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No. 2

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

TEACHINGS OF SRI RAMAKRISHNA ¹

भीरामकृष्णोपदेशावलिः । ¹

SWAMI RAMAKRISHNANADA

A Parable of Fishwives and Their Baskets ²

Once upon a time, some fishwives, after catching basketfuls of fish, went to a distant village market to sell them. Their whole day was spent there in business. In the evening, taking empty fish-baskets on the head, they started back for home. Hardly had they crossed half the way, it became dark due to approaching night, while they were passing through a lonely place. To add to their misfortune, the sky became full of dark clouds, and soon they were overtaken by gale and thunderstorm. Frightened, they began to look for shelter with eyes full of anxiety and eagerness ; and luckily, seeing a garden-house near by, they ran towards it in full speed, and dashed in hurriedly. Fortunately for them the florist was a good-hearted gentleman and a devotee of God, and his heart melted at their plight. Looking to their helpless condition, he showed them a place in the garden-house where they could pass their night. The first hour of the night was over ; the rain and thunderstorm also stopped ; the sky became clear and starlit, and the whole world was then taking rest in the sweet bosom of the goddess Sleep. But the fishwives could not shut their eyes even for a moment due to the unaccustomed fragrance of flowers in the room, and also because of the absence of the long-experienced fishy smell of their house. They were thus spending the night with great difficulty, tossing on the bed from one side to another. After some time one of them bubbled out : 'Sisters, I don't know what bad karma we must have committed as a result of which we got shelter today in a florist's house ! I couldn't sleep even for a second !' On hearing her words, all other fishwives also started blaming destiny for giving them shelter in a florist's house. After passing some time in

1. See *Vidyodaya*, (a critical Sanskrit monthly journal), Ed. Hrishikesh Sastri, Bhātpāra (24-Parganas, West Bengal) : The Oriental Nobility Institute, June-July (*āṣāḍha*), 1896, pp. 144-47. The versified Sanskrit rendering is by Swami Ramakrishnananda, a direct disciple of the Master.

2. For a different version of this parable, see 'M', *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, trans. Swami Nikhilananda. Madras : Sri Ramakrishna Math, 1974, pp. 386, 1009-10,

this way, a bright idea flashed into the fertile brain of one, intelligent amongst them ; and she burst out with joy : 'Sisters listen : I hit upon a plan by which all of us shall fall into deep sleep in seconds.' Hearing her, all other fishwives burst out in one voice : 'O sister ! please, please tell us the way soon. We are dying to sleep.' With an air of pride and victory the woman began : 'You all bring your empty fish-baskets ; sprinkle them nicely with water, and keep them near your head. Thereby all of us shall fall into deep sleep in no time due to the lovely fishy smell.' Listening to her advice, the fishwives did accordingly, and due to the long-experienced fishy smell, started snoring in minutes.

इत्युपाख्यानेन अभ्यासजन्यस्य स्वभावस्यैव प्राधान्यं प्रदर्शितं भगवता श्रीरामकृष्णदेवेन । अभ्यासवशादेव कुसंसर्गी साधुसंगमिच्छन्नपि न तमनुष्ठातुं शक्नोति ; भवति तु तस्य समधिका प्रीतिर्दुःसङ्गेन । कामिनीकाञ्चनसंसर्गी पुरुषः न कदापि तदासक्तिं विहाय शुद्धे सच्चिदानन्दमयेऽविग्रहे परब्रह्मणि चित्तं समाधातुं शक्नोति ।

अतएव—

यतोऽभ्यासात् स्वभावोऽयं स्त्रीपुंसां जायते ध्रुवम् ।
 यतः सर्वः सदैवेह स्वभावमनुवर्तते ॥
 कदाभ्यासं ततः सर्वो विहाय सत्स्वभावतः ।
 सद्भावान् समनुष्ठाय विमलानन्दभाग् भवेत् ॥

By this parable, Sri Ramakrishna has shown how strong is the impact of a long-practised habit on man. Overwhelmed by the power of long-practised bad habits in the company of the worldly-minded, one cannot have holy company, in spite of one's wish ; one's mind always loves to have bad company. A man steeped in lust and gold cannot withdraw his mind from their attachment and apply it to the Reality, which is of the nature of Existence-Knowledge-Bliss Absolute.

Therefore :

4. Whatever men and women practice all their lives, becomes their confirmed nature, and they always follow this inherent nature of theirs ; they even give up good things due to their bad habits. It is, therefore, advisable for intelligent men and women to practice spiritual disciplines with earnestness and be sharers of pure divine Bliss.

ON HAPPINESS—II

(EDITORIAL)

In the last Editorial we have discussed various concepts regarding happiness according to some Indian thinkers. We have also seen how the pleasure drive motivates the life of man. Various kinds of happiness possible in human life, and the process of manifestation of happiness from the innermost being, have been dealt with as well. In this instalment, some Western concepts of happiness and other related topics will be treated in brief.

*The Concepts of Happiness According to Some Western Psychologists:*²⁶

The Western psychologists regard happiness as limited mainly to the mind and nervous system. They are of the opinion that happiness depends upon nervous stimulus; and if the stimulus is either too intense or too low, happiness cannot be felt. In the same way, one cannot enjoy a single object for a long time without break, because the nerves get tired, and then one feels a sort of temporary callousness in the mind. That is why the mind likes to enjoy a variety of objects. It gets fed up if it is given only one object to enjoy. But it is also seen that if there is a change in the object suddenly, when one has developed attachment to it, one becomes miserable. Once an individual experiences such a sudden change in the object, and a break

26. Ref: 1. P. N. Bhattacharya, *A Text-Book of Psychology*, Calcutta: A. Mukherjee & Co., I & II, 1965.

2. Nigel Calder, *The Mind of Man*, London: British Broadcasting Corporation, 1970.

3. F. L. Ruch, *Psychology and Life*, Bombay: D. B. Taraporewala Sons & Co. Pvt. Ltd., 1970.

4. M. A. Wenger, and others, *Physiological Psychology*, New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1956.

in the pleasurable stimulus, he develops permanent dislike for that object. On the other hand, due to constant practice, an apparently painful stimulus may result in a pleasurable stimulus. For instance, pleasure derived from constant drinking of strong alcohol, and masochism can be cited as the best examples. It is said in the *Yoga-Vāsiṣṭha*: 'By practice even a bitter thing becomes relishingly palatable for a man. It is observed that some people like the margosa (Nim) extract, as others like honey.'²⁷

The western psychologists also believe that pleasure depends upon *harmony*. For instance, if the musical tunes are played in harmony, it is a matter of great delight, whereas if they lack harmony, people feel like running away or get headache. They say that thought-currents which are in harmony with one's likes and dislikes are always pleasurable, while those which are contrary, result in painful experience. It is because favourable thought-current can flow easily through the nerve-channels, whereas the unfavourable ones get resistance while passing through the ruts. According to Ward, worldly happiness is mainly dependant upon 'attention'. If the attention of the enjoyer is not focussed on the object, pleasure is not possible.

Some psychologists believe that at the ends of the nerves of the peripheral nervous system there is a special power of feeling the stimulus, due to which an individual experiences either pleasure or pain. Therefore, according to their view, the experience and intensity of pleasure or pain depends upon this power of receiving the stimulus.

27. *Yogavāsiṣṭha*, 6U.67.28.

The above mentioned view received a rude shock when some psychologists discovered a 'pleasure site' in the brain. In 1953 José Delgado, Warren Roberts and Neal Miller, at Yale, demonstrated that stimulation of certain areas of the brain stem were unpleasant for animals. In the same year James Olds discovered that 'the areas of the brain where stimulation gave the greatest pleasure were spread through the hypothalamus from front to back—a "river of reward" ²⁸ as it is called. It was found that the stimulation of the 'pleasure sites' of the hypothalamus produced no particular action but only evident gratification. However, these 'pleasure sites appear to be associated particularly with feeding and sex' according to these psychologists. An example is cited of a twenty-nine year old man who, being tortured to the point of suicide, went to the laboratory of one doctor. To give him relief the doctor stimulated a certain part of his brain by passing an electric current through it. As soon as the man switched on the current 'a sensation of pleasure is induced that is, by his own description, "better than sex". ²⁹

Although the hypothalamus has been regarded as a centre of pleasures derived from the satisfaction of hunger, thirst and sex-appetite, the pleasure drive in man becomes intense or tepid according to his culture and learning. Therefore some psychologists believe that emotion is the basis of the pleasure drive, while others are of the opinion that pleasure itself is a form of 'emotion'. There are still others who say that pleasure is only a 'drive' which causes 'emotion'. They claim that the autonomic nervous system is guided by the hypothalamus, and it in turn results in producing pleasurable or painful emotions

in man. In the opinion of some, the relief from the nervous tension caused by excessive passion is the real cause of happiness. They observe that one gets more happiness after the tension is over, than during the enjoyment itself—relief from the tension of the thirst for enjoyment being the cause. For instance: one feels happy when one comes from the scorching heat of the sun into a cool shade, or drinks a glass of water after being tormented by thirst, and so on. The psychologists cite the relief from the tension of the prior painful experience, as the cause of this happiness.

