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OR

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NOVEMBER 1977

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No. 11

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

SRI RAMAKRISHNA REMINISCES

'When I went with Mathur to the north-western parts of India, I found that what was here was there also. The same mango trees, tamarind trees, clusters of bamboos, were there as here. I saw all that and said to Hridu : "What, O Hridu, have I then come to see here? Whatever is there, is here. The only difference is that the power of digestion of the people of these parts seems to be greater than that of the people there, when one sees the ordure in the fields here."'¹

* * *

'But one undoubtedly finds inspiration in a holy place. I accompanied Mathur Babu to Vrindavan. Hriday and the ladies of Mathur's family were in our party. No sooner did I see the Kaliyadaman Ghat than a divine emotion surged up within me. I was completely overwhelmed. Hriday used to bathe me there as if I were a small child.

'In the dusk I would walk on the bank of the Jamuna when the cattle returned along the sandy banks from their pastures. At the very sight of those cows the thought of Krishna would flash in my mind. I would run along like a madman, crying : "Oh, where is Krishna? Where is my Krishna?"

'I went to Shyamakunda and Radhakunda² in a palanquin and got out to visit the holy Mount Govardhan. At the very sight of the mount I was overpowered with divine emotion and ran to the top. I lost all consciousness of the world around me. The residents of the place helped me to come down. On my way to the sacred pools of Shyamakunda and Radhakunda, when I saw the meadows, the trees, the shrubs, the birds, and the deer, I was overcome with ecstasy. My clothes became wet with tears. I said : "O Krishna ! Everything here is as it was in the olden days. You alone are absent." Seated inside the palanquin I lost all power of speech. Hriday followed the palanquin. He had warned the bearers to be careful about me."³

Comp.—Swami Sarveshananda

1. Swami Saradananda: *Sri Ramakrishna the Great Master*. Madras: Sri Ramakrishna Math, 1970, p. 560.

2. Places near Mathura, associated with the life of Sri Krishna.

3. 'M', *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, trans. Swami Nikhilananda, Madras: Sri Ramakrishna Math, 1969, pp. 57-58.

SISTER CHRISTINE : THE DEDICATED—III

(EDITORIAL)

A Short Period of Vexation :

In the last Editorial on this subject, we have covered the life-story of this beloved child of Swami Vivekananda up to the end of the nineteenth century. The new century was perhaps to start with a feeling of vexation both for the guru and the disciple. Swamiji had not written any letter to Christina since long in reply to hers. In this connection the Swami had written to Mrs. Bull on March 20, 1901 from Dacca, 'I have no news from Detroit. I received one letter from Christina some months ago, but I did not reply. Perhaps that must have vexed her.'⁵¹ Maybe, he was testing his disciple, as Sri Ramakrishna had tested him by not speaking a word to him for a month. But love never dies. The long silence of Swamiji must have melted the heart of the disciple, and at last the Swami received her letter at Dacca in the first week of April, redirected from the Math. He did not lose time now to reply to it. On April 4 he wrote to her from Dacca, 'I have been anxiously awaiting a letter from you, and it seems it would never come. I am sure to be happy—can't help thinking so—after much struggle the result must come. Things take their own course. It is I who am to brighten up, I find. And I am trying my best. And you can help me by writing nice letters now and then. Will you?'⁵²

Which particular letter of Swamiji's had vexed Christina is not known. We have studied all the available ones, but there is nothing therein to cause vexation. Perhaps Christina had destroyed that letter.

Whatever it may be, hereafter the flow of correspondence lasted without any interruption till the end of Swamiji's life—rather it increased in frequency and momentum. After returning to the Math from Dacca, the Swami got another short note from Christina, in reply to which he wrote on May 13, 'I arrived in the Math yesterday. This morning came your short note. You must have got my letters by this time, and hope this will give you a taste of how sometimes silence is gold. . . . Either I am to go to Europe this summer, and thence to the U.S., or you come over to India. Things are getting ready at that end. Mother knows Her ways.'⁵³

In a Lighter Vein :

In order to relax himself, the Swami used to write Christina at times in a lighter vein, and also made inquiries about her health, which, of course, was necessary, if he wanted to bring her to India for the 'Mother's work'. On July 6, he had written to her from the Math, 'Then your letters: These are no information about yourself. What are you doing? How are you—getting fat or thin? What are you doing during the present vacation, etc. etc.? Only a few lines of worry about my health—faugh !'⁵⁴

The Swami had not seen his disciple for a little more than a year, and he always felt worried about her health. He wanted to see for himself, whether she had grown fat or thin. So he wrote to her on August 27, 'I am sure the Mother will . . . keep you in good health at least. . . . As soon as you get this [letter] send me your latest photograph.'⁵⁵ And the photograph came at last

51. 'Unpublished Letters of Swami Vivekananda' from Mrs. Boshi Sen's Collection (hereafter U.L.), dt. 20 March 1901.

52. U.L., dt. 4 April 1901.

53. U.L., dt. 13 May 1901.

54. U.L., dt. 6 July 1901.

55. U.L., dt. 27 August 1901.

on November 12 commenting on which the Swami wrote to Christina on the same day, 'The morning mail brought me a photograph from Detroit. I thank the sender very much for promptness. Well, I liked it much. But the old one is [the] profile view, this front. Then again, the phenomenal fat seems to be only imaginery on somebody's part. In a way, I am more used to the old one, and as such I cannot slight an old friend. So let me say both are good. The one is an evolution of the other—for the better.'⁵⁶

Once, after writing a long chatty letter to Christina, the Swami had written in a lighter vein, 'Eh ! I must stop. I'm going to look after my geese and ducks ; just for five minutes, breaking the doctor's command to lie down all the time. One of the geese is a silly fearful bird ; always despondent and anxious. She likes to be all alone by herself, and is miserable ; very much like another goose I know in another place [meaning Christina].

'Here my story ends,

[and] spinach top bends.

Why is spinach withering?

Because the goat is browsing.

Why is goat browsing?

Because no grass is growing.

Why no grass is growing?

The gardener is not watering.

Why there is no watering?

The Master is not commanding.

Why is he not commanding?

An ant has bitten the Master !

'This is a nursery hymn told after a story ; and it is true of us all. It is only an ant-bite after all—the trouble here. Isn't it?'⁵⁷ We find many such passages written to Christina just for his own and Christina's recreation ; because she was his beloved child.

In addition, Swamiji wrote in details about his own health to relieve her from anxiety. On November 25 he had written, 'By the by my right eye is failing me badly. I see very little with that one. It will be hard for me for sometime either to read or write, and as it is getting worse every day, my people are urging me to go to Calcutta and consult a doctor. I will go soon, as soon as I recover from a bad cold I have on.'⁵⁸ The Swami also wrote to her the reason for the failing eye three weeks later as follows : 'You know last three years I am getting albumen-uria now and then. It is not constant ; neither is it yet of any organic character. The kidneys are structurally all right. Only they throw out albumen now and then. This is worse than throwing out sugar in diabetes. Albumen poisons the blood, attacks the heart, and does all sorts of mischief. Catching cold always increases it. This time it has caused a small blood vessel in the right eye to burst, so that I scarcely see with that eye.'⁵⁹ We do not get anywhere else so detailed an information about Swamiji's health as we get it in his letters written to Christina.

Invitation to India :

We have seen earlier that Swamiji had Christina in his mind for his work of educating the Indian women. He had already expressed his desire to Mrs. Funke long back saying—'I must have her for my work in Calcutta.' And now there was an opportunity. After staying for about two years and a half in the West, Sister Nivedita had decided to come to India with Mrs. Bull, in order to start her work again for the Indian women ; and the Swami had requested Mrs. Bull to bring Christina with her to India. Accordingly Mrs. Bull had tried hard to urge her to come,

56. U.L., dt. 12 November 1901.

57. U.L., dt. 12 December 1901.

58. U.L., dt. 25 December 1901.

59. U.L., dt. 12 December 1901.

but due to some difficulties Christina could not make up her mind. On September 2, the Swami had written to Christina, 'Mrs. Bull and Nivedita are in Norway. I don't know when they come over to India. . . . I pray, you could come, and the Mother will open the door for it.'⁶⁰ About six weeks later, after knowing the reason of Christina's not accompanying Mrs. Bull, the Swami wrote to her, 'Mrs. Bull writes: "I wrote Christina recently to ask her, if she were to be free in case the opportunity opened for her to go to the East. I send you her reply." I went through several times your letter to Mrs. Bull. It surely was horrible, and you have been all this time hiding the real state of affairs from me, and posing great cheerfulness!! You will be a precious fool to lose the opportunity, if such comes, as is offered by Mrs. Bull. You only have to take a year's leave. The rest will be arranged by Mrs. Bull, including, I am sure, all your anxiety for those, you will have to leave behind in Detroit.'⁶¹

In spite of Swamiji's letter, Christina could not make up her mind sooner, and by that time Mrs. Bull and Nivedita had started for India via Marseilles. Swamiji's letter seems to have had some effect in changing her mind, and Christina decided to come to India at last, all alone. The Swami got some money for her passage from Mrs. Sevier, and sent it to Christina on December 18. On the same day he wrote to her giving some directions for her journey to India as follows: 'Herewith I send you four hundred eighty dollars by cheque drawn on Thomas Cook & Son, Broadway, New York. They have no branch office in Detroit. On receipt of this, you write to Thomas Cook & Son, Broadway, New York, that you have got a cheque from India mentioning the amount and number. . . . This is to pay your "passage

to India" if you think fit to accept Mrs. Sevier's invitation. If you get leave and come, I am sure, you will find somebody who is coming to England at least; thus from there again somebody who is coming to Egypt. You come with them as far as Italy; thence direct on a boat to India. Second class passage across the Atlantic is all right; but second class from Italy to Bombay is rather bad. There are always a few rough men and fast women. There is money enough for travelling first class all through, if you like. The Mother will see to it even as this money came. Drop me a line as soon as you engage your passage. . . . In case, however, things take another turn and you cannot come, no matter. Do with the money just as it pleases you.'⁶² But, perhaps, before she received Swamiji's letter of December 18, the Swami received her letter conveying the news of the passing away of her mother in reply to which he wrote her again a week later, 'Alas! The stars brought you a tremendous blow. Blessed be the name of the Lord. After all, it is only "Thy will be done" our only refuge. . . . Well, the Mother phenomenal has merged in the Mother absolute, eternal. Thy will be done!'⁶³ The Swami did not know definitely about Christina's decision to come to India. So he wrote her on January 23, 1902 from the Math, 'By this time, you must have settled your plans. Don't worry, however, on my account. I only want to see you rested, and well rested, wherever you be. . . . To Mother have I given you over. She protects her own, ever and ever. I have no fear.'⁶⁴

By the beginning of March, the Swami came to know that Christina had started for India. He was then taking rest at Benares, and was not sure about his life. He might have been worried about

60. U.L., dt. 2 September 1901.

61. U.L., dt. 14 October 1901.

62. U.L., dt. 18 December 1901.

63. U.L., dt. 25 December 1901.

64. U.L., dt. 23 January 1902.

Christina, who was then coming to India, lest she does not find him alive! So he wrote to Nivedita on March 4, 'My condition is not at all serious, but it may become any time, and I do not 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 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. . . . 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 where I meet her, and she is to be the guest of Mrs. Sevier. I am also going to take another chance in Almora.'⁶⁵

But nothing undesirable happened to the Swami till his disciple arrived in India. After getting the information from her, he had written from the Belur Math to Christina, c/o the S.S.O. Baldwin Italian Royal Mail Office, Bombay, a few weeks later, 'You know how welcome you are. I need not express it. This is a land where expressions are studiously subdued. Margot [Nivedita] and Joe [Miss MacLeod] have already written and made arrangements at Bombay. I expect and await you here in Calcutta. . . . Come over straight; only take great care of the heat by protecting the back of the head. The trains here are not so safe as in your country, so have a little care of your things during night travel. If you feel tired, take rest in Bombay. Mrs. Bull, Joe and Margot [who were in India by

this time] are anxiously waiting for you, and so is Vivekananda.'⁶⁶

At the Feet of the Master Again :

From Swami Brahmananda's diary it is known that Christina came to Calcutta from Bombay on April 7, 1902, and took her lodging with Nivedita and Mrs. Bull, at the American Consulate, Calcutta. The wife of the then American Consul in India was a friend of Miss Josephine MacLeod, and she had left the whole house at their disposal as it was lying vacant at that time due to their absence. Mr. Okakura and Prof. Oda also stayed here later, along with these ladies. Christina and Mrs. Bull went to the Belur Math the next day to see the Swami in the morning, and stayed there for the whole day. The Swami was feeling better in health.⁶⁷ From Swami Brahmananda's diary it is known that Christina went to the Math and stayed for the whole day on April 18, 23, 25, 26; May 1 and May 4. On the last day Swamiji paid Christina from his personal money Rs. 150/- for her travelling expenses to Mayavati. Swami Sadananda, Nivedita and Suren were to accompany her to Mayavati by night train on the next day. Christina had hardly known then that she would not see her Master any more.

From Sister Nivedita's letters of this time, we know something more about Christina while she was staying with her at the American Consulate. On April 19 Nivedita wrote to Miss MacLeod who was then expected to be at Mayavati, 'On Thursday [April 17] evening S. Sara [Mrs. Bull] went. Tonight our guests [Mr. Okakura and Rev. Oda] are going [to Buddha Gaya for a week], Christine and I are staying here till May first, but Swami is not coming to us, as I had thought he would. Christine

⁶⁶. U.L., dt. 30 March 1902.

⁶⁷. 'Swami Brahmananda's Diary' (unpublished), dt. 7 April 1902.

