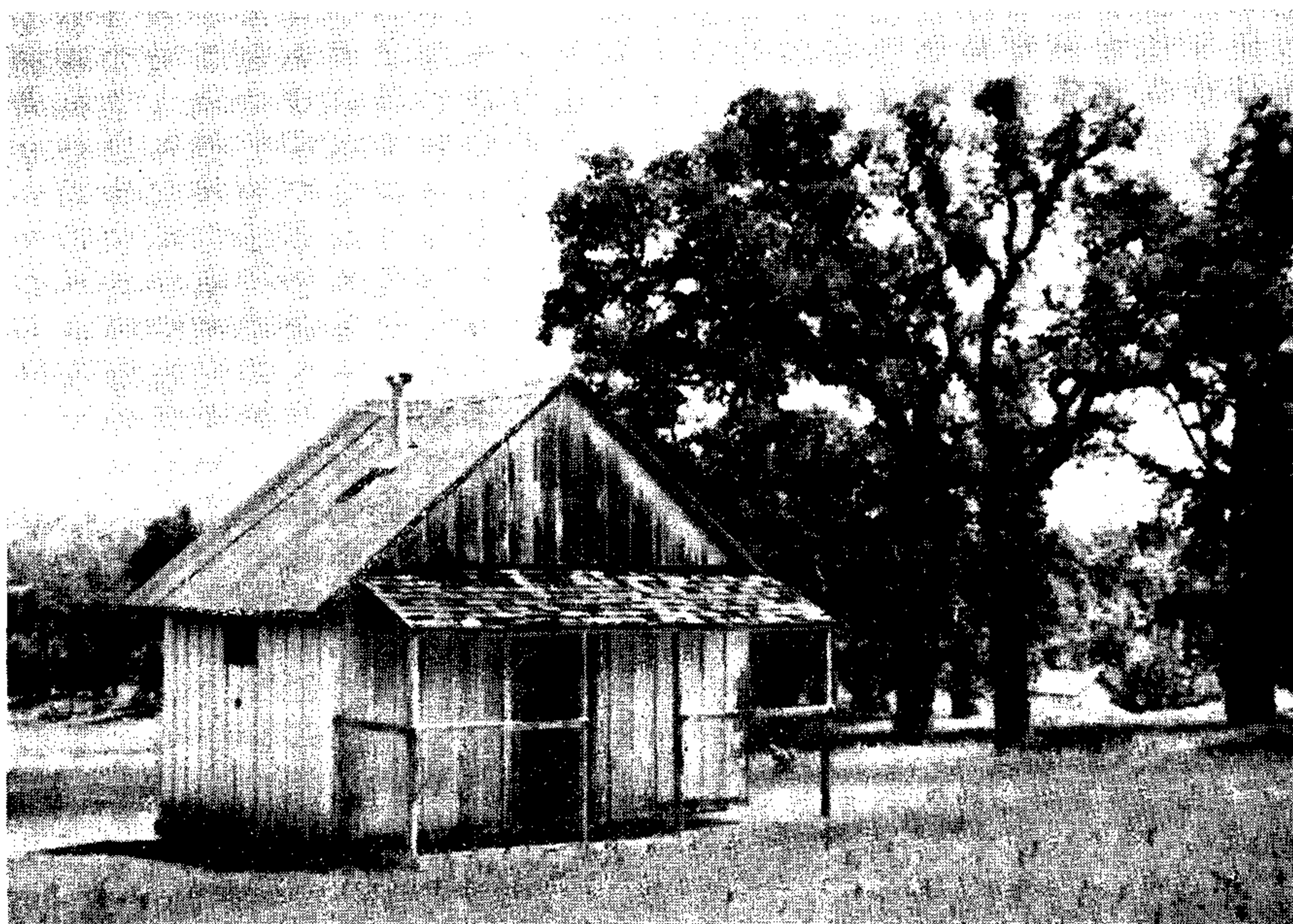
The United Cultural Institute in Salisbury (called also the Ramakrishna Vedanta Society) cleared its loan on its fifth house, located in Hatfield. The small loan of about \$ 1,400 on the Bulawayo house, our sixth, will be paid off from rents alone by next year.

Immediate Needs : (1) More books for the Library in Salisbury, and in other important cities visited by the Swami. (2) More 16 mm. or Super 8 films on the lives of eminent saints of East and West. (3) Permanent Fund, whose recurring interest can assure a minimum of service in African States.

Our Thanks : The Committee offers heart-felt thanks to all individuals, especially Swami Bhashyananda of the Chicago Vedanta Society, and all Associations for the various ways in which they have helped the work in Rhodesia, and elsewhere in Africa. We hope they will extend similar co-operation to us in the future as well.



Shanti Ashrama : A General View



The Meditation Cabin at the Shanti Ashrama



Sister Christine
(The Subject of this Month's Editorial)



Swami Turiyananda at San Francisco
(Reading a Letter on the Bay-shore)