All these different views of the Western psychologists lead us to conclude that their concepts of happiness are limited only to the mind and nervous system.

The Experience of Men Regarding Worldly Happiness:

Whatever be the concepts of happiness of the Eastern or Western thinkers, be they right or wrong, it hardly concerns the man in general, as it results neither in intensifying nor weakening their pleasure drive. Man has been running after worldly pleasures since his advent on earth. The scriptural mandates of saints and seers have proved in no way effective in changing the course of his life. He has been enjoying the world to his fill, but his experience tells him that even after enjoyment, the desire for enjoyment is never quenched, rather it goes on intensifying. It is said in the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavata*: 'The thirst for enjoyment is not satisfied by the enjoyment of worldly objects; rather it intensifies more and more like putting fuel in the fire.'³⁰

It is because of this that Indian sages call this thirst (*tr̥ṣṇā*) the root cause of all misery. Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa says in the *Gītā*: 'That happiness which arises from the contact of object with the senses, at first like nectar, but at the end like poison,

28. N. Calder, op. cit., p. 50.

29. 'Breakthrough in Brain Research', *Reader's Digest*, Bombay: The Reader's Digest Association Pvt. Ltd., February 1972, p. 25.

30. *Śrīmad-Bhāgavata*, IX.xix.14

that is declared as Rājasika.³¹ 'Since enjoyments that are contact-born are causes of misery alone, and with beginning and end, O son of Kunti, a wise man does not seek pleasure in them.'³² Every human being experiences some day in his life that one and the same thing at times gives him pleasure, while at other times becomes the cause of pain, anger, disgust, or gives him real dispassion and becomes thus the cause of realizing the Bliss of the Atman. Therefore, there is nothing which can be stamped as pleasurable or painful in this world. It is because happiness or misery depend upon the state of the mind.³³

Regarding worldly pleasures, the Christian Saint Gregory says: 'Carnal pleasures in anticipation seem desirable, all we need to make us happy; afterwards they are disappointing, even disgusting. Spiritual pleasures beforehand are unattractive, even repulsive; once experienced they are all the heart could crave.'³⁴ The great thinker Aristotle is of the opinion 'that almost every animal is dismal, dejected and disturbed after enjoying the most intense, vehement, carnal pleasure; it is the reaction of a tradesman counting on a huge profit, but making a heavy loss.'³⁵

These wise men of East and West speak of the experience of man in general with regard to worldly pleasures, the only difference being that ordinary man cannot understand the deceptive nature of worldly enjoyments due to the clouding of the faculty of discrimination. 'For a man of discrimination everything in the world is painful on account of everything bringing pain either as consequence, or as anticipa-

tion of loss of happiness, or as fresh craving arising from impressions of happiness, and also as counteraction of qualities.'³⁶ Therefore, they renounce worldly pleasures (*preya*), and accept the path of good (*śreya*) which leads to Brahmānanda.

Where Is the Source of Happiness?

Another experience of man is worth considering here. While enjoying worldly objects, although it appears that the source of happiness is the object, on critical observation one finds that the source is not the object, but within the enjoyer himself. That is why one can experience happiness even though the object of enjoyment is absent; for instance in deep sleep and dream states. One can experience happiness without the gross presence of the object even in waking state, such as through fantasy. All this is possible because the source of happiness is within us—the Atman. The Bliss which one enjoys in the states of Nirvikalpa or Savikalpa Samādhi, or in deep sleep are the best examples of objectless happiness (*nirviṣaya-ānanda*). If happiness were not possible without an object, one could not have experienced bliss in these states. A man of subtle intellect can feel even while enjoying objects that the happiness he is getting is coming from within himself and not from the object. Had any object been really a *source* of happiness, it would have *always* given us happiness. But our experience tells us that 'one and the same object leads to pleasure at one time, and to misery, jealousy, anger, etc. at other times.'³⁷ So how can we say that the object is a *source* of pleasure? Ācārya Śaṅkara has said, 'When sense-objects are favourable it [the mind] becomes happy, and it becomes miserable when the case is contrary.'³⁸ This

31. *Śrīmad-Bhāgavad -Gītā* (hereafter *Gītā*), XVIII.38.

32. *Gītā*, V.22.

33. See *Viṣṇu Purāṇa*, II.vi.49.

34. Saint Francis De Sales, *The Love of God*, trans. Vincent Kern, London: Burns & Oates, 1962, p. 29.

35. *Ibid.*

36. *Pātanjala Yoga-Sūtras*, II.15.

37. *Viṣṇu Purāṇa*, II.vi.47.

38. *Vivekacūḍāmaṇi*, 105.

would not have been the case, had the sense-objects been the sources of joy.

This fact can be understood thus: Suppose a man wins a big sum in a lottery. The very information that he has won, gives him joy even though the sum has not yet come to his hand. The joy is doubled when he gets the sum actually in hand; but if a dacoit snatches it away at the point of a revolver, the man may see the sum in the hand of the robber, but it no more gives him any joy, rather he becomes miserable. Now, if the sum were the source of joy, it should give him happiness, whether it is in the hands of the dacoit or in his own hands. But this does not happen. For instance, a burning lamp being the source of light, emits light equally, whether it is in the hand of its owner or is taken away from him by a dacoit. Wherever the lamp is taken, it gives light. In the same way, had money been the source of happiness, wherever anyone sees money, he should start dancing with joy. But this does not happen. Thus it can be proved that the source of joy is not the object, but it is within the enjoyer. It is our Atman, as we have seen before, which reflects in the Sāttvika state of the mind, when an object of enjoyment becomes available to us, due to our good karma.

Now, a question may arise: if it is accepted that the source of bliss is within us, then is it present in the same proportion in everyone, or in some is it more and in others less? The answer is: the source is infinite in everyone, only its manifestation depends upon one's good deeds and availability of the objects of enjoyment. The source continuously supplies happiness to all from cradle to grave, whenever karma is favourable. It never diminishes nor is exhausted. One may be rich or poor, there is an infinite source of bliss in all. A poor man is less happy because his *prārabdha* karma has less good karma to fructify; he, therefore, gets lesser number of objects and chances to enjoy. But if by chance, a poor

man hits the jackpot, he will feel the same joy (perhaps more) that a rich man would feel, if he were to win the same amount. It is because there is a mine of bliss within every individual.

Someone may ask, if this is the case, then why can't one enjoy that bliss within at will and to one's fill? Why does one need objects to manifest it? When such an infinite ocean of bliss is within everyone, why do people run after the mirage (objects of enjoyment)?

The answer is: so long as there is ignorance covering the Atman in the individual, so long will he be unable to experience that infinite Bliss directly and at will. But when his ignorance vanishes after realization of the Atman, he becomes joy itself. His life becomes blessed. Then he 'attains the Bliss of his own nature—*sva-svarūpa-ānanda-avāpti*.³⁹ Till then his happiness will be rationed by his karma as told before.

Someone may say: Let there be rationing on worldly enjoyments! What does that matter? Even to get rid of ignorance by Realization (*Ātmajñāna*) is not a very easy task! We have heard that it takes births together. And what is the guarantee that we shall continue our spiritual practices in the next birth? And who knows whether there is a next birth or not? Even if it is, whether we shall be born as human beings or not? So why leave the bird in hand to catch two in the bush? Why should we observe fast without water (*nirjala-ekādaṣī*)? Moreover, we find in this world that all men—educated or uneducated, cultured or uncultured, foolish or intelligent—wish only sense-pleasures!

Yes, to realize the Atman is not so easy, and takes its own time; yet that is the only purpose of life for a wise man. He no more takes delight in sense-pleasures—'*na teṣu ramate budhaḥ*'.⁴⁰ He chooses what is

39. *Vedāntasāra*, I.29.