⁶⁵. U.L., dt. 4 March 1902.

and I hope to go together on Monday [April 21] to the Math. We cannot go tomorrow, as I have a meeting to preside over. Christine is beyond words—soothing, gracious, lovely. I think, we may come to Mayavati together on May first, second or third. And I feel that it is very possibly her destiny to remain in the Himalayas a year or so—meditating. I should think that will prove to be her power. Her character is radiantly beautiful. Of course, I wish, I could have her to live with me.⁶⁸ Two days later, Nivedita wrote again to Miss MacLeod, 'Christine is wonderful. She sits so quietly, and is so true to him [Swamiji]. And yet she is always a *link*, and never a discord, and oh! so soothing!⁶⁹

At Mayavati :

From Nivedita's letters it appears that Christina, Miss Bett, Nivedita, Sadananda, Suren (a nephew of Swamiji's), and Mr. Okakura left for Mayavati on Monday the 5th of May by the evening train.⁷⁰ But they seem to have diverted their path later; because the party reached Mayavati separately on May 10, and 13. According to the Mayavati diary, Saturday, 10 May 1902: 'Miss [Christina] Greenstidel, Swami Sadananda, Swami Subodhananda, Suren (Swamiji's nephew) and Gangi [Sah] reached here at about 5.30 p.m.'⁷¹ And on 13 May 1902 it is mentioned: 'Sister Nivedita, Mr. Okakura, Miss Bett and Mr. Okakura's servant, reached here at noon (about 2 p.m.)'⁷² From this, it appears that Nivedita and Mr. Okakura came via

Almora, while the first batch came directly to Mayavati.

On June 6, Nivedita, Christina, Mr. A. M. Bose (the President of Brahma Samaj) and Amritananda went to Champavat on a visit.⁷³ Sister Christine was the guest of Mrs. Sevier, and the host was very much pleased with her. Swamiji must have learnt this from Mrs. Sevier. Swamiji had written to Christina on May 27, 'If you feel you are becoming least burdensome to Mrs. Sevier, write me immediately. It would be a sin to put further pressure on her. She does so much for me. However, she likes you very much, and writes that you look be-au-ti-ful in sarees.'⁷⁴ Christina had liked Mayavati, and she had become especially intimate with Swami Swarupananda, the then President of the Advaita Ashrama. About their intimacy, Nivedita had written to Miss MacLeod on June 2, from Mayavati, 'Christine is here, a quiet dark girl, *not great*, but exquisite, and all sweet, no sting underneath, eager to leave any whom she loves, true to *all* their past, not trying to take to herself, . . . Swarupananda spends the bulk of his time with her. She is full of gentle strength, and her figure and carriage are indeed wonderful. She was born on the [17th] of August 1866. *He* [Swami Swarupananda] needs at this moment all, whose horoscopes are bright and productive of victory.'⁷⁵

Mr. Okakura and his servant suddenly left Mayavati on May 20 and went to Devdihura; and Nivedita left for Calcutta exactly a month later. She was anxious to open the School. Christina stayed there till December 6. It is known from the Mayavati diary that on this day 'Mrs. Sevier, Miss Greenstidel, Miss Bell and Amritananda left for Allahabad.' They seem to have gone to Calcutta afterwards; and all

68. *Letters of Sister Nivedita* (in Press), Comp. Sankari Prasad Basu (hereafter *Nivedita's Letters*), pp. 458-59.

69. *Ibid.*, p. 463.

70. *Ibid.*, p. 464-65.

71. 'Mayavati Diary' (unpublished), dt. 10 May 1902.

72. *Ibid.*, dt. 13 May 1902.

73. *Ibid.*, dt. 6 June 1902.

74. U.L., dt. 27 May 1902.

75. *Nivedita's Letters*, p. 472.

except Christina returned to Mayavati on April 7, 1903. Swamiji had already written to Christina on June 15, 1902, 'I am quite easy in my mind so long you live with Mrs. Sevier at Mayavati. . . . I will be very anxious, if you are in Calcutta at Baghbazar. . . . Stay with Mrs. Sevier as long as you can. Don't come down with Margot [Nivedita].'⁷⁶ It appears that Christina very much wanted to go to Calcutta and remain near the Swami, but Swamiji was all the while forbidding her to do so. On June 21, 1902, he had written to her, 'We will think of your coming to Baghbazar after Nivedita has fairly started, till then keep quiet, and lay on food.'⁷⁷ This was the last letter the Swami had written to her, at least there is no further letter available to us written after this date to Christina.

Passing Away of the Master :

Christina might not have even dreamed that a shocking news was to reach her in the second week of July, when a long letter dated July 7, conveying the news of their Master's Mahasamadhi, reached her from Nivedita. She had written, 'Tomorrow you will receive this news that will desolate your life. I can only tell you dear, that if my presence could keep you there, you were never absent from his side on Saturday. I must have reached the Math about 7, and I was allowed to sit with him and fan him until 1, when he was taken to the burning place, and the ashes were carried into the chapel about 6. Death came to him so beautifully on Friday night ! A half hour's sleep after meditation, and he was gone ! He was an hour or an hour and a half in the chapel before he slept, and then he just lay down in his room. . . .'⁷⁸

Mrs. Sevier's letter of August 23, to Miss MacLeod, from Mayavati throws great deal of light on Christina's mental state at this time. She had written, 'The passing away of our dearly loved Swamiji was indeed a terrible shock to us all, and, of course, especially to Christine, who nevertheless, bore up bravely, and after the first week resumed her ordinary demeanour, though I can see, at times what restraint she has to put upon her feelings. I am so glad she happened to be here, so as to have the advice and guidance of a strong man like Swami Swarupananda. She has long talks with him about Swamiji, and Advaita Philosophy. When we think of Swamiji, we try not to recall the fact of his *death*. . . . Christine is very quiet, and we get on famously together ; she seems to enjoy the monotonous, quiet life we lead here, and I am certain, *rest* was what she greatly needed ; she looked so pale and wan when she came first. The climate is equable and pleasant ; and the natural beauties great. Christine, like me, is rapturous over mountain scenery, and its ever varying beauties. . . . Christine sends love and sympathy to you in your natural loss : She appreciates greatly your kind and friendly feelings towards her and often regrets she had not the pleasure of meeting you.'⁷⁹

But Christina's mind can be best known from her own letter written during this period to Miss MacLeod. It shows that by constant discussions on Advaita Philosophy with Swami Swarupananda at Mayavati, her mind had become quite Vedantic by the time her guru left his mortal coil. That is why Mrs. Sevier had written to Joe that 'Christine, . . . nevertheless bore up bravely, and after the first week resumed her ordinary demeanour, . . .'⁷⁹ This is possible only for a strong Vedantic mind, the

⁷⁶. U.L., dt. 15 June 1902.

⁷⁷. U.L., dt. 21 June 1902.

⁷⁸. 'Miscellaneous Letters' from Mrs. Boshi Sen's Collection, Sister Nivedita to Sister Christine (unpublished), dt. 7 July 1902.

⁷⁹. 'Unpublished Letters of Swami Vivekananda's Friends and Disciples', Mrs. Sevier to Miss MacLeod, dt. 23 August 1902.

glimpse of which we get in her letter to Miss MacLeod. She had written, 'Yet while for us life is finished, for him [Swamiji] this is Freedom Absolute. I try to think of that and that alone. And after all, this life is but a little thing and short; thank God. We would not have him back suffering in body, tortured in mind—no, not even for one hour would we! We would rather gladly suffer the pains and bear the sense of loss. How beautiful it all came at the end! Just as he always hoped it would—"as it should be with a Yogi". And now I love to think of him "sitting in Eternal Meditation".'⁸⁰

This letter of Christina's speaks of her mettle. She was a fit disciple of Swami Vivekananda—the Lion of Vedanta.

^{80.} *Ibid.*, Miss Christina Greenstidel to Miss MacLeod, dt. (August ?) 1902.

Though she was weak physically, she was a Lion's cub in her mind. She had 'nerves of steel', which Swamiji wanted; but to make her 'muscles of iron' Swamiji had advised her to take one year's leave and give some rest to her body. On May 27, he had written to her, 'I am so happy to learn the mountains are doing you good. Eat a lot, sleep as much as you can, and get plump. Stuff yourself till you get plump and burst.'⁸¹ And perhaps she did the same, besides discussing Vedanta with Swarupananda till she left the mountains in the first week of December with Mrs. Sevier and others, to start in due course the 'Mother's work' at Calcutta in collaboration with Sister Nivedita, with full vigour—physical and mental.

(To be concluded)

^{81.} U.L., dt. 27 May 1902.

EARLY DAYS AT SHANTI ASHRAMA—IV

GARGI

4

Swami Turiyananda's awareness that the Ashrama might fail for lack of support did not impinge upon his firm faith in the Mother, whose will did not manifest itself always in success, always in brightness. This concept, difficult for Westerners to grasp, he spoke of to Mrs. Hansbrough in one of his most loving of letters:

The 29th Sepember 1900

My dear Mrs. Hansbrough,

Many thanks for your kind letter received day before yesterday. I have been exceedingly happy to know that you all are doing quite well. It is really gratifying that Mrs. Wyckoff is herself again. I am glad that Minie feels so kindly towards me. My best wishes and kind regards to her always.

I would be happy to meet her in San Francisco only if I can know her address. I think I will be here this winter as I wish to make this place a permanent centre for Spiritual culture and therefore I do not like to leave it vacant any more. We are now ten persons living here. I am not sure how many [are] going to stay here during fall. There is a little misunderstanding on the part of the president of the Vedanta Society in San Francisco. She thinks that this is a place for the people of the Home of Truth. She has not written that to me. But such is the rumour in the city. Swamiji has written to her that it is nothing of that sort, yet I don't know if she has been disillusioned. However, we are getting along pretty well as far as spiritual teaching and practices are concerned. We leave the rest to the Mother. Let us do all that is in our

power and then Mother knows what is best. If it is not Her will that this Ashrama should go on then let it drop. Who cares for it. Swamiji asked me to start this centre and I have done. So far it is all right. Mother knows, I do not. Yes I promised Miss Spencer that I should write to her when there and therefore I wrote giving our idea as to the land. She has not replied to it. You are right. If it be the will of the Mother men and money and everything will come. But if it is not, She knows. Why should I bother myself for that. Our faith should be firm in Mother surely, but not for any success or failure as regards the particular work that we might think right. It stands or falls, that should not shake or make any difference whatever in our faith in Mother. Whatever pleases her best let that be done and let us remain constant in our faith under all sorts of circumstances. I heard from Swamiji recently. He sent his love to you and enquired if you are sending money to India as usual and I have replied in the affirmative. He is doing very well in Paris and means to stay there for some time and learn German [French]. The news from India is also good. We all are doing well. My best wishes and love to all of you and greetings and kind regards to all other friends in Los Angeles. Please remember me to one and all of the friends I know personally. How is Doctor doing? To him my love please. Hoping this will find you all in the enjoyment of sound health and peace of mind with affectionate regards

Yours Sincly
Turiyananda

PS. I have not heard from Helen for some time. How is she doing? My eternal affectionate regards to her. You know Miss Boock left this [place] some time ago. Has she seen you at all? I have not heard from her since her departure though I have written to her. Don't you feel any impelling of coming this way just now? All the members here are feeling very much benefitted and improved spiritually so they say. Chetana [Miss Bell] is now living in retirement. She is doing well.

Everybody that know you sends their love to you.

It does not appear that the officers of the Vedanta Society always bothered to keep Swami Turiyananda informed of the developments regarding Shanti Ashrama as they unfolded at the weekly meetings in San Francisco. The needs of the Retreat had not been altogether forgotten or brushed aside. Mrs. Agnes Stanley—Shraddha of the emptied purse—had pressed the matter, and on September 20, as the Minutes for that date testify, 'it was deemed necessary to raise (fifty) dollars for a portion of the pipe necessary at the Ashrama and the Class was requested to try and raise this amount.' Within three weeks the fifty dollars was scraped together, half of it coming from Shraddha herself, and on October 11 an announcement was made at the weekly meeting that a money order had been sent to Swami Turiyananda. It was shelter more than a pipe that the Ashrama needed just then, and the Swami's relief at now being able to afford the former is evident in the following letter:

The 21st October 1900

My dear Mrs. Hansbrough,

Your letter of the 9th October came duly to hand but I am sorry I could not reply to that earlier. I have got your letter of the 18th just this afternoon. I thank you for both of them. You will be glad to hear The Vedanta Society in San Francisco sent \$50/- fifty dollars to me to build cottage or something of that kind in the Ashrama. Mrs. Stanlay was the great mover and contributed herself \$25/- twenty-five dollars. Mrs. Stanlay came with me and lived in the Ashrama for more than two weeks. She is a beautiful soul. You know Mrs. Plumb perhaps of Oakland. She also sent \$10/- ten dollars. Mr. Roorbach has gone to San Jose to buy the necessary articles for a meditation hall and dining-room in the Ashrama for general use with the money. Those that are going to stay here during

winter have made up their minds to fix their tents at their own cost. So matters have become plain and easy. I am now not thinking of anything except living day to day life without thinking of the morrow. Mother knows what is going to happen next. Mr. Aspinall is at last coming down here and he will be an acquisition to the Ashrama so they all say. Do you know him well? I saw him in the Pine Street Home of Truth and formed a very good opinion about him. I think Mother is working all right all the time though very slowly but surely, and everything is tending towards gradual improvement and growth. I am sorry Mrs. Schmidh suffered from illness. I hope she is quite well now. I am so glad you all are doing well and Helen is feeling improved in matters Spiritual. I have received a beautiful letter from her, give her my best wishes and love and to all else in the family please. I will write to her at leisure. I think Miss Boock has met you all by this time. She is not very social although she has an excellent heart and spirit, and above all she is unselfish to a degree quite satisfactory. She has done so much for the Ashrama. I thank you for giving me the address of Minie. I shall try to write to her conveniently. I am going to write to Mrs. Eaton also very soon. I am glad that she has such a nice state of mind just now. If she really means what she spoke to you Mother will help her I am sure. Blessed are those that hunger and thirst after righteousness for they shall be filled is not an idle word. Helen writes that she (Mrs. Eaton) is coming to San Francisco and intends to come and stay in the Ashrama for some time. If that is so then it would be very much convenient for me to speak to her and to see for myself what would help her most. Writing cannot do all this so well. Yet I will write soon be sure of it. When you are so very mindful about her and so is Helen I can assure you Mother's attention will be drawn to her benefit as regards her spiritual needs.

I heard from Swamiji the other day. He is in Paris still and in excellent health. I am doing well with all other members

here who are getting along very well in every way. Give my best wishes and kind regards to all the friends there.