40. *Gītā*, V.22.

beneficial (*śreya* or *niḥśreyasa*) and not what is pleasant (*preya*), which leads to man's degradation. It may appear practical and wise to go after sense-pleasures, but even after getting them, one discovers some day or the other in his life that they have not helped him the least in fulfilling the cherished aspiration of his life. All that human beings aspire for is: continuous happiness, perpetual peace, absolute freedom, total cessation of misery, and long life. Attaining these in some way or the other is according to men the main purpose of life. One tries one's level best to fulfil this purpose by running after the world, but fails. Yama says to Naciketā in the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad*, 'The beneficial (*śreya*) and the pleasant (*preya*) approach mankind. A man of intelligence having considered them, separates the two. The intelligent one selects the beneficial in preference to the pleasant; the non-intelligent one selects the pleasant for the sake of growth and protection.'⁴¹ A wise man prefers the beneficial to the pleasant, because he knows that the purpose of human life—attaining eternal happiness, eternal peace, eternal life, eternal freedom, and absolute cessation of misery—which everyone aspires for, is possible only by following the path of the good (*niḥśreyasa*). He knows that if anyone goes after the pleasant and sticks to this world, his fate will only be suffering and transmigration. The world is bound to give him blows for his folly, which will some day open his eyes to the Truth. It is said by Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa to Uddhava: 'In this world those who are engaged in investigating the true nature of this world often lift themselves up by their own efforts and rid themselves of the craving for the pleasures of senses.'⁴² Therefore it is necessary for every human being to ponder on this

issue through reason; to study it carefully in a scientific way—by experiment, observation and inference; to be aware of real happiness and beware of false pleasures; and to save himself from the pitfall. Rightly has it been said in the *Bhāgavata*: 'Although the human body is evanescent—ever susceptible to death, it is the only means to attain the true purpose of life (*paramārtha*); therefore, having got this rare human birth after passing through so many lower births, it is wise for man to make an effort for attaining the beneficial (*niḥśreyasa*)—i.e. realization of the Self—as early as possible in life, before death. The main purpose of human life is God realization. Sense-pleasures are possible even for the animals; one should not, therefore, waste one's valuable life in running after them.'⁴³

If anybody takes this message of the wise men seriously and practises spiritual disciplines sincerely according to their directions, Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa assures him: 'With heart unattached to external objects, he [the aspirant] realizes the joy that is in the Self. With the heart devoted to the meditation of Brahman, he attains unending happiness.'⁴⁴

Sri Ramakrishna has said: 'The only purpose of life is to realize God';⁴⁵ i.e. to attain this eternal happiness (*akṣaya sukha*). If anybody studies his *Gospel*, it is revealed that he preached this lofty spiritual ideal to all; but prescribed spiritual disciplines according to their *svadharma*—psychological constitution. For householders he gave directions in one way, giving them some concessions (*luci chakkā kheyē ekādaśī*), while for sannyasins he prescribed rather

43. *Ibid.*, XI.ii.19.

44. *Gītā*, V.21.

45. 'M', *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, trans. Swami Nikhilananda, Madras: Sri Ramakrishna Math, 1974 (hereafter *Gospel*), p. 213.

41. *Kaṭha Upaniṣad*, I.ii.2.

42. *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatā*, XI.ii.19.

strict disciplines (*nirjalā-ekādaśī*;⁴⁶ but for both, goal is the same.

In the end, it will be inspiring and illuminating to see what Swami Vivekananda has said on this subject. In a class lecture delivered in America he observed: 'All the misery we have is of our own choosing; such is our nature. . . . we are all going to be happy and never meet with misery, but the more we go towards happiness, the more it goes away from us. Thus the world is going on, society goes on, and we, blinded slaves, have to pay for it without knowing. Study your own lives, and find how little of happiness there is in them, and how little in truth you have gained in the course of this wild-goose chase of the world. . . . Such is the life-story of each one of us; such is the tremendous power of nature over us. It repeatedly kicks us away, but still we pursue it with feverish excitement. We are always hoping against hope; this hope, this chimera maddens us; we are always hoping for happiness. . . . Nobody is ever really happy here. . . . Because happiness and misery are the obverse and reverse of the same coin; he

who takes happiness, must take misery also. We all have this foolish idea that we can have happiness without misery, and it has taken such possession of us that we have no control over the senses. . . . Few men know that with pleasure there is pain, and with pain, pleasure; and as pain is disgusting, so is pleasure, as it is the twin brother of pain. It is derogatory to the glory of man that he should be going after pain, and equally derogatory, that he should be going after pleasure. Both should be turned aside by men whose reason is balanced. Why will not men seek freedom from being played upon? . . . The sage wants liberty; he finds that sense-objects are all vain and that there is no end to pleasures and pains.'⁴⁷ He, therefore, prefers *nihśreyasa*—the path of the good.

Thus, keeping the eye-opening words of the wise men of the East and the West quoted so far in mind, and infusing ourselves with new spirit at the start of the New Year, let us march ahead according to our own path (*svadharma*) on the way to Blessedness and make our lives fruitful.

(Concluded)

46. See : *Gospel*, p. 675 ; and Śrī Ma, *Śrī Śrī Rāmakṛṣṇa-Kathāmṛta*, (Bengali), Calcutta: Anil Gupta, B.S. 1361, pp. 203-4.

47. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, Mayavati: Advaita Ashrama, I, 1970, pp. 408, 409, 410, 411.

FIRST MEETINGS WITH SRI RAMAKRISHNA : SWAMI ADBHUTANANDA

SWAMI PRABHANANDA

In the Ramakrishna phenomenon,¹ marked by many extraordinary and mysterious happenings, one of the most striking events is the transformation of the shepherd boy Rakhturam, into the extraordinary

saint, Swami Adbhutananda. Very truly has this transformation been described as the 'greatest miracle'² of Sri Ramakrishna,

1. Christopher Isherwood in his book *Ramakrishna and His Disciples* (Mayavati: Advaita Ashrama, 1965, p. 1) has described Sri Ramakrishna's life and doings as a phenomenon.

2. Swami Vivekananda once observed, 'Latu is the greatest miracle of Sri Ramakrishna. Having absolutely no education, he has attained to the highest wisdom simply at the touch of the Master.' (See *The Apostles of Sri Ramakrishna*, Mayavati: Advaita Ashrama, 1967, p.271).

the Godman of the nineteenth century. Rakhturam was the first among Sri Ramakrishna's all-renouncing disciples to see him. Again, he was the only apostle of the Master who had no book-learning. Sri Ramakrishna at least had some knowledge of the three R's, but Rakhturam was blissfully ignorant of them. Once Sri Ramakrishna himself tried to teach him the Bengali alphabet, but the endeavour did not succeed.

Very little is known of Rakhturam's childhood, for he was always reluctant to speak of it. He was born of humble parents in a remote village of Chapra District of Bihar. In his infancy he had a severe attack of smallpox, and finding no way out his mother fervently prayed to Lord Rama for the child's life. Miraculously enough, the infant recovered gradually from the deadly illness. The parents, taking it to be due to the mercy of Lord Rama, named him Rakhturam—one saved by Rama. As he grew into boyhood, being a son of a shepherd, he had to tend the flocks of sheep. Reminiscing about his boyhood experiences, he told later, 'Well, you know, I used to spend my days with shepherd boys. ... They were very guileless indeed. Unless one becomes guileless as they were, one cannot have real joy.'³ Poverty, misery and bereavement dogged every footstep of the boy. When scarcely five he lost his parents. Amidst such hopeless circumstances there bloomed spontaneously the bud of religious disposition which child Rakhturam was endowed with. His close affinity to nature helped him perceive the glory of God. In his quietude he used to sing, 'O mind, sing the glory of Sitaram.' The orphan boy was taken care of by his generous uncle. Extravagance, however, finally ruined his

uncle, and the latter was compelled to go to Calcutta in search of a job. Rakhturam naturally had to accompany him there.

Banishment from the rural setting was rather a shock to Rakhturam, and he took quite some time to get himself adapted to city life. After some struggle his uncle found out one of his native villagers named Phulchand who was serving as an orderly to Ramchandra Datta, the Assistant Chemist of the Calcutta Medical College. Phulchand succeeded in placing Rakhturam as an attendant in the Datta's stationery shop at College Square.⁴ Sometime later the shop had to be closed, and the boy was employed as a servant in the home of Ramchandra Datta. Hard working, simple and loyal Rakhturam—lovingly called Laltu by the household⁵—by virtue of his quick grasp soon felt at home in the intricacies of a sophisticated urban life. Modest and humble though he was, his moral courage and conviction gave him strength enough to stand against odds. Although he was busy in obeying errands for the family, he utilized his leisure in learning wrestling and body-building.

Ramchandra Datta being a devotee of Sri Ramakrishna, his house was surcharged with a religious atmosphere and frequent talks of God. Once Laltu heard Ramchandra say, 'God watches man's mind. He does not bother about man's placement in life, his status and achievements.' On another occasion he heard him say, 'One who is earnest in seeking God will surely realize Him. One should go into solitude and pray and weep for Him.'⁶ These words

3. Chandrasekhara Chattopadhyaya, *Śrī Śrī Lātu Mahārājer Smṛti Kathā* (Bengali), Calcutta: Udbodhan Office, second edition (hereafter *Smṛti Kathā*), p. 11.

4. See *Udbodhan* (Bengali organ of the Ramakrishna Order), Calcutta: Udbodhan Office, Śrāban. B.S. 1331, p. 403.

5. Swami Gambhirananda, *Śrī Rāmakṛṣṇa Bhaktamālikā* (Bengali), Calcutta: Udbodhan Office, (hereafter *Bhaktamālikā*), I, B.S. 1359, p. 412.

6. *Smṛti Kathā*, p. 27.

sank deep into his heart; not only did he remember them throughout his life, but they also brought about some visible changes in him. It seems, his strong common sense helped him choose a way of life for himself. Thereafter, Laltu would sometimes be seen lying covered with his blanket, often wiping tears from his eyes. Hardly anyone could understand him. The ladies of the family sympathized with the poor boy who, as they thought, was perhaps grieving for his home or family members.

Laltu often heard Ramchandra talk reverently of Sri Ramakrishna, and felt an urge to see the great Saint. Soon thereafter he got an opportunity to do so. One Sunday in early January of 1880,⁷ when Ramchandra was preparing himself for a visit to Sri Ramakrishna, Laltu ventured to ask his permission to accompany him to Dakshineswar, to which Ramchandra agreed.

Sri Ramakrishna (then forty-four years old) was a unique personality, who radiated peace and tranquility. He had found peace by realizing all varieties of religious experience, some of which even surpassed those described in the holy texts. His wonderful power of integrating apparently

divergent religious paths, his profound knowledge of the science of spirituality, his broad vision of the divine nature of men and, above all, his deep love and concern for human beings, made his life and teachings a living exposition of the bright Indian tradition. In fact he was like a great epic which epitomizes all shades of religious faith in one life. And soon he was to become the centre round which sincere aspirants of different faiths were to rally, each regarding him in his own light.

Dakshineswar temple had been his home for the past twenty-four years, almost half of his life. He lived in a room in the north-west corner of the temple-complex built by Rani Rashmani. He deprecated sectarian views, controversial theological discussions, and encouraged in men child-like simplicity, love of God, and resignation to His will. Naturally, he exercised profound influence on all who happened to come in his contact. Men of high rank and great learning flocked around the simple and unassuming Saint of Dakshineswar who seemed to remain saturated in divine bliss. He once explained the magnetic attraction people felt for him. He said, 'It is God alone who exists in this [meaning his body]. That is why so many people are feeling more and more attracted to it. A mere touch is enough to awaken their spirituality. This attraction, this pull, is the attraction of God and of none else.'⁸ Laltu also came under the spell of this attraction,

Ramchandra came with Laltu to Dakshineswar temple when Ramlal, Sri Ramakrishna's nephew, was standing near by. Ramchandra entered into Sri Ramakrishna's room, while Laltu kept standing in the western porch. Sri Ramakrishna was not then in the room, but soon after appeared

7. Swami Gambhirananda in an erudite Bengali article—'Tyāgi Bhaktader Śrī Rāmākṛṣṇa-Samīpe Agaman' ('Coming of the Sannyasi Disciples to Sri Ramakrishna')—which appeared in the *Udbodhan* (Asvin and Kārtik, B.S. 1357), pointed out that the meeting took place in 1879-80. Now to locate a probable date we should remember that Ramchandra Datta met Sri Ramakrishna first on November 13, 1879. Laltu saw the members of the Datta family well acquainted with Sri Ramakrishna. Again, Sri Ramakrishna spent about eight months at Kamarpukur from March 3, 1880 to October 10, 1880. Before he left for Kamarpukur Laltu met him thrice, the last meeting being on the day when Sri Ramakrishna's physician was present. The second meeting took place in February after a gap of a few weeks. It can be assumed that the first meeting, in all probability, took place on a Sunday in the first week of 1880.

8. 'M'. *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, trans. Swami Nikhilananda, Madras: Sri Ramakrishna Math, 1974 (hereafter *Gospel*), p. 780.

in the porch crooning the song, 'O friend, that day I stood at my door as you were going to the woods...etc.' Seeing him there Ramchandra came to the porch. As his eyes fell on the short-statured, strong and stout Laltu, Sri Ramakrishna asked Ramchandra, 'Have you brought this boy with you? Well Ram, where did you find him? I see in him signs of a holy man.'⁹ A connoisseur of the science of spirituality, Sri Ramakrishna could see a man through and through. He easily assessed the spiritual potentiality of Laltu and decided to bring it into full manifestation without changing the distinctive features of his personality. He also recognized the new arrival as belonging to his inner circle of devotees. On the other hand, Laltu was charmed to see the most unassuming but attractive personality of Sri Ramakrishna, radiant with a smile of innocence and purity. A wave of joy leapt into his heart as he looked into the affectionate eyes of Sri Ramakrishna. Timid, unobtrusive and loving Laltu felt deeply drawn towards Sri Ramakrishna.

Sri Ramakrishna and Ramchandra entered into the room, but Laltu hesitated to go inside. Ramlal's persuasions also failed to dispel his hesitations. Now summoned by Sri Ramakrishna Laltu went into the room, and following Ramchandra Datta, made obeisance to the Master. Sri Ramakrishna began to converse with Ramchandra. Noticing that Laltu was still standing Sri Ramakrishna lovingly said to him, 'Take your seat!' Laltu wavered to take a seat near his master Ramchandra, and kept standing. Sri Ramakrishna said, 'Knowledge is always within the grip of Nityasiddhas in every birth. They are like fountains hidden under stone. As soon as some expert removes the obstacle water gushes out.'¹⁰

Scarcely had the topic of discussion closed

before Sri Ramakrishna came forward and touched Laltu with his hand. The electric touch gave rise to a wonderful experience within Laltu. A mighty and mysterious love of God invaded his heart, and he lost his outer consciousness. His body became motionless; suddenly his hair stood on end, and he began to sob with profuse tears of joy streaming down his cheeks. His lips began to tremble. Ramchandra was astonished at such an outburst. Under the pressure of a surprisingly sweet experience Laltu continued shedding tears for more than an hour. At last Ramchandra pleaded with Sri Ramakrishna to help Laltu regain his normal state. Sri Ramakrishna touched him again, and thereafter Laltu could control himself to a certain extent.¹¹ At Sri Ramakrishna's bidding, Ramlal gave *prasāda* (offered food) to Laltu. When he partook of the *prasāda* he came back to his normal self. This was certainly a revealing experience for the simple-minded boy which revolutionized his mind. And to Ramakrishna the test revealed Laltu's potentialities and mental preparedness for receiving the spiritual gifts he was eager to distribute.

Sri Ramakrishna asked Laltu to visit the temples, and he did accordingly. When Ramchandra was about to take leave of Sri Ramakrishna the latter said, 'Hallo, please send the boy here now and then.' Addressing Laltu he said, 'Come here, come as frequently as possible.' Sri Ramakrishna used to address Laltu as 'Leto' or 'Neto'; and for all others the name 'Latu' became popular. With an indelible impression in his mind Laltu returned home a changed man. He became indrawn. Despite all remonstrances from the members of the Datta family he was finding his household duties insipid and uninteresting. He was moving like a wound-up spring toy. He felt

9. *Smṛti Kathā*, p. 31.

10. *Ibid.*, p. 32.