Hoping this will find you all well and prosperous. With best wishes and loving regards

Yours in the Mother
Turiyananda

Shortly before receiving the Swami's letter Mrs. Hansbrough had given a nudge to the Vedanta Society of San Francisco, which had been so reluctant (it had seemed) to help support the Ashrama. The Society does not appear to have been altogether pleased by Mrs. Hansbrough's implication and suggestions. Indeed the Minutes for October 25 had a certain hauteur about them: 'A communication from Mrs. Hansbrough was read by Mrs. Wilmot, in which the former stated that the Vedanta Class of Los Angeles was getting a fund of \$150 together in order to send it to the Ashrama and asking the Class of San Francisco to do likewise. As the latter Class has already exceeded this amount in donations, etc. to the Ashrama, it was deemed to accumulate funds to the depleted treasury as they came in, without demanding large contributions. The reading and expounding of the Bhagavad Gita was continued.'

Although it is perfectly clear that the Class of San Francisco was not about to be dictated to by the Class of Los Angeles, it is not entirely clear from the available records just how the San Francisco Class had exceeded \$150 in donations, etc. All one can surmise at the present time is that the "etc." included such items as tents, furnishings, and provisions, contributed by individual members and worth over a hundred dollars. In any case, it was not until early December that the Society found itself able to make a further contribution. On December 6 'the Secretary was instructed to send \$5 to the Shanti Ashrama to Swami Turiyananda for a matting for the Meditation Room'

Whether or not the Vedanta Class in Los Angeles was able to achieve its goal of \$150 we do not know, but at least some money came to the Ashrama from southern California, and by November Mr. Roorbach had hauled in enough lumber for two more cabins—one for Miss Bell (the first to be built) and one for the Swami. It now seemed possible to weather the long winter months ahead when the valley would be grey with frost, and the wind, whistling down from the snow-topped mountains, would seek out every chink in the cabin walls.

As is evidenced by the following two letters, Swami Turiyananda felt that it was not only feasible to keep the Ashrama open during the winter, but advisable:

The 11th November 1900

My dear Mrs. Hansbrough,

Your kind letter is to hand. I am so glad to learn you all are doing well. I have got a letter from Miss Spencer too this morning. She has sent a cheque for \$10/- ten dollars to help the Ashrama in building comfortable quarter for the winter. She herself has subscribed five and one Mrs. Henderson her friend the other five. I think I do not know Mrs. Henderson. However I shall write to her in acknowledgement of the same. The money you sent reached Mr. Roorbach safe and I hope you have got his letter. It is all right. But I think from business point of view it would be better to send the money in the name of Swami Turiyananda. I am sure you quite understand what I mean. The money has not yet been expended but it will come to the real use and benefit for all. I am glad you like to see me and talk with me regarding the work here. Don't you think you can come here for a short time at least. They all are so much eager to have you here. I know for certain you will do a good deal of work in connection with this movement. No sooner I saw you for the first time than I became sure of the establishment of this Ashrama and

got settled in my mind about its financial support. This is going to be proved by and by. Mother is doing Her own work. We are mere instruments at her hands. I am glad Miss Boock met you all and is so much interested in the Ashrama work. She has very beautiful traits in her character. She is really a noble soul. I got a letter from Swamiji the other day from Paris. He did not write anything about his coming this way. He intends going to Constantinople although I am never certain about his movements. Who knows he might come to this country before long. I am feeling the necessity of living in the Ashrama at least until I become sure of its permanent footing. I have sent for Mr. Heyblom [Gurudasa] the gentleman I spoke to you about in New York. He has expressed his desire to come. I hope he will be a great help of the Ashrama when here. He is a character I know on whom I can safely depend and leave the Ashrama in his charge when I am abroad. I quite agree with your idea of having another Swami for California work; the place is so vast and real field for Vedanta. I am sure we can get some Swami from India any moment we would send for him furnishing the necessary expenses. Mr. Aspinall is here still. He had been called by the Alameda Home to join there but he preferred being here. He is becoming very much interested every day. I like him immensely. Helen is all right. Mother has taken hold of her. You will see that later. I have written to Mrs. Eaton already but have not heard in reply. It will be so nice if she comes here. I will do all I can to help her out. Mother will make you do a lot of work Alice I am pretty sure of it. Time will show that. I am glad Mrs. Schmidt is herself again. My best wishes and love to all the friends and Vedanta Students there. Wishing you all happiness and prosperity and hoping to see you here before long if not impossible with best wishes and love to yourself and all in the family

I am Yours ever in the Mother
Turiyananda.

(The letter from Swamiji mentioned by Swami Turiyananda is more than likely one that has been published in the *Complete Works* and there dated 'September, 1900'. To judge from internal evidence, Swamiji wrote this letter not in September but in the last half of October. His tone had been encouraging, as to both the eventual success of the Ashrama and the spiritual welfare of the California students.)

On November 26, Swami Turiyananda wrote again to Mrs. Hansbrough:

My dear Mrs. Hansbrough,

Many thanks for your kind letter together with the draft for (\$25) twenty-five dollars. We all have been so happy to learn that you have made up your mind to be in the Ashrama before long. Mr. Aspinall will be going soon to join the Alameda Home of Truth. They want his service badly and waited for it one month without asking anybody else. He thinks it his duty to respond to the call. But he has been very much impressed by the work of this place and may join here again in right time. Mother knows, I do not, but he proved himself a great help to the Ashrama during his short stay here and we all shall miss him very much. I have got a letter from Mr. Heyblom. He will start for the Ashrama as soon as he hears from me. I have written to him yesterday. Do you know Swamiji has left for India with the Leggetts? So I hear from a friend of mine in New York. [Swami Turiyananda's friend was misinformed. Actually,

Swamiji had left for a tour of southern Europe and the Near East with Miss MacLeod, Mme Calvé, and others—not for India with the Leggetts.] But I feel pretty sure he will be here some time again before it is very long. Yes, I feel from within to stay here in the Ashrama besides Swamiji's instruction, and I believe that will be the best thing for me to do for the present. I am glad to learn that you have heard from Swami Brahmananda of late. Mother willing the Vedanta work will grow and spread in this country far and wide, maybe slowly but surely and permanently. Convey my hearty thanks to the Club members for their kind help and my greeting and love to them all. Do you know Miss McChoniki [Margaret McConochie]. She says she is a member of your Club. She has been staying here since six weeks or so. She will write to you I believe. I have got a letter from Helen. I will write to her in reply soon. Please give her my best wishes, and love and the same to Mrs. Wyckoff and all. Yes I got the letter which Mrs. Whelen kindly wrote to me but I am sorry I forgot to write to her in reply. I will do so soon. It rained here steadily for four or five days and the wind blew so high. But we were not very uncomfortable. Now it is fine weather again. Everyone here is feeling quite well and happy. Wishing you all hale and hearty,

With love

Yours Sincly
Turiyananda

(To be continued)

DIVINE GRACE AND SPIRITUAL PRACTICE

S. SREENIVASA RAO

Before dealing with the importance of Divine grace in the spiritual adventure, it may be mentioned that Divine grace and grace of the Guru are not two different things, because Guru is considered as the Divinity (Supreme Brahman) in physical form. Divine grace may come to a spiritual aspirant either directly or through his Guru.

Divine grace in the field of spiritual adventure may be studied at three stages, viz, (1) Divine grace necessary to become a spiritual aspirant, (2) Divine grace needed for an expeditious progress during spiritual practice, and (3) Divine grace essential for ultimate illumination.

1. Need of Divine Grace to Become a Spiritual Aspirant :

A doubt arises whether Divine grace is necessary at all to take up the path of spiritual practice. Some hold that the results of actions (or *samskāras*) in the previous births make one a spiritual aspirant. Some others think that only those who receive Divine grace become spiritual aspirants. It may be seen here as to what extent these views are supported by the scriptures and the sayings of the Saints.

The impact of the past actions on the future birth and spiritual life may be studied in the light of the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*.¹ There it is stated that the householders who perform sacrifices and works of public utility go after death to the lunar sphere where they enjoy the fruits of their actions. After exhaustion of the results of their deeds, they come down to earth through rain, and are born in this world as rice, barley, herbs, plants and beans. However, those who have good residual results of actions earned in this world, after enjoy-

ment in the region of Moon, quickly reach a good womb, that is, a decent human birth. There is no indication in this Upaniṣad that a decent human birth would by itself make one a spiritual aspirant. Even presuming that good actions in the previous birth could uplift him to that level, it may be said that a person does such good actions only through inspiration from the Divine.

In this connection, we may refer to the *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad*,² which states that God, as the indwelling Self, inspires and guides the creatures in using their senses. Therefore, if a person happens to use his senses for a good action, which may be presumed to elevate him to the level of a *Sādhaka* (spiritual aspirant) in the future life, it is because of the inspiration he gets from the indwelling Self. This goes to show that Divine grace is essential for making one a *Sādhaka*, rather than merely the deliberate effort of a person.

In this connection Śrī Śaṅkarācārya has declared in the *Vivekacūḍāmaṇi*³ that three things are rare indeed, and are due to the grace of God ; viz. human birth, longing for liberation and the protecting care of a perfected sage. Śrī Śaṅkarācārya himself has thus categorically clarified that it is only due to Divine grace that one not only gets the human birth, but also acquires a longing for liberation, and the protecting care of a perfected sage.

A parable of Sri Ramakrishna may be quoted in this connection:⁴ As long as a child remains absorbed in its play-things, the Mother keeps herself engaged in cooking and other household work. But when

2. Vide *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad*, III. 3.

3. Vide *Vivekacūḍāmaṇi*, 3.

4. Vide *Sayings of Sri Ramakrishna*, Madras: Sri Ramakrishna Math, 1938, p. 192.

1. Vide *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*, V.x. 3-4.

the child loses interest in its play, and begins to cry aloud for its mother, she can no longer stay in the kitchen. Leaving everything she runs to the child and takes it on her lap.

Even though this parable appears to mean that renunciation comes after one gets disgusted with this world, our experience tells us that not all the people who have undergone sufferings in this world get disgusted and renounce. On the other hand, people still go after the worldly pleasures, and undergo sufferings repeatedly. Though one may feel disgusted for the time being, it is just like a camel eating thorny shrubs despite profuse bleeding from its mouth. Therefore, even to get an urge to cry constantly for the Divine Mother, the grace of the Mother seems necessary.

Swami Ramdas stresses that unless Divine grace dawns on a person, he never awakens spiritually. But such an awakening comes through the contact of a spiritual soul, whom one gets by the grace of God. He quotes an incident of a disciple who told God that because God remembered him first, he remembered Him later. He is of the opinion that the grace of God falls on a chosen person unconditionally, whether he be a sinner or a good person.⁵

2. Need of Divine Grace for Spiritual Progress :

This is a very difficult topic for analysis because it is to be seen: (1) whether self-effort alone is sufficient; (2) whether Divine grace alone is to be propitiated; or (3) whether self-effort should go hand in hand with Divine grace; and, if the latter, to what extent each should play its part during the *Sādhana* (spiritual practice).

In the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*, Śvetaketu, during the course of instructions, feels a doubt regarding the means by which the

Supreme Being can be known. To clarify this, the sage Āruṇi narrates the following parable to his disciple: 'Just as someone, my dear, might lead a person, with his eyes covered, away from [the country of] the Gāndhāras, and leave him in a place where there were no human beings; and just as that person would turn towards the east, or the north, or the south, or the west, shouting: "I have been brought here with my eyes covered, I have been left here with my eyes covered!" And as thereupon someone might loosen the covering and say to him: "Gāndhāra is in that direction; go that way"; and as thereupon, having been informed and being capable of judgement, he would, by asking his way from one village to another, arrive at last at Gāndhāra—in exactly the same manner does a man who has found a teacher to instruct him obtain the true knowledge.'⁶

It may be marked here that someone removes the bandage from the eyes of the Gāndhāra, and it may be said that the removal of the bandage takes place through Divine grace or the grace of the Guru. But mere removal of the bandage does not enable the Gāndhāra to reach his abode. He has to enquire from village to village, and also exercise his own judgement in a proper way. So also, by mere Divine grace one cannot attain spiritual illumination, but it appears that self-effort is also necessary.

Now, can self-effort alone lead us to the goal? In this connection the *Kātha Upaniṣad*⁷ states that the Self cannot be known through much study, nor through the intellect, nor through much hearing. It can be known through the Self alone. The Self of that seeker reveals its true nature. Similarly, *Muṇḍaka*

5. Vide *Ramdas Speaks*, II, pp. 109, 111, 183; III, p. 20; IV, pp. 24, 72,

6. *The Upanishads*, trans. Swami Nikhilananda, New York: Harper & Brothers, IV, 1959, p. 320.

7. Vide *Kātha Upaniṣad*, I. ii. 23,

*Upaniṣad*⁸ says that Brahman cannot be comprehended through the eye, nor through speech, nor through other senses, nor is it attained through austerity or Karma. As one becomes purified in mind through the favourableness of the intellect, one can see that indivisible Self through meditation. Both the verses mentioned above clearly demarcate the spheres of self-effort and Divine grace. After an intense self-effort, a spiritual aspirant reaches a stage when his yearning for realization intensifies, and Divine grace dawns on him, and the Reality reveals Itself to him. As Sri Ramakrishna has said, Divine grace descends upon the aspirant only after he has prayed to God with intense yearning for realization, and practised spiritual discipline.

A vision of Sri Ramakrishna clarifies the relationship between self-effort and Divine grace. In his own words: 'Once when I was explaining God's actions to someone, God suddenly showed me the lake at Kamar-pukur. I saw a man removing the green scum and drinking the water. The water was clear as crystal. God revealed to me that Sachchidananda is covered by the scum of māyā. He who puts the green scum aside can drink the water.'⁹ Thus God realization is not possible unless one makes an effort for the same.

On another occasion, citing an example of a sailor, Sri Ramakrishna said: 'The wind of God's grace is incessantly blowing. Lazy sailors on this sea of life do not take advantage of it. But the active and the strong always keep the sails of their minds unfurled to catch the friendly breeze, and thus reach their destination very soon.'¹⁰ Keeping the sails unfurled signifies 'self-effort', which enables a spiritual aspirant

to catch the breeze of ever-flowing Divine grace.

Swami Ramdas, extolling the flow of Divine grace for the spiritual aspirant, says that grace is like light, always spreading its rays, and we should only open the doors and windows so that we may get that light.¹¹

Thus, self-effort and Divine grace are mutually complementary. Without Divine grace, one cannot have the tenacity to put out strenuous self-effort. Alternatively, without self-effort one cannot get Divine grace for progress in the spiritual adventure.