11. This narration is according Ramchandra Datta; See *Smṛti Kathā*, p. 33.

that his contemplative mood was being interrupted by idle diversions again and again.

Weeks later in February 1880 another opportunity came for Latu to go to the Master. He walked more than six miles carrying some fruits and sweets sent by Ramchandra and arrived at Dakshineswar about 11 a.m. He met Sri Ramakrishna in the garden path itself and prostrated at his feet. In the company of Sri Ramakrishna he witnessed the *āratrikam* (evening service) at the Vishnu temple. So much fervency he felt that he began to chant loudly, 'Jay Ram, Jay Ram.' *Ārati* over, Sri Ramakrishna asked Latu to take *prasāda* at the temple, which the boy's orthodox mind refused to accept. But his strong common sense immediately made a compromise and he said, 'I will take your *prasāda* only—and nothing else.'¹² Obviously this pleased Sri Ramakrishna. Latu passed the day in the company of Sri Ramakrishna and left for Calcutta in the late afternoon.

Some days later Sri Ramakrishna went to Kamarpukur under the advice of his physician and stayed there for nearly eight months. Latu missed him very much and felt a void in his heart, as it were. Visits to Dakshineswar made him all the more desolate and morose, for the memory of Sri Ramakrishna's deep affection and concern haunted his mind. Writhing in mental agony he would unburden his heart by weeping in secret. Describing his sufferings he later said, 'You know, my mind used to get restless very much. ... What will you understand of the sufferings I had then? Truly do I say that you cannot understand my heart. Only Rambabu could to some extent appreciate my feelings, and he used to console me. He gave me a photograph of Sri Ramakrishna.'¹³

When Sri Ramakrishna returned to Dakshineswar, Latu acquired a new lease of life, as it were. On the occasion of his next visit to Sri Ramakrishna the latter asked him to stay overnight, which Latu gladly did. After night meal he began to massage Sri Ramakrishna's feet. This touch brought an overwhelming experience in him, and he began to shed tears. Gradually he became speechless, and sat motionless with his eyes fixed. Hours after hours passed, his condition remained unchanged. This upsurge of ecstasy continued till next day noon, when Sri Ramakrishna helped him to regain his normal consciousness, and he became himself again. On this occasion Latu stayed with Ramakrishna for three days. After some persuasion only could he be sent back to the house of Ramchandra.¹⁴ By this time Latu had developed such an attachment to Sri Ramakrishna that he wished to live always with him.

In June 1881, Hriday Mukherjee—Sri Ramakrishna's nephew and attendant—had to leave Dakshineswar for good; and to replace him Sri Ramakrishna proposed Latu's name to Ramchandra, to which he gladly agreed. This fulfilled Latu's most cherished wish of doing personal service to Sri Ramakrishna. He began to serve his Guru with one-pointed devotion. The claim of holy texts that service to the Guru leads one to the highest spiritual realization, has been successfully verified in the life of Latu. A simple wish or a mere remark of the Guru was as good as a sacred injunction to him. One day Sri Ramakrishna found him sleeping in the evening and mildly reproved him, saying, 'If you sleep at such a time, when will you meditate?'¹⁵ It was enough, and Latu gave up sleeping at night for the

14. *Bhaktamālika*, I. p. 417.

15. *Disciples of Sri Ramakrishna*, Mayavati: Advaita Ashrama, 1955 (hereafter *Disciples*), p. 184.

12. *Ibid.*, p. 35.

13. *Ibid.*, pp. 39-40.

rest of his life. He would take a short nap in the daytime and pass the nights awake, pouring all his energy on repeating the sacred Name or meditating on God. Though he held Sri Ramakrishna in the highest esteem, he had with him a very close relation. Describing his own attitude he said later, 'Did I take the Master as God? Had it been so, how could I serve him or live in his close company? He appeared to me as my dear father, so I had no anxiety and I was quite free with him.'¹⁶ The dedicated personal service he offered was spontaneous. 'He seemed to understand his Master's every need and gave him the tender care a mother might give her little child, scolding him when he did not eat enough or was too indifferent to his own welfare.'¹⁷ Swami Ramakrishnananda, a direct disciple of the Master, admitted that he had learned the technique of loving service from Latu.

Years later Latu, as Swami Adbhutananda, said, 'Many do not succeed in religious practices for they do not live their lives in obedience to the instruction of the Master.'¹⁸ His own life was an illustration of perfect obedience. Unlettered and unsophisticated as he was, Latu never questioned or reasoned out his Master's words. Any word from the Master's lips was final and binding on him.

To the ardent disciple, Sri Ramakrishna was everything—friend, philosopher and guide in one. Latu once resolved that on waking up he would see no face first other than that of his Master. One morning when he got up he could not see his Master, and so he began to shout for him with his

eyes shut. Hearing Latu's voice Sri Ramakrishna came and rescued him.

Latu was one of the very few who were permitted to attend on the Holy Mother. He kneaded flour for her, washed utensils, did marketing and so on. She loved him as her own child, and he in turn held her in a very high esteem. He said, 'She is none other than Lakshmi.' Again he said, 'Mother knows my past, my future and everything... I do not speak about Mother to all and sundry because they won't understand her, rather they will misunderstand.'¹⁹

While Latu devoted his heart and soul in the service of the Master, the latter guided him imperceptibly but firmly along the spiritual path. So effective was his guidance that Latu in four years' time made astounding progress; so much so that Sri Ramakrishna said of him on June 20, 1884, 'The nature of these attendants of mine is undergoing a change. Latu is always tense with spiritual emotion. He is about to merge himself in God.'²⁰ Such yearning for God invited problems and dangers too for him, but Sri Ramakrishna like a loving mother always protected him. One day when he was meditating on the bank of the Ganga, there came the flood-tide, and waters surrounded Latu. The news reached Sri Ramakrishna who at once rushed to the place and brought Latu back to his consciousness. Another day, Latu sat deeply absorbed in meditation in one of the Shiva temples. Hours passed unnoticed. Coming to know of Latu's whereabouts Sri Ramakrishna came and began to fan Latu who was perspiring. Returning to normal consciousness, Latu felt deeply embarrassed. In fact during these days the Master was taking care of his attendant, instead of the attendant taking care of the Master.

16. *Sat Kathā* (Bengali), ed. Swami Siddhananda, Calcutta: Udbodhan Office, fifth edition (hereafter *Sat Kathā*), p. 9.

17. Sister Devamata, *Sri Ramakrishna and His Disciples*, La Crescenta: Ananda Ashrama, 1928, p. 88.

18. *Sat Kathā*, p. 39.

19. *Smṛti Kathā*, p. 416.

20. *Gospel*, p. 412.

With the gradual unfoldment of the inner life Latu became a changed person. His complexion became brighter; his look steadfast, sharp and meaningful; his voice solemn and commanding; his gait measured and slow.²¹ The rustic boy was gradually transformed into a self-confident disciple and apostle of Sri Ramakrishna.

After the passing of the Master, Latu became overwhelmed with a strong aspiration to attain the highest ideal, and accordingly plunged deeper into spiritual practices. Continuously for more than six years he passed his days and nights practising *japam* and meditation without caring for his bodily needs. His untiring effort coupled with his absolute surrender to God led him ultimately to the realm of highest illumination. Like his Master he had access directly to the fountain-head of knowledge; and bereft of formal schooling, he nonetheless turned into an enlightened spiritual giant. Scholars and philosophers used to become dumbfounded listening to the stream of wisdom falling from his lips. The uncouth language he spoke was a funny mixture of Bengali and Bhojpuri Hindi, but the ideas they conveyed were pregnant with highest wisdom. In him was fulfilled the prophetic promise of Sri Ramakrishna, who in semi-ecstasy had once said, 'O Leto! You will babble out Veda and Vedanta.'²²

At the time of his initiation into sannyasa, Swamiji (Swami Vivekananda) gave him the name Swami Adbhutananda, in consideration of his extraordinary renunciation and austerities.²³

Appreciating Latu's outpourings of knowledge Swami Vivekananda lovingly called him 'Plato'. To 'Plato' the great

Vivekananda was his dear 'Loren-Bhai', whose company he always aspired after. He used to say, 'I am ready to take hundreds of births if I can have the companionship of Loren-Bhai.'²⁴ Likewise he developed sweet relationships with other sannyasi and household disciples of Sri Ramakrishna.

Notwithstanding his childlike faith, his filial devotion, his chaste character and the sincere recollectedness practised by him, the key to his fast spiritual progress lay in his complete resignation to the Master. He said, 'The road that leads to Him is full of many obstacles and temptations... With every step you take, you will have to call upon your saviour, resign yourself utterly to his protection. Only with such one-pointed resignation as this, can we hope to escape the snares of temptations. If we fail in being ever-watchful and do not resign ourselves completely to His will, we will never be free from passions and desires.'²⁵ When he thus advised one of his disciples, he in fact quoted his personal experiences.

Beneath an apparently rough exterior, Latu Maharaj hid a kind heart always eager to sympathize with the lowly but sincere, downtrodden but devoted, poor but enriched by faith. In fact he was a friend of all, he was a holy man, a messenger of Sri Ramakrishna. Once he said, 'Howsoever one can, one should keep company with holy men. God is vividly manifest in them. A favour from them opens the gate to God's grace.'²⁶ This is true about his own life.

Like other all-renouncing disciples of Sri Ramakrishna, Swami Adbhutananda was unique. But he was the wonder of wonders,

21. See Mahendranath Datta, *Tāpas Lātu Mahārājer Anudhyān* (Bengali), Calcutta: Mahendra Publishing Committee, B.S. 1363, p. 58.

22. *Smṛti Kathā*, pp. 491.

23. See Swami Abhedananda, *Amār Jivan Kathā* (Bengali), Calcutta: Sri Ramakrishna Vedanta Math, B.S. 1371, p. 141.

24. *Disciples*, p. 193.

25. 'Conversations with a Saint', *Vedanta and the West*, Hollywood: Vedanta Press, May-June 1967, p. 38.

26. *Adbhutananda Prasange* (Bengali), ed. Swami Siddhananda, Calcutta: Udbodhan Office, B.S. 1367, p. 15.

for he attained the highest wisdom by mere touch of the Master. Swami Turiyananda, a brother-disciple of his, said, 'Many of us had to go through the muddy waters of knowledge before we attained God, but Latu jumped over them, like Hanuman.'²⁷ Girish Ghosh, another miracle of Sri Ramakrishna, once said about Latu, 'Even the moon has dark spots, but Latu is like pure gold. I have never seen before such a spotless character. Latu's holy company purifies men.'²⁸

And Swami Vivekananda observed, 'Comparing Latu's great rise in spiritual life from the extremely unfavourable circumstances with those of ours, he is far superior to us.... Depending entirely on contemplation and recollectedness Latu climbed from a very low rung of the spiritual ladder to the highest realizations. This only proves his great innate strength and Sri Ramakrishna's infinite benediction upon him.'²⁹

In Varanasi, Latu Maharaj passed the sublime years of matured sainthood radiating a hue of grandeur, disseminating peace

²⁷. Romain Rolland, *The Life of Ramakrishna*, trans. E. F. Malcolm-Smith, Mayavati: Advaita Ashrama, 1970, pp. 194-95.

²⁸. *Smṛti Kathā*, p. 501.

²⁹. *Bhaktamālīkā*, I, p. 410.

and joy, guiding aspirants along the path divine and exemplifying the glory of Sri Ramakrishna. Imbued with the true spirit of his Master's life and teachings, his illumined life proved to be a most effective instrument for the propagation of the bracing gospel of Sri Ramakrishna. 'Original' though every disciple of Sri Ramakrishna was, Swami Abdhutananda will be honoured as perhaps the classical illustration of the *dāsya* (servant) attitude of Bhakti discipline, of which his own Master had attained the highest perfection.

As the last hour of his life arrived, he became deeply self-absorbed, with his gaze fixed between his brows. He entered into Mahasamadhi on April 24, 1920. His face beamed with light and an intelligence unspeakable, as if he was taking leave from his friends for the last time. The last few moments of his extraordinary life was like a rocket that bursts into sparks of various hues.

When Swami Adbhutananda breathed his last, the *Prabuddha Bharata*, the English organ of the Ramakrishna Order, paid tribute to him saying, 'His passing away was a wonderful thing and a glorious finale of a life-long spiritual living and realization.'³⁰

³⁰. *Prabuddha Bharata*, May 1920, p. 119

A REMINISCENCE OF SWAMI TURIYANANDA

SWAMI PRABHAVANANDA

When I was twenty-two years old, in 1915, I stopped in Varanasi on my way to Mayavati in the Himalayas. There I fell ill with chickenpox. Swami Turiyananda (Hari Maharaj) would not let me proceed further. Swami Atmabodhananda had already had the disease; so he took care of me. I had a high fever.

Every day Swami Turiyananda would come, sit on my bed, and put his hand on my forehead. After a few days he said to me: 'Abani,¹ ask a boon of me.'

I said: 'Maharaj, please do not come

¹. A nickname of Swami Prabhavananda.

and sit on my bed any more. You may fall sick.'

Hari Maharaj seemed disappointed and said: 'Oh, why do you say such a thing!'

He continued to come and visit me every day; but he respected my wish and would stand at the open door, inquiring from there how I was getting along.

After the healing process had begun I took my first bath in turmeric water, according to the Indian custom. I thought I should bow down to Swami Turiyananda after the bath. But at that stage, when the skin is still scaly, the disease is very contagious; so I bowed down to Hari Maharaj from the door of his room. The upper part of my body was bare.

He asked me to come in, but I explained that I did not want to risk infecting anyone. Many devotees were visiting him at the time.

He said to me: 'I am ordering you to come in.'

People moved aside to let me pass, and the Swami said: 'Anyone who is afraid of contagion may leave.' No one dared to move.

I stepped past the devotees and came to Hari Maharaj's side. He put his hand on my back and said: 'Abani, where is there no contagion? But through Mother's grace a big rock floats on water, fire loses its power to burn, water loses its power to drench.'

DYNAMIC MESSAGE OF SWAMI VIVEKANANDA

SWAMI GAMBHIRANANDA

Sister Nivedita remarked that Swami Vivekananda derived his message from three main sources—Guru, Gita and Ganga. By Guru she of course meant Sri Ramakrishna and Gita stands for the Scriptures and Ganga for the sacred land of India, for which Swamiji had abundant love. From these three sources he derived his message and gave it freely. After moving through India, from east to west and north to south, he reached Kanyakumari and there, as he says, 'Sitting on the last bit of Indian rock, I hit upon a plan'. What was that plan? If we analyse it, if we study it in the light of all his utterances and writings and his own life, we come to the conclusion that he found that (1) without uplifting the masses, (2) without removing poverty, and (3) without giving them higher culture, there was no future for India; and they were to be given higher ideas, and higher

ideals through education; but at the same time, he remarked that their religion must remain intact. There is nothing wrong in the religion as such. We have not understood our religion fully and properly, and the little that we have understood, we have not applied to life as we should have done. He read the Scriptures, which are full of dynamic ideals. There is, for instance, the verse in which Sri Krishna says (*Bhagavad-Gītā*, XIII, 28):

*Samam paśyan hi sarvatra
samavasthitam īśvaram;
Na hinastyātmanātmānam
tato yāti parām gatim—*

'Since seeing the Lord equally existent everywhere, he injures not Self by self, and so goes to the highest Goal.'

God remains everywhere equally and He is to be treated and worshipped equally.

But in practice, what do we do? If an untouchable comes near, we exclaim, '*Dūram apasara re cāṇḍāla*—You are a *Cāṇḍāla*; move away from me'; 'You are a moving crematorium.' We do not apply our religious ideas to our life and that is why India has fallen. The masses—and along with them he also mentioned women—have to be uplifted through education, and on the basis of religion and spirituality. These were his ideals; these he preached. But then we must understand that he was not just a social worker, as we understand service in the ordinary world. We say, there are transport services, there are departmental services and all that; Swamiji's idea of service was something different. It was not even what we generally understand by the word 'Karma Yoga'. I will explain what I mean by Swamiji's ideas of practical Vedanta, of the application of the monistic ideas of Advaita philosophy, to everyday life. He did not want religion to remain hidden in the temples, in the jungles, in the caves, but to be spread throughout the world, if it is to be helpful in man's everyday life. That is what he wanted.