3 Need of Divine Grace for Ultimate Illumination :

It has been seen in the second section that the ultimate illumination will come of its own accord through the grace of the Self;¹² while in the *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad*,¹³ it is stated that the Self is indeed a mighty Lord. He is the imperishable internal Light that controls everything. He guides the intellect of all beings so as to enable them to gain that extremely pure state. And in the same *Upaniṣad*,¹⁴ it is said that the Self, which is subtler than the subtlest, greater than the greatest, is concealed in the hearts of creatures. By the grace of the Creator, one becomes free from sorrows and realizes Him as the Great Lord. This *Upaniṣad*¹⁵ further narrates how the great sage Śvetāśvatara attained the supreme state of Brahman by the power of self-control, concentration of mind as well as by the grace of God.

By analysing the instructions contained in the *Upaniṣads*, we find that after a long, and probably a tiresome and adventurous journey on the spiritual path, the revelation

8. *Vide Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad*, III. i. 8.

9. 'M', *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, trans. Swami Nikhilananda, Madras: Sri Ramakrishna Math (hereafter *Gospel*), 1974, p. 199.

10. *Sayings of Sri Ramakrishna*, Madras: Sri Ramakrishna Math, 1938, p. 207.

11. *Vide Ramdas Speaks*, II, p. 160; III, p. 57.

12. *Katha Upaniṣad*, II. 23; *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad*, III. ii. 3.

13. *Vide Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad*, III. 12.

14. *Vide Ibid.*, III. 20.

15. *Vide Ibid.*, VI. 21.

of the truth comes of its own accord by God's grace in the purified heart of the spiritual aspirant.

Sri Ramakrishna says that as long as there is any trace of ego, none can realize the supreme state. To illustrate, he says that, suppose, a householder has put someone in charge of his storeroom. Then if somebody comes and asks the master for something from the storeroom, the master will simply direct him to the storekeeper. He himself will not enter the storeroom as long as the keeper is retained there. But, once the storekeeper is sent out, the owner himself comes and takes charge.¹⁶

Sri Ramakrishna compares God to a policeman on night duty with a lantern. With the help of the lantern, the policeman sees everybody in the night, but if we want to see the policeman himself, we must earnestly pray to him to turn the lantern

towards his own face. By such a prayer, he turns the light towards Himself, and the aspirant gets the vision of the Lord.¹⁷

Thus it is clear that the Ultimate Illumination comes through Divine grace, which will not be denied to any aspirant who yearns for it.

In conclusion, it may be said that there is no dearth of Divine grace to achieve our goal. It is always available in abundance, and it is left to us to make ourselves deserving to receive it. In the words of Sri Ramakrishna : Let us take one step forward towards the Lord, and the Lord, out of pure love and compassion for us, comes towards us by ten steps. What is, therefore, necessary is to march ahead with all sincerity of purpose and unflinching love to Him ; and to practise spiritual disciplines, for the purification of the heart in order to realize the Goal Supreme.

¹⁶. *Gospel*, p. 107.

¹⁷. *Gospel*, p. 107.

SELECTIONS FROM THE ADHYATMA RAMAYANA—III

TRANS. SWAMI YOGESHANANDA

(Continued from the August issue)

Uttara Kanda

Chapter Two (from v. 63)

The sage Agastya said, addressing Rāma: 'You are the visible Nārāyaṇa, originator of the worlds. This whole world, animate and inanimate is your own form. Brahmā, grand-sire of the world, sprang from the lotus of your navel. O best of the Raghus, fire and speech have sprung from your mouth, and from your arms the multitudes of world-protectors. From your eyes have come the sun and moon, and your ears give rise to the principal and intermediate points of the

compass. *Prāṇa* itself derived from your nostrils, as do the twin Aświns, holiest of *devas*. From your shanks, knees and wide hips the atmosphere and the rest have come into being. It is out of your belly that the four seas arose, and from your breasts issued Indra and Varuṇa. Your seed became the Bālakhilya¹; from your organ of generation Yama was born. From your intestines came Mṛtyu, and from your wrath, the three-eyed Rudra. The mountains arose out of your bones, the cloud-masses from

1. A class of *ṛsis* of the size of a thumb.

your black locks, the herbs from your bodily hairs, and from your nails, Khara and the like.²

‘Endowed with the power of *māyā*, you, the Puruṣa of cosmic form, appear in various shapes, as it were, in mixtures of the *guṇas*. Taking refuge in you, the gods quaff nectar in sacrificial ceremonies. It is by you that this whole living and non-living universe is projected. Because of you, all the mobile and stationary creatures live. Everything, even in ordinary life, O Rāghava, forms a part of you, just as butter, becoming finely divided in milk, pervades the whole liquid. The sun does not illumine you, but is itself illumined by your light. The eye of wisdom regards you as the all-pervading Eternal One, but the ignorant eye may not even see you, as the blind do not see the sun. Yogis think of you as the Supreme Lord dwelling in their own bodies. Absorbed day and night in meditation on the Upaniṣads, they will, if seized by a particle of devotion to your feet, meditate on you as pure consciousness and nothing else.

‘Lord of the gods, as I enjoy your favour, you ought to forgive me this bit of prattle before you, the omniscient. I bow down to the Lord of Raghu, who is utterly devoid of space, time or direction, who is one-without-a-second, pure consciousness, unborn and undying, and without movement and the rest; the all-knowing Lord of infinite qualities, free from maya and not separated from his worshippers.’

Chapter 3 (from v. 25)

The sage Agastya said: ‘By you, through sport, embodied as a man, the earth’s entire burden has been assumed. But what power is that, for one who has the unbroken eternal form of the ever-free *cidātmā*, dwelling

within all beings? But this assuming of a form through play is highly praised by good men. That mortal who exalts your glory in having relieved all the worlds of their sins and brought them happiness, is freed from all blemishes through taking refuge in you. I will now tell, O Rāma, of another event relating to you, for the sake of which Sītā was stolen by the evil-minded Rāvaṇa.

‘Of old, in the Kṛta Yuga, Rāvaṇa, seated with Sanatkumāra, mighty son of Brahmā, addressing him with proper humility said: ‘Who, pray, in the higher world is the strongest of the gods? And in whom do they take refuge to conquer their foes? Who is it that is always worshipped by the twice-born, and on whom do the yogis meditate? Please answer this question, O Lord, O best of the knowers about questions—knowing whom completely, and as seated in one’s heart, one becomes a knower of yoga?’

‘To Rāvaṇa, Sanatkumāra replied: “Hear me, my boy, for I will tell you: it is Hari, the immutable Nārāyaṇa, by whom the world is eternally borne, who is without birth and the rest, and is always being praised by the gods and *asuras*. From his navel is born Brahmā, the master of the creation, by whom alone is projected everything, animate and inanimate. It is to Hari the wise resort, for conquering enemies in battle, and by the yoga of meditation the yogis pray to him alone.”

‘On hearing these words of the great sage, Rāvaṇa asked: “By which path do the *daityas* and *dānavas* travel after death, when killed by Viṣṇu, O best of sages?”

‘Sanatkumar’s answer to King Rāvaṇa was, “Those who are killed by a *devatā* always go to one of the lower heavens; at the expiration of their enjoyment, they fall down from that, again to earth. They are born and die in accordance with their previously acquired good and bad karma. But those who are killed by Viṣṇu attain the locale or Hari.”

2. A pun here: *khara* means sharp things in general; and is also the name of a younger brother of Rāvaṇa.

'Rāvaṇa, hearing all this from the sage's mouth, and elated in mind, reflected that he would fight with Hari. Fully comprehending Rāvaṇa's decision, Sanātkumāra said, "Child, what you are hoping for will surely take place. Wait a bit, and be happy, Rāvaṇa." The great-armed sage added, "Let me tell you about his form (although he, the Magician, has in reality no form): He is in the trees and in all rivers and streams; he is Om, Truth, the sun and the earth, the foundation of the whole world, wearing the form of Śeṣa, of all the gods; he is the ocean, Time, the sun and moon, the sunrise, day and night and Yama, as well as wind and fire, Indra, Parjanya, Vāsava, Brahmā, Rudra and all the other *devas* and *dānavas*. Maker of the universe, he flashes, he shines, he eats, he drinks, he plays—this immutable Ātman. This is the eternal Viṣṇu. All this—the three worlds with their moveables and immovables—are pervaded by him.

"He is not seen by just anyone, whether serpents, *dānavas*, or *devas*: he on whom the Lord bestows his grace can see him; sacrifices, austerities, studies or charities can never bring him into sight. The Lord Viṣṇu can be seen by those of his devotees who have a pure perception of the Vedānta, whose vital energies all have gone toward him, and whose *cittas* are his, and whose sins are washed away. Now as regards your longing to see the Supreme Lord, hear me: In the Treta Yuga he, Lord of the gods, will come in the form of a man for the sake of the welfare of gods and men. Hari will appear in the line of Ikṣvāku, becoming Rāma, son of Daśaratha, possessed of great purity and valour. Because of his father's command he, the soul of *dharma*, will wander about in the Daṇḍaka forest with his wife (his *māyā*, Mother of the universe) and his brother. You have heard all this in detail, O Rāvaṇa, from me: now always worship with an

attitude of devotion the glorious Rāma."

'The great *asura*', said Agastya to Rāma, 'thought over and pondered for awhile what he had heard. The desire for a struggle with you, grew within him, and he exulted. His condition is that of one roaming throughout the worlds in eagerness for battle. Therefore, Great King, Rāvaṇa is very wise to steal Sītā, in his wish to be destroyed by you. And whoever hears or reads this story, or relates it to those eager to hear it, will always have long life, health, endless happiness and imperishable wealth as well.'

Chapter 5 (from v. 3)

One day when Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa were alone, the latter got a bright idea and saluting with devotion the lotus feet of his brother (which are adored by Lakṣmī) said in all humility:

'I know that you are pure Knowledge, the Self of all embodied beings. You are the Lord, formless by nature. You are recognized by those having insight, O great-minded One, those who gather together, concentrated on the nectar of your lotus-feet. I am prostrate now, Lord, before those feet, which are the culmination of relative existence, cherished by the yogis. Please give me instruction so that I may without delay spread abroad that joyous knowledge which is a boundless sea!'

Rāma, the remover of the afflictions of his devotees, was pleased at his brother's words. He, whose ornament is the protection of the earth, then spoke wisdom compatible with scripture, designed to extinguish the darkness of ignorance.

'A man should first perform', he began, 'the duties prescribed for his own *varna* and *āśrama*: by these his mind is made pure. Then, having completed that portion of his *sādhanā*, let him resort to a true guru in order to discover the Self. Work always ends in embodiment. For one who is impassioned, it leads to happiness and misery.

In this way—with another body and more action, arising one after the other—the world goes round like a wheel. For the root cause is nothing but ignorance, and this is destroyed not by action set in motion or obstructed, for that is born of ignorance itself, but by knowledge (*vidyā*) alone, which is very skilful in destroying it. If ignorance and passion are destroyed, karma with its handicaps cannot arise; memory too will be unobstructed. So let a wise man possess knowledge and discrimination. (Objection:) Some say that action is extolled through the mouth of the Veda, and like knowledge it is also the fulfilment of the human endeavour. For the embodied, action then is said to be an aid to knowledge.

It is not so, for even the performing of good deeds, however righteous, looks to other instruments. That is why knowledge is declared by the illumined to be a better means of liberation than action. The doctrine that actions are to be combined with knowledge is self-contradictory for this reason: knowledge comes with absence of egotism, but where there is pride in the body, it only increases ignorance. Knowledge is characterized by the effulgence of totally pure consciousness and the *Atma-vṛtti*; when this is established, ignorance is destroyed with all its concomitants, including action and its instruments.

Therefore, the intelligent man who has as his goal union with the Self, and keeps the range of all the senses and mental motions turned inwards, should renounce action altogether to put an end to multiplicity due to the obstruction to knowledge. As long as a man's self-consciousness is, because of *māyā*, in the body etc., so long are the actions of the followers of ritual to be done. Then one should reject everything by means of declarations like "not this", revealing the Supreme Self, and renounce activity. When the Supreme Self is distinguished from the mind, the effulgent intellect (*vijñāna*) shines in

one's self; then alone will *māyā*, the cause of self-remembrance, at once dissolve. And as on the evidence of *śruti*, *māyā* is completely destroyed, how can it then be a performer of action? By realization one is automatically purified of duality, and ignorance does not again arise; if it be destroyed, and does not arise again, how can there be the thought "I am the doer of this"? Therefore is knowledge independent, requiring nothing else for liberating the soul; it shines of itself. The *Taittirīya śruti* has clearly spoken respectfully of the renunciation of all commended actions. *Śruti* has also said that for heroes, *jñāna*, not karma, is the means for liberation. In their power to put an end to illusion, action and knowledge are declared unequal; their antagonism is evident from their respective fruits. The consciousness of ego, the non-Self, which is notorious in the ignorant, accomplishes purposes through many instruments. It is not so for one who sees truth; for one with knowledge, it is just the opposite. Therefore the wise—those whose soul is not in activities—should renounce according to precept the action promulgated by rituals.

When a man has been purified in mind through the grace of the guru and has understood the oneness of *jīva* and Atman, by faith in the words "*Tat tvam asi*—Thou art That", he should be happy, and unshaken like Mt. Meru. The first step, it is said, on the road to realization of the meaning of this utterance, is comprehension of the meaning of the terms. The two words *tat* and *tvam* mean respectively, the Supreme Self and the *jīva*, and *asi* means the oneness of the two. The seeker should remove the division between the two (consisting of opposites like 'within' and 'without') and comprehend the essence of both as clarified consciousness. Knowing the implied by implication, let him be his own non-dual Self. If the discarding of the direct meanings of the two words, *tat* and *tvam* be not completely carried out, it

will prevent the correct understanding of their true condition as a single self. So let the implication of their partial meanings, as in the demonstratives "this" and "that", be faultlessly pursued.³

'The gross superimposition on the Self is the body, consisting of *māyā*, born of action with beginning and end and so on, the locus of enjoyment of activities which result in pain, pleasure and the like, and the product of the compounded elements—water and so on. The subtle body, endowed with mind, intellect, the ten inner sense-organs and the vital energies, is the product of the uncompound-ed elements. It brings about the pleasure etc. of the enjoyer. But the wise see it too as different from the Self. There is also the causal body, which is beginningless and indescribable, but the essence of which is *māyā*, the real fabricator of bodies.