To understand this philosophy of his, this stand of his, we have to go back a little to the life of Sri Ramakrishna and refer to one particular incident. Sri Ramakrishna was one day explaining some tenets of a Hindu sect. He said in Bengali: '*Jive dayā, nāme ruci, vaiṣṇava sevā*—Compassion towards creatures, love for the Lord's name, and service to the devotees of God'. He explained the terms one by one. When he came to the explanation of the term 'compassion towards creatures', Sri Ramakrishna said, 'Fie upon you! How can you become compassionate to creatures? It is God who can be compassionate.' What does compassion after all mean? It means that I stand on the higher pedestal and you on the lower. I give you something and you get it from me. I feel pride and

you should remain grateful to me. That is the idea of compassion, that is the idea of charity; but Sri Ramakrishna said, 'No, you must worship even the *jīva*; you must worship the creatures of God as God himself. He has become all this. He is not different from them.' It was not mere talk with Sri Ramakrishna. He himself demonstrated in his own life how others can be worshipped and said, 'If you can worship an image of God, can you not worship godly human being?' We Hindus sometimes worship little girls as Umā. So also, why not worship all human beings as representations of God, of Divinity, though not fully manifest for the time being? That was the idea of Swami Vivekananda, who was present when Sri Ramakrishna said this. Swamiji said, 'If God wills, if God grants, I shall show to the world the full meaning of this message. It is a new thing that I have got from him, and herein again all the paths of religion and particularly the four Yogas—Jnana, Bhakti, Karma and Raja—become reconciled.' That is what Swami Vivekananda says, and that is what he wanted everybody to take up for worship.

Sri Ramakrishna asked one gentleman, Krishna Das Pal, 'Sir, what would you do?' He said, 'I want to do good to the world.' 'Doing good to the world! Well, how big is the world and how small are you! And yet you want to do good to the world! No, no, you cannot do any good to the world; you can serve it and the beneficiary is not the world but you yourself.' One becomes benefited. One should remain thankful to others that they have given one the opportunity to serve them. This is practical Vedanta. Swami Vivekananda taught this. He found in it reconciliation of all the paths of Yoga, because herein he says, at the start, we talk of 'Karma Yoga'. What does it mean generally? I do not say that Karma Yoga as taught by Sri Krishna is something different from what Swami Vivekananda

taught. No, never say that. Sri Krishna talked about all kinds of Karma. He says in the *Bhagavad-Gītā* (IX. 27) :

*Yat karoṣi yad aśnāsi
yajjuhoṣi dadāsi yat ;
Yat tapasyasi kaunteya
tat kuruṣva madarpaṇam—*

‘Whatever thou doest, whatever thou eatest, whatever thou offerest in sacrifice, whatever thou givest away, whatever austerity thou practisest, O son of Kunti, do that as an offering unto Me.’

In this verse he comprehended all kinds of Karma ; but there came the commentators and annotators, who restricted the meanings and said, ‘The duties of the different castes are meant by this Karma. You do some Karma and then dedicate the result to God. You do not take the result for yourself.’ But what did Sri Ramakrishna and Vivekananda say ? You worship others in God, i.e. Bhakti, worshipping—that is also Karma ; you are doing something for them. But then, what result do you expect ? Nothing at all. You are doing good to others, because it is really in your own good. You serve others, because thereby you benefit yourself. That was the idea of Karma Yoga. In his practical Vedanta Swami Vivekananda says : There is no idea of doing something and getting some result and then offering deed to God. You are worshipping God already. The result goes to God as soon as you start the worship and during the worship and at the end of worship. There is no question of again dedicating the result to Him. Are you not meditating ? Are you not thinking of doing something divine, something spiritual, for others and for your-

self ? Therein also comes an element of Jnana. So you see, you have to think what is good and what is bad ; what you should do and what you should not do. Therein comes discrimination, the path of Jnana. Here, then, all these paths get combined. That is the message we have learnt from Swami Vivekananda. That is the lesson that has been derived from his Guru Sri Ramakrishna and that is also the lesson embedded in all our Scriptures. So it is not a new thing at all. It was there all the time. We did not know ; but here Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda have revealed this whole thing to us in a new form, and given it a dynamic power for upliftment of society—for the uplift of the masses.

Swami Vivekananda himself knew what poverty was. You know, in his own life there were days when he either did not get a full meal or any meal at all. When he returned home after searching for jobs here and there, and his mother said, ‘Take some food’, he would say, ‘No, please excuse me, I had my food already.’ He wanted to save that morsel for his brothers and his mother. He had known what the masses really suffered from, and it is this message that welled out from the heart of Swami Vivekananda. He wanted the combination of the intellect of Shankaracharya and the heart of Buddha ; and here, in Vivekananda, we have this intellect and this heart combined. Here is this combined message. Here is this dynamic message. Here are the new paths opened out for you by Swami Vivekananda.

Let us be ready. Let us make our country greater. But let us make the masses better and better.

RAMAKRISHNA'S NAREN* AND NAREN'S RAMAKRISHNA—II

SWAMI BUDHANANDA

2

It would appear that since early youth Narendra had spontaneously adopted the razor-sharp path of knowledge and discrimination as his way of life. He hardly cared a trifle for Mahamaya—the Divine Mother. In regard to Her special manifestation as Kali, his attitude was: 'Oh, She is Ramakrishna's Divine Mother, having little meaning for me.'

The six-foot tall, sturdy Vedantin Totapuri, Sri Ramakrishna's teacher, also had scant regard for Kali. But when one night, tortured to the extreme by a fell disease, he wanted to commit suicide by drowning himself, but could not even find enough water in the Ganga for the purpose, his eyes opened. He at last felt the inscrutable power of Mahamaya as a supreme fact of existence, through every nerve. And so Narendra, being mercilessly handled by the problems of living in a pitiless world after his father's sudden death, came to have the same awakening.

Driven to desperation, Narendra one day importuned Sri Ramakrishna to ask *his* Divine Mother for the removal of his family's pecuniary wants. And the Master grasped this supreme opportunity relentlessly, so to say. He replied: 'My boy, I can't make such demands. But why don't you go and ask the Mother yourself? All your sufferings are due to your disregard of Her.'¹³ Resorting to these hard words uttered with fathomless love, Sri Ramakrishna with a supreme sense of strategy

ushered Narendra into the inner precincts of the waiting Divine Mother. And there, standing before Kali, Narendra was simply dumbfounded. In mute wonder he saw that the Mother, whom Sri Ramakrishna worshipped, was really sparkling with life and splendour. Striking him from without, the Divine Mother awakened Naren from within, and then permeated his consciousness for all time to come. Such was the all-devouring grace of the Divine Mother on him.

That day on which Narendra accepted Kali, was one of the greatest days of joy for Sri Ramakrishna. He declared with bubbling enthusiasm to everyone who came to Dakshineswar: 'Naren has accepted Kali!' For this had been the greatest obstacle in the way for Naren—this non-acceptance of Kali. If one accepts only the Absolute and not the relative, where does one really stand to perform the feat? As Sri Ramakrishna says, 'A man attains Brahmajnana only when it is given to him by the Adyāshakti, the Divine Mother. Then alone does he see the whole thing as magic; otherwise not.'¹⁴ It is She who conjures up Maya; it is She again who cuts the strings behind the sportive show. She is the Avidyāshakti who binds; She again is the Vidyāshakti who unbinds and liberates.

Without accepting the Divine Mother, Narendra could not become the purveyor of God's love for man. This was the root of the Master's fear about Narendra. Thus, after he had accepted Kali, there remained no more fear of losing him. Having descended from the regions of the Absolute,

* 'Naren', short for Narendranath, was the premonastic name of Swami Vivekananda.

13. *Life of Sri Ramakrishna*, Mayavati: Advaita Ashrama, 1964, p. 354.

14. 'M', *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, trans. Swami Nikhilananda, Madras: Sri Ramakrishna Math, 1974, (hereafter *Gospel*), p. 415.

Narendra had been thus long homeless, so to say: now he became the child in the Mother's parlour. What more worry could there be for him?

The Mother of the universe had, it seemed, become saddled on Narendra's consciousness, and did not leave as long as he lived in that body. She got Her own work done after harnessing him by his very bones; then at last, at Kshir-Bhavani She granted him the strange realization that Her universe could very well go along without him! What did this really mean? It only meant that the compassionate Mother was sportive too. At long last She made this heroic son of Hers roll in the dust of utter self-surrender and cry 'Mother! Mother!' That was the fullness of Narendra's spiritual attainment even as he was the knower of Brahman.