'The aspirant should gradually become acquainted with his own Self within himself, for it is separate from these *upādhis* (superimpositions) which are nothing but "excess weight". But within these sheaths, what is implied by the word "this" shines, in the form of that, *tat*, through nearness, like a crystal (near a bright colour).

'When the great dictum "the Puruṣa is unattached" has been fully realized, the Self is seen as the unattached, the unborn, the non-dual. The threefold vibration (*vr̥tti*) of the intellect, i.e. the waking, dream and deep sleep states, due to the individual's three *guṇas* prevailing one over another, is falsely attributed to the eternal, Supreme Brahman, solitary and beneficent. That vibration which we call thought, characteristic of the ignorant because of their attachment to *tamogūṇa*, revolves endlessly through the phases of memory, mentation, vitality, organs and gross body; as long as it does so, so

long will there be the springing up again of relative existence. Making the totality formless by means of the test of "not this, not that", and enjoying in his heart the nectar of condensed consciousness, let a man completely renounce the world; having drunk like water the juice of the True, what does he want with the fruit of the world?

'The Self never dies and never is born; it does not wax nor wane. It is superior to everything that was left behind, is happy by nature, self-luminous, all-pervading and non-dual. How can relative existence, full of misery, ever bear fruit like this which is filled with knowledge and happiness? When the superimposition due to ignorance is overcome, light dawns; so let a man be immediately absorbed in that knowledge, by contradicting (the apparent). For *adhyāsa* (superimposition), say the wise, is that which is imputed to something which it is not, through error, like the imputation of a snake in that which has not become a snake, such as a rope and the like. So also is the universe on God. On the Consciousness-Self, devoid of the *māyā* of differentiation, egoism is the first projected (*upādhi*); it is nothing but a superimposition on the Self, the cause of all, the incorruptible, solitary Supreme Brahman.

'With respect to desire, passion, pleasure and so forth, the wise always follow *dharma*, and are thus activated to evolve toward the Supreme. They understand that the happiness experienced in the state of deep sleep is attributed to ourselves through failure to perceive there the Supreme. "The individual soul is this Light, reflected in the intellect which arises from beginningless ignorance"—this is the way they explain thought. The wise, taking up the station of the witness, see the Self, existing separately, detached and different from the intellect. The Self and the intellect appear to have exchanged attributes through indiscrimination, the former seeming to be unconscious, the latter con-

3. This is a rather technical exercise in discrimination, using the method of *bhāga-lakṣaṇa*; illustrations and details may be found in the *Vedāntasāra*, which also deals with it.

scious; (as when we attribute fire to) an iron ball heated red-hot. When the superimposition of the one on the other is removed, the inertness of the reflected (the intellect) and the opposite nature of the true consciousness (*cetas*) stand clearly revealed. Having obtained wisdom from the Vedic utterance as well as from the guru, regarding him as one's own Self, Self-established and free from *upādhis*, let one renounce completely the insentient, the realm of the lower self.

‘“I am of the form of light; I am unborn, non-dual, never manifested, extremely pure, the embodiment of purest enlightenment, free from disease, complete, full of bliss and without action. I am always free and possessed of inconceivable power. I have knowledge beyond the senses and am subject to no change; I am limitless. Day and night I am recognized by the wise followers of the Veda in their hearts”—thus are all actions productive of rebirth destroyed quickly together with their cause (ignorance), by the purified thought of a man who discriminates with unwavering intelligence, as a bodily illness is cured by taking the “elixir of life”. Seated in a solitary place with his organs under control, his mind thoroughly subdued and his inner intention truly pure, let the seer of wisdom, independent and self-settled, manifest the One denoting no second. He should make this universe, which is an appearance of that Supreme Self, dissolve in the Self, the cause of all; then the Infinite, made of Consciousness-Bliss, knowing no object within or without, remains.

‘Before *samādhi* let him meditate on the entire universe of the moving and unmoving as *Oṃkāra* alone, for it is to that that the *praṇava* refers. The consciousness represented by the letter ‘*a*’ is the person who lives in the gross universe, while that which is represented by the letter ‘*u*’ gradually arises in the subtle (or dream) state; to the letter ‘*ma*’ is assigned the deep sleep state, by all the authorities. (But as this is prior to *samādhi*,

it is a meditation only, and does not actually happen. To make it a reality:) Let him merge the gross consciousness, the ‘*a*’-person (*Viśva*) in the ‘*u*’-person (*Taijasa*), and then this person of two letters of *praṇava* into the last, the ‘*ma*’-person (*Prājña*). Finally let him also merge the *ma-kāra*, *Prājña*, the cause, into the Self, the *cid-ghana*, the Supreme. “I am He, the ever-free Supreme Brahman, the seer of wisdom, pure and bereft of *upādhis*”—thus will he sit, satisfied in his own bliss, everything totally forgotten, always feeling the inner presence of the Supreme Self; he will calmly manifest the happiness of the eternal Self like an ocean of unmoving water. Thus will it be for a yogi who has practised *samādhi*; the expression of all his organs will be inward, his every enemy totally vanquished: “Let me be one in whom the six qualities (sense qualities) are subdued.”

‘After meditating in this way on the Self night and day, the wise man should always remain totally free from bondage and conceit, experiencing the *prārabdha karma*; then in Me alone he will surely be dissolved. Having understood relative existence, the source of fear and grief, as regards its beginning, middle and end, he should put an end to everything suggested by the advocates of injunctions, and worship his own Self, who is the Self of all beings. Knowing there can be no difference in the Self, he should reflect with regard to objects: “This is, because of non-difference, myself in another form.” And he becomes That, like water poured in the ocean, milk into milk, space into space, air into air. So, whatever the sage may see existing in the world, he should reflect on it thus, saying, “The world is nothing but a misapprehension,” like the appearance of two moons in the sky or the disorientation due to disease of the eyes. So long as he does not see everything as consisting of Myself, he will naturally be engaged in propitiating

Me. He who is full of earnestness, marked by very powerful devotion, sees Me night and day in his heart. That intelligent man who thinks and meditates on this collection of the essences of the *śruti* which I have told you in private, O dear one, is freed at once from heaps of sins. Brother, if it is thoroughly understood that the world is *māyā* alone, and everything is to be renounced by the will, and if the mind is purified by dwelling upon Me, a man will be realized, happy, free of disease and full of the joy of life. He who with all his heart serves Me, the attributeless beyond all qualities, or also as if I were possessed of qualities—is one

with Me; wherever he moves he sanctifies with the sacred dust of his own feet, as the sun purifies with the touch of its rays, the three worlds.

'It is by Me alone that all this wisdom, the one essence of the *śruti*, following the famous Vedanta, has been recited. Whoever studies it with *śraddhā*, combined with devotion to the guru, becomes one with Me if he has faith in My words.'

Thus ends in the *Śrīmad Adhyātma Rāmāyaṇa*—the dialogue between Uma and Maheśvara—'Śrī Rāmagītā', the fifth chapter of the Uttara Kāṇḍa.

(Concluded)

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA: THE CROSS-BEARER

BRAHMACHARI ASHOK

The phrase 'cross-bearer' comes from the New Testament of the Bible. Jesus Christ carried¹ on his shoulders the heavy cross on which he was crucified. Since then the word *cross* has come to symbolize suffering, humiliation, and carrying the burden of human sufferings. Here the title refers to the sufferings Swami Vivekananda had to undergo in his life; and an attempt is being made to understand the significance of his struggles and conflicts—both physical and mental.

Youth and Discipleship :

Swami Vivekananda, then Narendranath, experienced the first wave of inner struggle during his youth, when his quest for Truth could not be satisfied by mere philosophies and intellectualism, or by the devotional practices of the Brahma Samaj. This

search for the ultimate Truth became a consuming fire—a question of life and death for him; and it was this which made him rush one day unannounced into the solitary retreat of Devendranath Tagore and ask pointedly: 'Have you seen God?'

But this was only the beginning of his 'jarring and clashing life',² as the Swami himself labelled it. His father suddenly died when Narendranath was still a college student, and then followed one of the most difficult periods of his life. Being the eldest in the family, all the responsibility fell on his shoulders. Relatives turned into enemies, sued him in the court, and tried to snatch away a part of the ancestral property. He had to face dire poverty and unemployment, so much so that it became difficult to make both ends meet. He would often fast for two or three days at a stretch, and once

1. Cf. John 19:17,

2. Swami Nikhilananda, *Vivekananda: A Biography*, Mayavati: Advaita Ashrama, 1971, p. 302,

he even fainted due to hunger and fatigue by the roadside.

This economic crisis was associated with psychological problems. His friends and relatives tried to tempt him, and women to dissuade him from the idealistic way of life. Some of them betrayed him, and even his nearest and dearest ones suspected his character. And the worst of all, his faith in God, a factor which had sustained him through all these tribulations, was shaken.

Just when this hectic period of physical and mental agonies was passing away, Sri Ramakrishna, his Guru, the source of all his strength, solace and inspiration, the haven of his life, who loved him more than even his parents, left the mortal coil, plunging the young Narendranath further into an ocean of agony. He was left alone with the responsibility of the whole Brotherhood.

The period following was still worse. The Brotherhood shifted to a delapidated house with cobras hissing around, and lived a life so severe that even ghosts would have run away. Narendranath's mental state was correspondingly terrible, as he confessed in one of his letters: 'I had to stand between my two worlds. On the one hand, I would have to see my mother and brothers starve unto death; on the other, I had believed that this man's [i. e. his Master's] ideas were for the good of India and the world, and had to be preached and worked out. And so the fight went on in my mind for days and months. Sometimes I would pray for five or six days and nights together without stopping. Oh, the agony of those days! I was living in hell!' ³ Finally, however, Narendranath renounced, and became a monk; but the result was devastating for his family.

As a Wandering Monk:

Then followed the hard days of wandering

—the Parivrajaka life—about which he has said: '... sometimes one meal at nine in the evening, another time a meal at eight in the morning, another after two days, another after three days—and always the poorest and roughest thing. ... and most of time waking, climbing snow peaks, sometimes ten miles of hard mountain climbing, just to get a meal. ... For months and months I existed that way—of course it was telling on the health.' ⁴ Yes, during the Parivrajaka days Swamiji fell ill several times, and on one occasion so seriously that he was almost dead.

Swamiji's mind was by no means calm. All through the Parivrajaka period he was torn between two opposite urges, the one of retiring and remaining merged in the Absolute, and the other of his responsibility both to his brother-disciples and of doing something for the degraded and spiritually sick masses of India. By the grace of Sri Ramakrishna he had experienced the supreme Bliss of Nirvikalpa Samadhi. But it was taken away from him, and what could be a greater misfortune and torture than to be deprived of the supreme Bliss after once experiencing it? During this period he had to bear the loss of Balaram Bose and Surendra Mitra—two of Sri Ramakrishna's foremost householder disciples who supported the Baranagore Math. Then his sister committed suicide, which rudely awakened him to the great problems of Indian womanhood.

In America :

One would expect the end of his trials and tribulations after his going to the United States, but that was not to be. Prior to the Parliament of Religions he suffered from cold in America due to lack of warm clothing. He was burdened with unaccustomed possessions needed for the travels, and being conspicuous in dress was hooted in the streets

³. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, Mayavati: Advaita Ashrama (hereafter *Com. Works*), VIII, 1971, p. 81.

⁴. *Com. Works*, VIII, p. 84.

and at the World's Fair grounds by young boys, who ran after him in amusement. He felt desperately lonely, for in the whole continent of North America, he had not one friend. Further, he was rudely shocked when he learnt that he had arrived too early for the Parliament, and that he might not be admitted as a delegate for want of proper credentials.

It is, however, well known how Swamiji became a world figure after his brilliant address on the first day of the Parliament of Religions. But, on the very first night of his triumph he wept like a child, for no longer would he remain the itinerant monk, no more would there be the quiet, which of all things he loved most. It was to be strenuous, ceaseless labour, involving terrible demands upon his time and personality.

In the West Swamiji no longer suffered from any material wants; but in spite of popularity, he was always miserable, because his heart was bleeding for the down-trodden masses of India. Even before coming to America, shaking with emotion Swamiji had told Swami Turiyananda: '... my heart has expanded very much, and I have learnt to feel. Believe me, I feel intensely indeed.'⁵ Even much after his return from the West he was heard to hum the song of Mirabai—'Oh, nobody understands my sorrow!'—in such pathetic tone that even stones would melt.

Swamiji's outspokenness aroused the bitter enmity of the Christian Missionaries and fanatic Christians, who began to vilify him both openly and in private; and some of the Indian delegates to the Parliament also joined hands with them. Moreover, he had to face more powerful enemies in the so-called free thinkers, including the atheists, materialists, agnostics, rationalists, and scholars well-versed in Western philosophy and science; and it was an uphill task for him to

remove their ignorance, superstition, and perverted ideas about religion in general, and Hinduism in particular.

In the West, on three different occasions he was almost in the jaws of death either due to the malicious actions of his opponents or by accident. Once in America, an attempt was made to poison him; while in England, a bull chased him and his party; and to protect a lady who had collapsed, he had faced the charging bull squarely. On another occasion while wandering in the Alps, he almost slipped from a precipice which would have meant instantaneous death.

The Days of Hardships in India :

The period of two years which Swamiji spent in India between his first and second visits to the West was one of physical and mental torture. He had written to Mary Hale, 'The last two years have been specially bad. I have been living in mental hell.'⁶ He worked very hard, even at the cost of his health for the masses of India; but the inability of the Indian masses to respond actively to his call, and the opposition from the orthodox Brahmins, Brahmo Samajists and Christian Missionaries had been very discouraging to him.

Nor was it easy for Swamiji to convert his brother-disciples to his ideas. The difficulty he encountered in convincing Swami Turiyananda to go to the West can be cited as the best example: Throwing his arms around Swami Turiyananda, Swamiji said weeping like a child: 'Dear Haribhai, can't you see me laying down my life inch by inch in fulfilling this mission of my Master till I have come to the verge of death! Can you look on without helping by relieving me of a part of my great burden?'⁷

Then the strenuous journey to Amarnath in the year 1898, in the severe cold, and the curse of the fakir in Kashmir resulted in

5. His Eastern and Western Disciples, *The Life of Swami Vivekananda*, Mayavati: Advaita Ashrama (hereafter *Life*), 1974, p. 282.

6. *Com. Works*, VIII, p. 494.

7. *Life*, p. 646.

permanently damaging his health; and till the end of his life, he always suffered from asthma, diabetes, repeated swelling of the feet, and so on.

Meditation on Death :

But the climax of Swamiji's stormy life was reached one day in the second week of September 1898, when he meditated upon the dark, the painful and the inscrutable aspect of the Reality, upon Death itself. His whole frame shook, a world-destroying tempest raged within him and he had the vision of Kāli, the Mighty Destructress, the Terrible One.

Over and above this, financial difficulties in running the Organization constantly worried him. In addition, the work in England collapsed by the middle of 1897, and later on his ardent disciples like Mr. Sturdy and Miss Henrietta Müller deserted him. Even Sister Nivedita, his spiritual daughter, was going astray, and was not able to act up to his satisfaction. At the closing phase of his life he had to suffer the loss of his brother-disciple Swami Yogananda, and his most faithful disciples, J. J. Goodwin and Capt. J. H. Sevier. Thus the life of Swami Vivekananda was one of continuous physical and mental sufferings. At no time during his whole life was he altogether free from them. Why should Swamiji, the foremost disciple of Sri Ramakrishna, the incarnation of the age, suffer so much? Swamiji himself has given the answer of this question. Speaking as a mystic, Swamiji said: 'That which Sri Ramakrishna called "Kali", took possession of my body and soul. ... That makes me work and work, and never lets me keep still or look to my personal comfort.'⁸

Swamiji was a saint of the highest order; and suffering in the life of saints is a sign of Divine grace which God gives only to His choicest few. Swamiji said once: 'Suffering

is the lot of the world's best and bravest',⁹ and 'I may have had Divine help—true; but oh, the pound of blood every bit of Divine help has been to me!!'¹⁰

According to Swamiji: 'There are two sorts of persons in the world. The one—strong-nerved, quiet, yielding to nature, not given to much imagination, yet good, kind, sweet, etc. ... they alone are born to be happy. There are others again with high-strung nerves, tremendously imaginative, with intense feeling, ... For them there is no happiness. ... [They] will have to run between ecstasy and misery.'¹¹ And Swamiji was a person of this sort. Swamiji blamed his emotional nature for his suffering: 'My mistakes have been great; but everyone of them was from too much love. How I hate love! Would I never had any Bhakti! ... my sister committed suicide, . . . and that weak heart flung me off from that prospect of peace!'¹²

Apart from his temperament, Swamiji seems to have had a liking for suffering. 'It is a mistake to hold that with all men pleasure is the motive. Quite as many are born to seek pain. There can be bliss in torture, too.'¹³ 'In my sane moments I rejoice for my sufferings. Some one must suffer here;—I am glad it is I, amongst others of nature's sacrifices.'¹⁴

There can be a deeper reason for Swamiji's sufferings. He was a Prophet, and to be able to deliver a message of universal applicability it was essential for him to experience personally various types of sufferings which human beings are liable to undergo. He was a saviour, born to redeem humanity. 'The Cross' not only signifies suffering and humiliation, but redemptive sacrifice also. Swamiji

8. *Life*, p. 719.

9. *Com. Works*, VI, 1972, p. 419.

10. *Com. Works*, VI, p. 420.

11. *Com. Works*, VIII, p. 390.

12. *Com. Works*, VI, p. 420.

13. *Life*, p. 597.

14. *Com. Works*, VI, p. 419.

was born to bear the burden of the heavily laden willingly, lovingly and voluntarily; and thus save it from untold sufferings of this world. Sometime during the last years of his life he exclaimed: '...may I be born again and again, and suffer thousands of miseries so that I may worship the only God that exists, the only God I believe in, the sum total of all souls—and above all, my God the wicked, my God the miserable, my God the poor of all races, of all species, is the special object of my worship.'¹⁵ And at another time he said: 'Come ye that are heavy laden and lay all your burden on me, and then do whatever you like and be happy and forget that I ever existed.'¹⁶

A study of this aspect of Swamiji's life is significant in various ways: Firstly, it demonstrates that both happiness and misery, good and evil are equally real, and according to Swamiji, both are aspects of the Divine. He said, 'Learn to recognize the Mother as instinctively in evil, terror, sorrow and annihilation as in that which makes for sweetness and joy!'¹⁷ Secondly, it shows that misery is a great teacher. 'In studying the great characters the world has produced,' Swamiji says, '... it would be found that it was misery that taught more than happiness, it was poverty that taught more than wealth, it was blows that brought out their inner fire more than

praise.'¹⁸ 'Disease and misfortune come to do us good in the long run, although at the time we feel that we are submerged for ever.'¹⁹ '[Suffering is the] discipline which breaks the dream [of the world]'²⁰ Thirdly, it reveals that those who want to help mankind must have a large heart, must learn to feel. 'First, feel from the heart,' Swamiji said; '... Feel, therefore, my would-be reformers, my would-be patriots! Do you feel?... Does it make you restless? Does it make you sleepless?... Has it made you almost mad?'²¹ And lastly, in the parting advice which Swamiji gave to his monastic disciples on the eve of his leaving for the West for the second time in the June of 1899, Swamiji characterized renunciation as 'the love of death'. 'Worldly people love life. The Sannyasin is to love death... We must die, that is certain; let us die then for a good cause.'²² According to Swamiji, the grace of the Divine Mother comes to him alone, who can love death. Aptly has he said:

Who dares misery love,
And hug the form of Death,
Dance in Destruction's dance,
To him the Mother comes.²³

15. *Com. Works*, V, 1973, p. 137.

16. *Com. Works*, VII, 1972, p. 521.

17. *Life*, p. 597.

18. *Com. Works*, I, 1972, p. 27.

19. *Letters of Swami Vivekananda*, Mayavati: Advaita Ashrama, 1970, p. 416.

20. *Com. Works*, VI, p. 419.

21. *Com. Works*, III, 1973, p. 225-26.

22. *Com. Works*, III, p. 446.

23. *Com. Works*, IV, 1972, p. 384.

THE MATH BELONGING TO THE GURU OF SRIMAT TOTAPURI

SWAMI ALOKANANDA

We come across in *Sri Ramakrishna the Great Master* a reference to the Math (monastery) belonging to the Guru of Sri-mat Totapuri, who initiated Sri Rama-krishna into Sannyasa, and taught him Vedanta. It is said to have been situated at a place named Ludhiana near Kurukshetra in Punjab.¹ On investigation we discovered that it is not Ludhiana, but Ladhana in District Karnal, of the present Haryana.

Since long, I had a desire to pay a visit to that Math, but it was not until the 31st of August 1962, that I had the privilege of visiting it. To reach the Math, firstly, one has to go to Kaithal, from where the Monastery is situated at a distance of about seven to eight miles. Kaithal can be reached by bus from Ambala city, and the distance being forty-eight miles, it takes about two and a half hours to reach the place. The bus station, from which buses leave for Kaithal, is situated at a little distance from the bus station of the Ambala city. The buses carry the passengers up to the entrance of Kaithal town, from where pilgrims enter the town either on foot or by rickshaws. There is also another route for Kaithal town, by train. Firstly, one has to go to Narwana Junction which is on the Delhi-Firozpur line, and there board a train going to Kurukshetra. Kaithal is the fifth station on this line.

Just at the entry of this town, on the right side of the road, there is a big reservoir on the banks of which are situated two ancient Monasteries attached with numerous temples. The front doors of these

Monasteries are facing towards the road leading to the park of the town. The first Monastery is named Baba Sital Puri's Math, and the second one is known by the name Baba Rajpuri's Math. Here monks belonging to any order are accommodated for as many days as they like, and the Ashramas provide them with 'Bhiksha' (alms).

Ladhana village is situated straight at the distance of about seven to eight miles from Kaithal, towards south-western direction; the roadway is broad, but unmetalled and has been recently constructed. During rainy season, the road becomes muddy at places, so much so that even bullock-carts cannot ply over it. People visiting Kaithal town from Ladhana and back usually cover the distance by cycle or on foot, or even by riding a horse, there being no other conveyance besides these. During other seasons one can reach Ladhana by car.

At a distance of about half a mile from Ladhana, towards the left side, is situated the Monastery belonging to the Guru of Srimat Totapuri, in a surrounding absolutely free from human habitation. The Monastery at Kaithal also belongs to the same monk, and Baba Sitalpuri was a monk of this Monastery at Ladhana. The local name of the place is 'Baba Ka Ladhana', that is, Baba's Ladhana. The Math is named 'Baba Rajpuri Ka Math', that is, Baba Rajpuri's Math.

The present condition of the Monastery beggars description, because it has become dilapidated and age-worn. The broken fragments bear testimony to the fact that once it had been a place of supreme grandeur and gravity. The house is a vast one-storied palace of bricks, consisting of innumerable rooms. The roofs have fallen

1. Swami Saradananda, *Sri Ramakrishna the Great Master*, Madras : Ramakrishna Math, 1970, p. 479.

down by the ravages of time, only the walls are standing like skeletons. The two or three roofs which are still existing are also in a pitiable condition, ready to fall at any moment.

Towards the western side there is a water-reservoir of middle size, consisting of pucca ghats or bathing places, separate for men and women. The water at one time most probably had been crystal-clear, but now it is not so. Two big wells are situated within the Monastery, one of which is in use, the water being drinkable and soothing.

There are altogether five temples within the Ashrama compound; the first is meant for 'Dhuni' or keeping fire. This is the biggest and highest of all the temples and for twenty-four hours fire is kept burning in this temple. Most probably the Monastery belongs to Naga sannyasins; that is why the sacred fire or 'Dhuni' is so highly revered. The second temple is assigned to Lord Shiva. The third one is constructed on the Samadhi of Baba Rajpuriji, the founder of the Monastery. The fourth is the Samadhi temple of Baba Nehalpur and Baba Siddhapuri, two monastic disciples of Baba Rajpuriji, and four other anonymous saints. The fifth temple is built on the Samadhi of Baba Totapuri, and one anonymous disciple of Baba Totapuri. Those present in the Monastery could not throw any light on the name of the Guru of Srimat Totapuri. Besides these, within the campus of the Monastery and encircling it there are about thirty to thirty-five Samadhis of saints, resembling the 'Naivedya' or offerings to the Deity, and are nothing but raised and white-washed earthen heaps.

The present Head of the Ashrama is named Baba Badripuriji, his Guru being Srimat Kedar Puri; Kedar Puriji's Guru was Srimat Gopal Puri. Beyond this no information could be gathered from them about the names of the line of Gurus. Srimat Badripuriji is staying there for the last 27 to 28

years, his age then being about seventy years. The total number of monks living there is only three. One of them keeps accounts, and has one Ashrama at the Ladhana village, and he spends the night in his village hermitage. The two other monks stay in this Monastery all the time. The monk, who is in charge of daily worship and stores, is named Baba Shyampur; and the monk who keeps accounts is known as Baba Chote-puri. I did not see them wearing ochre (Gerua) clothes; they put on a white dress. On their necks could be seen a Rudraksha bead, sewn with thread.

The Monastery had immense property in the form of lands, most of which have been taken over by the Government; but whatever are still remaining are in no way negligible. From very ancient times a big fair is organized at this Monastery during Durga Puja Festival, on the Navami Day. Pilgrims visit the fair from distant places, and after bathing in the reservoir, offer Puja at the Samadhi temple of Baba Rajpuriji.

Baba Rajpuriji had deep intimacy with the then Nawab of Kaithal, Narsebaj Pathan. It is known that Rajpuriji was a keen lover of the game of dice, and a past master in that game. Therefore, the Nawab Saheb used to invite Puriji to his palace occasionally, and both would engage themselves in the game of dice. One day when they were playing at dice, suddenly Puriji began to laugh, and, just after some moments, began to weep bitterly. Being surprised, Nawab Saheb asked Puriji Maharaj the reason of such rapid changes in his temperament. To this Puriji replied: 'In the Delhi royal court one beautiful damsel was entertaining the audience by her superb dancing, and the audience being charmed were regaling at the enchanting performance, therefore, I was also laughing being highly pleased. But suddenly, that dancing girl collapsed and died; and the hearts of those present were gripped by intense remorse at this most tragic incident.

That is why I was also weeping, sharing in their grief.'

The Nawab Saheb immediately despatched messengers to Delhi in order to verify the statement of Puriji and came to know that the incident was absolutely true. As a result, the reverence of Nawab Saheb for Puriji became all the more intensified. Later, the Nawab Saheb himself got that vast Monastery and the water-reservoir constructed near Ladhana village, and gave vast lands as a gift for its maintenance. Another famous personality, Amar Singh Rathor, had also a share in the erection of the Monastery.

The present condition of the Monastery is deplorable, and vibrations of pity rise in the heart of the visitors, though the income is still quite noteworthy. All the monks take their meals only once in the day time, there being no provision for supper. At about 9 p.m. the Pujari Maharaj read *Tulsi Ramayana* for a while, then all went to bed. The condition of the Ashrama produced an impression that rarely any monks or guests pay visits to the Hermitage. I was struck with sorrow with the recollection that this place,

where once the Guru, having knowledge of Brahman, used to impart various instructions on the teachings of Vedanta leading to the attainment of Brahma-Vidya or supreme Knowledge to many worthy spiritual aspirants, has been reduced to such a miserable condition! I began to reflect on the unflinching ravages of time, devouring all ancient glories within its endless abyss.

The name of the Founder-Guru of this class of monks was Marhi (मढ़ी) Bhagwan Puri, from whom this sect of sannyasins has originated; therefore, in Hindi language, his lineage is termed as 'Marhi', which signifies house or the source of its origin. Below is given a list of names according to the descending order of Gurus-cum-disciples: Marhi Bhagwan Puri, Jagmohan Puri, Janged Puri, Hardwar Puri, Mansa Puri, Saraswati Puri, Raj Puri, Siddha Puri, Bhandar Puri, Dalel Puri, Aan Puri, Tota Puri, Chaitanya Puri, Hazari Puri, Gopal Puri, Kedar Puri, Badri Puri, and Shyam Puri. Beyond this, nothing more could be known about the sacred Ashrama where once Srimat Totapuri lived.

UNPUBLISHED LETTERS OF SWAMI VIVEKANANDA*—IV

To Sister Christine

14

Suez,

14th July 1899.

My dear Christina,

You see, this time I am really out, and hope to reach London in two weeks. I am sure to come to America this year, and, earnestly hope, will have the opportunity of seeing you. I am so materialistic yet, you know! Want to see my friends in the gross body.

I had a beautiful letter from Baby before I left. I am soon going to pen a reply to your care, as directed. I could not write her earlier.

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

I was so so bad in health in India. My heart went wrong all the way. What with mountain climbing, bathing in glacier water and nervous prostration! I used to get terrible fits—the last lasting about seven days and nights. All the time I was suffocating and had to stand up.

This trip has almost made a new man of me. I feel much better, and, if this continues, hope to be quite strong before I reach America. How are you? What are you doing? Write everything about yourself, c/o E. T. Sturdy Esq., 25 Holland Villas Road, London. W.

With everlasting love and blessings,

Ever yours in the Lord,
VIVEKANANDA.

15

Marseilles,
23rd July 1899.

My dear Christina,

Your very very welcome wire just came. By next Sunday¹ we arrive in London, Albert Dock.² We are a party of four: myself, another sannyasin,³ a Calcutta boy⁴ going to study in America, and Miss Noble.⁵ Miss Noble is a young lady from Wimbledon near London, who has been working in India on the education of girls.

Our stay in England will not be long, I am afraid, as this is neither the season nor am I in fit condition to work much. Anyhow we will be in London a few weeks, at least myself. Then go to U.S. We will talk over all this, and infinite things besides, when we meet. I do not think even English summer days are long enough for all the chatter I will assail you with.

We go to Wimbledon for a day or two, and then I come back to London and find lodgings for myself and make plans.

Come to the Dock, if that is possible and discrete. Yes, it is discrete as there is a lady in the party and others will come to meet her. Only, Christina, don't, if you feel the least tired or unwell. I hope you are enjoying London immensely.

The orientals do not like any effusion of feeling. They are trained to hide all expression.

Is Mrs. Funke with you? If so give her my best love.

I am much much better just now. I am really quite another man this time.

1. Perhaps at Marseilles Swamiji got the information that their ship S.S. *Golconda* would reach London on Sunday (30 July 1899); but later on he learnt that it would reach there on Monday (31 July 1899). In order to intimate Christina about the change, Swamiji sent her a telegram from Camberwell, B.O., on July 30: 'Golconda due docks 6 a.m. Monday.'

2. S.S. *Golconda* actually arrived at the Tilbury Dock in London, instead of Albert Dock, on Monday morning.

3. Swamiji's brother disciple Swami Turiyananda.

4. Shri Satish Chandra Chakravarty—Swami Saradananda's brother.

5. Sister Nivedita.

I was nearly dead in Calcutta, when I started ; but this voyage has improved me immensely.

Hoping soon to see you,

Ever yours in the Lord,
VIVEKANANDA.

16⁶

Ridgely Manor,
2nd September 1899.

My dear Christina,

I hope by this time you are much better. I am getting physically better every day, though mentally not much.

The London work seems to fall to pieces. The friends over there are all shaky, even Sturdy. Anyway, in Mrs. Bull and Miss MacLeod I have very strong friends. They stand by me here through thick and thin.

Life is a series of fights and disillusionments. Is it not?

Well, I am seeking some quiet, if I can, before I plunge into work again. One has to work to gain a livelihood even. Good that it is so ; it keeps us straight.

How is Mrs. Funke? Where are you both now? I am glad though, that in this life I have got a number of staunch friends that will stand by me, whether I am in good or bad circumstances, I am ill or well ; and you are two of them.

I am rather happy these few days. It is so quiet here, and everybody is good. Days are passing any way, and I am learning to be contented.

The secret of life is not enjoyment but education through experience. But we are called off, the moment we begin really to learn. That seems to many a potent argument for a future existence.

I had the family doctor of the Leggetts to come and see me. He is also of opinion that there is nothing with my heart except a little nervous tremor and that will pass away with proper dieting. I am almost a vegetarian now, except I eat a bit of fish now and then as the doctor says. No meat whatsoever, and I am doing splendid.

I hope soon to be able to come to Detroit. Everywhere it is better to have a whirlwind come over the work. That clears the atmosphere and gives us a true insight into the nature of things. We begin anew, but on adamantine foundation.

I am strong, very strong now. I always am, when left to stand alone. May you be strong, very strong always !

Ever yours with love and blessings,
VIVEKANANDA.

6. Some extracts from this letter have been published in the *Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, V, 1973, p. 150 ; but have not been addressed to anybody. They have been reproduced here to maintain the flow of the letter.

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[Ridgely Manor],
P.O. Stone Ridge, New York,
13th September 1899.

Hold yet a while strong heart,
Nor part a lifelong yoke through weal and woe,
Though blighted seems the present, future gloom,
And age it seems since you and I
Began our march uphill or down
Or gliding smooth o'er calms that are as rare.

Thou nearer unto me than oft-times I myself,
Proclaiming mental moves before they were.
Reflector true, thy pulse so tuned to mine,
Thou perfect note of thoughts however fine,
Shall we now part? Recorder, say?
Though hand in hand so long, in sorrow, joy or shame.

In thee is friendship, faith, for thou didst warn
When evil thoughts were brewing, and cheer
The stranger ones, though they were few;
And though alas! Unheeded oft, thy warning
Thrown away; went on the same as ever, good and true.

188

Ridgely Manor,
20th September 1899.

Dear Christina,

I am much better, thank you. Hitherto, excepting three days there has not been any cold weather to speak of here. Miss Noble came yesterday,⁹ and

7. On 13 September 1899 Swamiji sent this poem to Christina from Ridgely Manor. This poem—entitled 'To My Own Soul'—has been published in the *Complete Works*, VIII, 1971, p. 170; but as the version available to us differs a little from the published one, it has been reproduced here in full for the information of the readers. The date on which this poem was sent to Sister Christine was not known so far. The letter accompanying the poem is, however, missing, though the envelope addressed to Miss Christina Greenstidel, and bearing a date-stamp—September 13, 1899—of the Stone Ridge post office, is available.

8. On September 20, 1899, Swamiji wrote another poem entitled 'Peace', from the Ridgely Manor to Miss Christina Greenstidel. The entire poem has been published in the *Complete Works*, IV, 1972, pp. 395-96; and the two versions are almost the same except in the following two places:

In this version—(1) line four of stanza four reads: 'Between the fits of passion'; and (2) line one of stanza five reads: 'It is beauty never loved'. The poem has not been reproduced for want of space; but the accompanying letter is being published. Until now the date of this poem was not known. For further information regarding this poem ('Peace') readers are requested to see footnote number 41 of last month's Editorial.

9. Sister Nivedita and Miss MacLeod arrived from New York in the afternoon of

we are having jolly good time. I am very very sorry to say I am growing fat again. That is bad. I will eat less and grow thin once more.

You are again at work; so do I find, only with a little variation of the old occupation. Better rest than mere idling. Do you like my new poem? Miss Noble thinks it is nice. But that is her way with everything I do. So you also say. I will now send my writings to missionary papers to get fierce criticism.

With all love to you and Mrs. Funke,

Ever yours affectionately,
VIVEKANANDA.

19

C/o F. H. Leggett, Esq.,
Ridgely Manor,
Stone Ridge, Ulster Co., N.Y.
25th October 1899.

Dear Christina,

What is the matter with you? Write me a line to tell me how you are, and what you are doing now.

I am tired of this place, and will come down to New York for a few days soon. I start thence for Chicago, and if you like, will stop at Detroit on my way to how do you do. I am much better; indeed just a different man, though not completely cured; for that, time is necessary.

Yours,
VIVEKANANDA.

20

Ridgely Manor,
30th October 1899.

My dear Christina,

Did you not get my last letter? I am very anxious to know how you are. Write a line to tell me, you are in very good health.

I am afraid the previous one was misdirected so I send this c/o Mrs. Funke.

Do write soon. I am thinking of Battle Creek food.¹⁰ Baby insists on that. Do you think it will do me any good? Write soon.

Ever yours in the Lord,
VIVEKANANDA.

September 20th. From the contents of this letter and the photostats of the poem and the envelope, it appears that the letter was added to the poem the next day. The date on the Stone Ridge post-mark is September 22, 1899.

¹⁰. Battle Creek is a city in central Michigan, United States, famous for its Health Centre which was known since 1876 as Battle Creek Sanitarium. Under the direction of John Harvey Kellogg (1876-1943) the Sanitarium experimented with health foods, which became the main industry of the city.

PS—Where is this Battle Creek? Is it near Detroit? I am seriously thinking of giving it a trial. I am not bad, but unfit for any exertion, even for a walk. This sort of life is no good to live. I try Battle Creek and if that fails get out quick.

V.

[In left hand margin :] Write me about Battle Creek.

V.

2111

C/o F. Leggett, Esq.,
Ridgely Manor,
Stone Ridge,
Ulster Co., New York,
1st November 1899.

My dear Christina,

Your last letter made me sorry. It seems there is a gloom over your mind. Never mind, nothing is to last forever. Anyhow, life is not eternal. I am so so thankful for it. Suffering is the lot of the world's best and bravest; yet, for eons yet, till things are righted, if possible here. At best it's a discipline which breaks the dream. In my sane moments I rejoice for my sufferings. Someone must suffer here—I am glad it is I—amongst others of nature's sacrifices.

Your letter came yesterday. I wrote you before receiving this. I see you have not had rest, a good rest. I don't care to go to the Sanitarium. You can get all the information about the food for me and the directions and the cost. Then take leave of absence for a month or two and be quiet and take rest either in Detroit or New York, or any other place that suits you. I will join you if you like. You give me German lessons, won't you? Leave the money part of making up of your salary, and the expenses of rest from work on me. I can easily do that much I am sure, without putting myself to straits. You were on your vacation last time, not leave; was it not? Do think on this and try your best to get rest. I am very strong and healthy now and feel strong like a lion, ready to take up any work again.

Don't you disturb your mind about the money part in it the least, for I am ready with it already. Else I would not write it. I intend to do some writing too. If you think you will get better rest at home take leave and rest there. I will come gladly if you can give me a hole even, for we Hindus don't require luxuries. I intend doing some writing and German. Write sharp.

Ever yours in the Lord,
VIVEKANANDA.

11. A part of this letter has been published in *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, Mayavati : Advaita Ashrama (hereafter *Complete Works*), VI, 1972, p. 419; and wrongly addressed to 'Margot' (Sister Nivedita), who, as a matter of fact, was then staying with Swamiji at Ridgely. The letter is printed here in full for the convenience of the readers.

PS—Mrs. Bull asks me to invite you to her home in Cambridge, Boston. You will have a room there and all liberty to do whatever you like. I will have to go to Washington for a few days. After that I will be free to come. But you can come tomorrow, if you like. You have only to write; and I send you your fare and the salary business. The house will be open to you from any day you like. I will join you in a few days. Mrs. Bull is really a mother to me, and will do anything I ask her to do. You need not be the least shy but take leave and come. Mrs. Bull is herself sending you an invitation. It is the best for you to come to her, I am sure. Take leave and come; do.

V.

22

Ridgely Manor,
4th November 1899.

My dear Christina,

The letter was all right in reaching. It was only my nervousness—I am sure you will understand and excuse this. I eagerly expect to see you in Cambridge. I am going to New York next week. Thence I go for a few days to Washington and then to Cambridge. Do come. And mind you, I must learn German. I am determined to be a French and German scholar. French I think, I can manage with the help of a dictionary. If I can do that much German in a month, I will be so glad.

It naturally takes time for a letter to reach from here. We have one delivery, and one posting a day.

With all love,

Ever yours in the Lord,
VIVEKANANDA.

23

21 West 34th Street,
New York,
10th November 1899.

My dear Christina,

I received your letter just now. I am now in New York. Dr. Guernsey analysed my urine yesterday, and there was no sugar or albumen in it. So my kidneys are all right, at least at present. The heart is only nervous—requires calming! Some cheerful company and good loving friends and quiet. The only difficulty is the dyspepsia, and that is the evil. For instance, I am all right in the morning, and can walk miles, but in the evening it is impossible to walk after a meal. The gas—that depends entirely upon food—does it not? I ought to try the Battle Creek food. If I come to Detroit, there will be quiet and Battle Creek food for me.

But if you come to Cambridge with all the instructions of the Battle Creek food, I will have it prepared there; or, between you and me, we will cook it. I am a good hand at that. You don't know a thing about cooking. Well, you may help in cleaning the plates etc. I always get money, when I need it badly. 'Mother' always sees to that. So no danger on that head. I am not in the least danger of life, the Doctors agree, only if this dyspepsia goes away. And that is 'food', 'food', 'food', and no worry. Oh what a worry I have had! Say we go somewhere else, and make a little party, and keep house ourselves. In Cambridge Mrs. Bull has a quiet separate place, her studio house. You can have rooms there. I wish you to know Mrs. Bull. She is a saint, a real saint, if ever there was one. Wait for my next letter. I will write today again, or tomorrow after seeing Mrs. Bull.

Ever yours in the Lord,
VIVEKANANDA.

NOTES AND COMMENTS

Sister Christine: The Dedicated—III (Editorial): In this part of the Editorial the story of Sister Christine's life has been told from the beginning of the present century up to the end of its first two years. Many hitherto unpublished sources, like the letters of Swamiji, Sister Nivedita and Swamiji's friends and disciples, were helpful in reconstructing the story, in addition to Swami Brahmananda's and the Mayavati diaries. Hope these Editorials will serve as a sort of commentary to understand the spirit of the 'Unpublished Letters of Swami Vivekananda to Sister Christine', which are being published in the *Prabuddha Bharata* from September 1977 onwards.

Early Days at Shanti Ashrama—IV: In this part of her article the author is narrating the story of the early days of the Shanti Ashrama in the light of some hitherto unpublished letters of Swami Turiyananda, and the minutes of the Vedanta Society of Northern California, San Francisco. The Swami must have thought in the beginning

that the Ashrama might fail due to lack of support; but he continued his preaching work leaving its fate to the care of the Mother. He had written to Mrs. Hansbrough on September 29, 1900, 'Let us do all that is in our power and then Mother knows what is best.' But the Swami soon became free from anxiety, when help started coming from San Francisco and Hollywood.

Divine Grace and Spiritual Practice: In this article, the author S. Sreenivasa Rao puts before the readers his views regarding the necessity of Divine grace at every step of aspirant's spiritual evolution. He points out that without Divine grace one cannot become a spiritual aspirant, cannot progress spiritually, or cannot realize his ideal. In order to prove his point of view, the author has given apt references from the Upanishads, *Vivekacudāmani*, the *Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, and other scriptures.

Selections from the Adhyatma Ramayana—III: In this last instalment, Swami

Yogeshananda has given the translation of some selected verses from chapters 2, 3, and 5 of the *Adhyātma Rāmāyaṇa*. Hope the Western readers of the *Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* will find this series helpful in understanding the *Gospel*.

Swami Vivekananda—the Cross-Bearer : The term 'cross-bearer' of the Bible signifies one who takes upon himself the burden of the heavy laden, and undergoes sufferings and humiliation for the salvation of mankind. In this article, Brahmachari Ashok has made an attempt to show that because Swami Vivekananda—the Prophet of the modern age—underwent varieties of physical and mental sufferings for the salvation of man, he was a 'cross-bearer'. In this connection Swamiji himself had written to Pramadas Mitra on 4 July 1889: 'Bless me that my heart may wax strong with supreme strength Divine, and that all forms of Māyā may drop off from me for aye: "We have taken up the Cross, Thou hast laid it upon us and grant us strength that we bear it unto death. Amen!"—*Imitation of Christ*.' The author has also drawn a fourfold significant conclusion from Swamiji's life as a 'cross-bearer'.

The Math Belonging to the Guru of

Srimat Totapuri: The students of Sri Ramakrishna's life, are quite conversant with Srimat Totapuri's name, as one who initiated the Master into Sannyasa, and taught him Advaita Vedanta. Nothing was so far known about the whereabouts and monastic lineage of that great monk, since he left Dakshineswar. Swami Alokānanda, a senior monk of the Ramakrishna Order, had the honour of throwing some light on this issue. He visited the Monastery belonging to the Guru of Srimat Totapuri, in the year 1962, and gathered some facts about his monastic lineage and other matters. In this small but lucid article, he has narrated whatever he could discover in this connection, for which the devotees of Sri Ramakrishna will surely feel grateful to him.

Unpublished Letters of Swami Vivekananda—IV: In this instalment Swamiji's letters written to Sister Christine during July 14 to November 10 1899, have been published. Some excerpts from these letters have been already published in the *Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, though wrongly in the name of Sister Nivedita. Yet, for the convenience of the readers, they have been reproduced here in full.

REVIEWS AND NOTICES

HINDUISM AND CHRISTIANITY BY SWAMI SATPRAKASHANANDA, published by The Vedanta Society of St. Louis, 1975, pp. 190, Price : \$7-50.

Hinduism and Christianity are representative faiths of the East and the West. The more refined aspects of the Semitic and Indian traditions have assembled here in a way that, though not overruling improvement, have come to satisfy the adherents of the two religions. For modern scholarship it has become an interesting area of

study. The mutual interest of two people, the developed means of communications and transports, and the growing population of inter-religious communities have made it possible and necessary to study the common features as well as formidable differences between two different faiths.

Swami Satprakashananda has presented to the modern world the teachings of Jesus Christ in the light of Vedanta in the title *Hinduism and*

Christianity. The work is the result of several decades' study, living and contemplation. In an admirably simple but authentic form the Swami presents the best of the two traditions to the reader. As all the major religions of the world are of Asiatic origin, the Swami is convinced of the fact that, due to close relationship between Hinduism and Christianity, there are many common features in the two religions.

The Incarnation (*avatara*) of God in human form, for the author, is the most striking feature that is common in the religious traditions under study. Of course, the fact remains that in Christianity the divine Incarnation is considered to be unique in the person of Jesus Christ, whereas in Hinduism there have been, and still could be, several Incarnations. The comprehensive outlook of Hinduism has been pointed out by the author by stressing the fact that Jesus can very well be regarded, and has been regarded, as one of the *avatars* by the Hindus.

To the question whether Christianity has been influenced by Hinduism, the author pays some attention, and is convinced of the fact that a clear impact is visible. The ascetic note and the ideal of mystical union in Christianity cannot be traced to a Jewish source, or to a Greco-Roman influence. The Hindu religious ideas, carried by travellers, merchants and immigrants, were present in many countries of eastern Europe centuries before Jesus. The concept of reincarnation (as found in the Gospel of St. John, 9:2; St. Jerome, St. Augustine and St. Gregory) and that of *Karma* (in St. Paul, Galatians, 6:7) are definitely of Indian origin.

The author has given a fresh interpretation to the concept of Kingdom of God or Heaven. This Kingdom is neither earthly kingdom nor any heavenly abode of God. It means God-Consciousness, a state of full spiritual awareness. The Vedantic theme of supreme consciousness eternally present and shining within our heart is so similar to the Christian ideal that the author sees identity in two religions. The Vedanta, as interpreted by Swami Vivekananda and his disciples, has made an attempt to bring the heavenly Kingdom of God on earth by social service and upliftment of the weaker sections of the society. Struck by the similarity between the two ideals, Rudolf Otto made an attempt to trace out the origin of the idea in the Vedic literature and

found that the term 'Raja' (king) is the most solemn title used for Varuna. Being the King, he is also the judge of the *praja* (subjects) of his *rajya* (Kingdom). This idea succumbed in Indian soil and gained victory on the Iranian soil (see R. Otto, *The Kingdom of God and the Son of Man*, London: 1938). Albert Schweitzer notes that the Jews, while in exile, became acquainted with the Iranian concept of the Kingdom (see his book, *Christianity and the Religions of the World*, London: 1923, 51, pp. 24-5).

A special feature of the book under review is the comparison between Jesus Christ and Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa. The author finds that, though their presentations differ, the ideals Jesus Christ and Sri Ramakrishna held before humanity are essentially the same. It is interesting to note that both these great figures were born under very humble and unusual conditions. By supernatural means the parents of both of them knew that a son of divine origin was to be born unto them. Neither of them had any formal education nor earthly possessions, though both proved to be uncrowned kings. Both taught in simple language, condemned lust and greed, emphasized love of God and devotion to Him, and His grace and love in return. Sri Ramakrishna, it may also be noted, had become suffused with the spirit of Jesus Christ in his own life-time.

In course of the book the learned Swami dwells on several other common features between Christianity and Hinduism, such as non-resistance, divine grace, death, resurrection and everlasting life in a most lucid manner by quoting extensively from the Hindu and Christian scriptures. As stated in the beginning of the work, very little attempt has been made to bring out the differences between the two traditions. This is a task that can be taken up by those who are not submerged in the spirituality, but can see things from a distance. Swami Satprakashananda deserves our congratulations for bringing out some of the undiscovered points of similarity between Hinduism and Christianity, and consequently bringing together the Hindus and the Christians within closer arms.

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NEWS AND REPORTS

RAMAKRISHNA MATH, HYDERABAD

This centre was formally affiliated to the Ramakrishna Math, Belur Math, District Howrah, West Bengal, in 1973. Within the short span of four years, the Math has proved itself to be an important centre of cultural and spiritual activities in the twin cities of Secunderabad and Hyderabad, open to all irrespective of caste, creed, or community.

The present activities of the Math consist of daily worship in the shrine, evening arati and bhajana, Sri Ramanamasankirtana on Ekadashi days; regular weekly religious discourses, in Telugu on Saturdays, in English on Sundays, with over-flow audiences, and occasional lectures and other cultural programmes on other days of the week, in its first floor 480-seat auditorium; a Vivekananda Library and Reading Room, with children's section and general section, and a free homoeopathic dispensary on the ground floor. The total number of patients treated in the dispensary from April 1974 to June 1977 was 52,618.

Lecture Tours: Swami Ranganathananda, the President of the Hyderabad Math, spoke on invitation before various groups in Hyderabad and other parts of India during 1974-77. Besides these lectures tours, the Swami undertook a fortnight-long lecture tour of Zambia, Madagascar and Mauritius in 1974; and continued his annual six-week Vedanta preaching tours of Holland, Belgium, Australia and Singapore during this period, with a special one-month lecture tour of U.K. and West Germany in April-May 1975, and a special eight-week lecture tour of U.S.A. and Canada, *en route* to Australia from Europe, in September-November 1976.

Balaka-Sangha: A new activity of the Math in the form of Vivekananda Balaka Sangha was inaugurated on 15 May 1977. Its main objective is to impart moral and spiritual training to young boys between the age group of 8 to 15 every Sunday morning, by means of chanting from scriptures, singing devotional songs, and narration of inspiring stories. Indoor and outdoor games, training in social service, and occasional picnics to important shrines and culturally interesting places, are also included in the programme.

Books of the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda literature, as well as those on the Vedanta, published by the Ramakrishna Order, are available for sale in its office and showroom on the ground floor.

New Project: As the space in the present premises does not permit of any further development of the work of the Institution, the Math has undertaken a New Development Project in the centrally situated Domalguda area, Hyderabad 500 029, where the Andhra Pradesh Government and the Municipal Corporation of Hyderabad have kindly made a gift of about 6½ acres of land to the Math for the purpose. The cost of the land at the prevailing rate is estimated to be about Rs. 15 lakhs. The project consists of:

1. *A Vivekananda Institute of Culture*, constituting a Vivekananda Hall with 1,050 chairs; a Vivekananda School of Languages, with Sanskrit, Telugu, Hindi, Arabic, Russian, German and Spoken English; a Vivekananda Library (both children's section and general section), and an Office and Booksale;

2. *A Vivekananda Health Centre*, with a well-equipped and multi-departmental outdoor allopathic and homoeopathic dispensaries, with pathological laboratory, X-ray and other facilities;

3. *A Sarada Kutir*, constituting monastic workers' quarters;

4. *A Universal Sri Ramakrishna Temple*; and

5. *Naga Mahashaya Kutir*, constituting family staff quarters.

The cost of the above buildings and equipment project is estimated to be Rs. 35 lakhs.

Foundation Ceremony: The ceremony began at 8.30 a.m. on Sunday, 28 August 1977, with Bhumi Puja and Bhajana. At 9.00 the foundation stones were laid, along with depositing holy earth and holy water from various sacred places and rivers of India, for: (1) the Universal Sri Ramakrishna Temple by Srimat Swami Vireswaranandaji Maharaj, President of the Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, Belur Math; (2) Vivekananda Institute of Culture by Sri J. Vengal Rao, Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh; (3) Vivekananda Health Centre by Srimati Rani Kumudini Devi; and (4) Sarada Kutir (monastic workers' quarters) by Sri Challa Subbarayudu, Minister for Municipal Administration, Andhra Pradesh.

From 9.30 to 11.00 a.m. a Public Meeting was held with Srimati Sharda Mukherjee, Governor of Andhra Pradesh, in chair. The meeting commenced with Vedic chanting by monastic brothers of the Math. In his welcome speech Swami Ranganathananda said that the project was expected to be completed within two years. Srimat Swami Vireswaranandaji Maharaj, in his

benedictory speech told the significance of the Universal Sri Ramakrishna Temple. Sri Ramakrishna, he said, realized that all religions lead to the same goal. This is a fact which will unite people; and, in this new temple all people, irrespective of colour, caste, creed or community, will be welcome. He further said that the new campus would cater to the physical, intellectual and spiritual needs of the people.

Project Souvenir: After the benedictory address the new project's Souvenir was released by Srimati Sharda Mukherjee. This Souvenir contains extracts from the *Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, some sayings of Sri Sarada Devi, an account of the spiritual and philanthropic activities of the Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, as well as detailed history of the Ramakrishna Math in Hyderabad. A description of the new project with architectural drawings is also included.

Speeches: Brief speeches were given on the occasion by several prominent persons: Mr. J. Vengal Rao said, the activities of the Ramakrishna Mission had been universally admired and praised. Srimati Rani Kumudini Devi said, the Ramakrishna Math's activities were aimed at total development of the human being. Alhaj Mohammed Zainulabedeem stated that the Math's activities reflect truth, love and selfless service which are the essentials prescribed by the *Gita* and *Koran*. Archbishop Arulappa said, the Ramakrishna Math's new campus would become 'a centre of pilgrimage', and that the teachings of Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda have eternal value. Mr. Challa Subbarayudu announced that the road from Charminar Chourastha to the Tank Bund passing along the Math's new campus would be named Sri Ramakrishna Math Marg.

Sri M. P. Pai gave the vote of thanks and read a message received from the Prime Minister Mr. Morarji Desai. The Prime Minister sent his good wishes for the success of the project and observed that the teachings of Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda 'give us sustenance so that during his encounters with the problems of modern life, man does not lose his soul and hanker after a mess of pottage.'

The Hyderabad editions of the *Hindu*, the *Indian Express* and the *Indian Herald* published the report of the ceremony. In its Editorial of August 29 the *Indian Herald* said: 'Hyderabad has not been particularly known for endeavours in the realm of culture and spiritualism, as say in Calcutta or Madras, its feudal background being one of the reasons for general apathy towards such pursuits. ... For decades the Ramakrishna Math [in Hyderabad] remained static. It was only after the advent of a shining exponent of culture as Swami Ranganathananda that the Math has been able to attract a large number of intellectual workers. Soon the Math became a centre of multifaceted activity. It was the impetus given by the Swamiji that the Math has ventured to embark upon an ambitious scheme to broad base its activities to embrace a larger segment of society.'

In order to complete the above project as soon as possible we earnestly appeal to all our sympathizers and friends to make liberal contributions, which may be sent to: The President, Ramakrishna Math, 74/B Market Street, Secunderabad, Hyderabad 500 003. Donations given to the Math are exempt from Income-tax as per notification, PAN 1101-RQ-2125/CAL/TC (C). Account Payee cheques may be drawn in favour of Ramakrishna Math, Hyderabad.

Know that the world, although appearing as substantial, has nothing substantial in it: it is a void, being merely an appearance created by the images and vagaries of the mind. Know the world to be an enchanted scene, presented by the magic of maya.

Yoga-Vasishtha.