Through the acceptance of Kali, Brahman came to be realized in a new way, as identical with Shakti. The identity of Jiva and Shiva was experienced in consciousness. 'He has become everything'—this Sri Ramakrishna said even more often than 'This world is unreal.' Thus he soaked the Vedanta of the forest in the elixir of divine love and brought the new religion of man back to the plane of benefaction.

Narendra wanted to forget the world and stay immersed in the transcendental state of Samadhi. But Sri Ramakrishna volatilized that dream of his with one wistful utterance, revealing the dimensions of Narendra's spiritual possibilities and their liberating meaning for mankind. Narendra had no right to remain immersed in the bliss of the Atman—that was meant for common Sadhakas [spiritual aspirants]. Not for one moment did the Master ever forget the reason for which he had brought Narendra down from the undifferentiated regions. And so he never permitted him to become the world-forgetting reveller in the delights of Atman. He turned his illumined conscious-

ness manward. After getting him rooted in the experience of the Absolute, he brought him down and tied him to the relative. He was not satisfied with only imparting to Narendra the Jiva-Shiva Mantra which blazed in his consciousness the fact that to worship man is to worship God, for 'It is God Himself who plays about as human beings.'¹⁵ In words of fire he inscribed another simple truth in Narendra's understanding: 'An empty stomach is no good for religion.'¹⁶ And a revolutionary question he asked, 'If God can be worshipped through an image, why shouldn't it be possible to worship Him through a living person?'¹⁷

He installed man as 'greater than the greatest' and made him the object of meditation. He said, 'However great and infinite God may be, His essence can and does manifest itself through man by His mere will.'¹⁸ A new and vigorous emphasis was laid on a mode of Sadhana [spiritual practice] which had far-reaching meaning for modern man. Devalued man was raised to the pinnacle of his potential glory. 'As fire is kindled when you rub two pieces of wood together, so God can be seen in man if you have intense devotion.'¹⁹ These were the main directive principles through which Naren was to work out the mandate given to him in the words: You will have to do the work of the Mother! Narendra absorbed all these in creative wonder, the dynamics of which was manifested later on in his message and deeds.

Two days before his passing away, Sri Ramakrishna emptied all the wealth of his realizations into the new vessel that was Narendra, and became, in his own words, a 'fakir'. The meaning of his becoming a

15. *Ibid.*, p. 358.

16. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, Mayavati: Advaita Ashrama, VI, 1972, p. 254.

17. *Gospel*, p. 659.

18. *Ibid.*, p. 700.

19. *Ibid.*, pp. 659-60.

'fakir' was that he, the Real He, became self-absorbed, as it were, into Narendra. In other words, thenceforth Narendra ceased to have a separate identity. And so, he declared Narendra to be his own Atman.

3

In his Narendra-sadhana—by which we mean everything Sri Ramakrishna did in order to transform Naren into what he became as Vivekananda—the Master cultivated the totality of religion, comprising both the eternal Sanatana Dharma (eternal religion) and the Yuga Dharma (religion of the times). He taught him everything: how to discard non-essentials and straight away absorb the essentials of religion, and also how to remove the sedge of illusion and drink the limpid water of Sachchidananda.

'I am telling you this and so you must accept'—this, Sri Ramakrishna never said to anyone. He specially encouraged Naren to examine all his words and experiences before accepting them.

His photographs taken in the states of Samadhi hardly convey the impression that Sri Ramakrishna, the 'Vijnani' (one having the special knowledge of the Absolute) was the co-religionist of the scientist. And yet, how few, if any, ever attained that perfectly scientific outlook as did Sri Ramakrishna! He never accepted anything without having seen it. And for seeing, he did not close his eyes for months or years on end! This is why his words about the 'unseen' are so simple, forceful and delightfully convincing.

In this age of science, religion has to respect the spirit of the times. The light of religion cannot any more be spread through cultivating a contemptuous attitude towards science. Therefore Sri Ramakrishna did not hesitate to appear again and again like an anxious schoolboy before his examining disciple, who was keen to subject the religious phenomenon to scientific scrutiny.

Look at the Ramakrishna we have received—limpid, beautiful, abundant, overflowing, without a twist or speck of doubt anywhere! We could have never got him in this manner, had it not been for the fact that the Master found his own way of stimulating Naren's spirit of enquiry and got himself enthusiastically examined at his hands. In one sense, 'love of God' is another name for the affectionate enquiry into the nature of truth. What made Naren's self-surrender to Sri Ramakrishna possible and convenient was this unique feature, that—as embodiment of Truth become an enquirer into It—the Master evinced a scientific temper which Narendra could wholeheartedly appreciate and worship.

Girish Ghosh, a disciple of Sri Ramakrishna, says:

When I wrote the play *Vilwamangal*, several of his [Sri Ramakrishna's] disciples questioned me about it. I told them I had learned the art of playwriting from Sri Ramakrishna. Narendra [Swami Vivekananda] has said that he learned science from Sri Ramakrishna, and Mahendra ['M'] says Sri Ramakrishna taught him the art of teaching. How is it possible to express Sri Ramakrishna's many moods and aspects? How can one say what they are?²⁰

True religion is revolutionary. It shatters to shreds the shroud of delusion, the langour of lassitude, and it clears the fog of superstition. True religion has to express itself by continuously breaking down the ever-growing walls of falsehood. Besides being an embodiment of the eternal spirit of Religion, the Avatar is fundamentally an ideational revolutionary. In Sri Ramakrishna's life has taken place a perfect blending of the spirit of Sanatana Dharma and Yuga Dharma, eternal spirit of the religion of the timeless,

²⁰. See The Minute Book of the Meeting of the Ramakrishna Mission, (hereafter 'The Minute Book'), 25 July 1897.

and the revolutionary spirit of the religion of the times.

How do we know this? From many clues, for example: his acceptance of alms from the blacksmith woman, his refusal to go in for a bread-winning education, his practice of Islam, his worship of the Divine Mother in the person of his wedded wife, and his giving of the Jiva-Shiva Mantra.

The new, powerful awakening of the spirit of religion which modern India witnessed is the contribution of this revolutionary thrust of the Eternal truths. With his own inner flame, Sri Ramakrishna set ablaze the same revolutionary spirit in Narendra. The fiery elucidation, abundance of life-force and awakening-power which characterize Vivekananda's exposition of religion, all had their source in this revolutionary spirit. Without being revolutionary, religion cannot become the conduit of God's love for man.

When religion enters into a sort of business contract with falsehood for securing a comfortable living in a stereotyped groove, thus forfeiting its revolutionary spirit—that state is called the state of *dharma-glāni*—decline of religion. Again, with the influx of the clear, strong and free stream of resurgent religion, a society experiences, *sarvodaya*, universal uplift. Then religion becomes the Annapurna, the Mother-giver of everyone's requirements. She then procures food for all, and fulfils everyone's cherished desires for wealth, happiness, righteousness or liberation of the spirit. This religion is verily God's love for man. This was why Sri Ramakrishna especially awakened and fed the revolutionary spirit in Narendra.

Another thing Sri Ramakrishna taught Naren: that God has to be loved in many ways. It is not enough just to have one chance-vision. One must bring Him home and love Him abundantly. One though God is, He is adorable and realizable in many ways. The unlimited should never be looked upon in a small way. Can we hold the

ocean in a pot? What is wanted is depth of realization, its extensity and spontaneity going together. The secret of Sri Ramakrishna's infinite varieties of spiritual mood is his fathomless love for God.

In building up Narendra, the Master only cultivated the disciple's own inner resources. He did not thrust anything from outside. From his very childhood, Narendra manifested a versatility of talents and moods. On the one hand, he was gay, open-hearted, and outgoing; on the other, a seeker of truth, enquiring and pure-hearted. To outward appearance he was a nonconformist; but inwardly he was a confirmed Brahmacharin devoted to meditation. He was utterly fearless, but had a very soft heart. On the one hand, with his sharp intellect, he was the thorough-going rationalist and scientific enquirer; on the other, he was the master of detachment and supreme lover of God. If he had not this variety of inherent qualities, how could he become the purveyor of God's love for men, flowing from a source of infinite moods like Sri Ramakrishna?

The Avatar does not come only for the few. His special mission is to stream forth to many, nay to all. And so Sri Ramakrishna accepted both the one and the many. Then when later on Swami Vivekananda expounded the Yogas, he served to humanity at large the truths experienced by Sri Ramakrishna through a variety of approaches to God, and also verified in his own personal experience. This was one of the most effective ways of conveying the love of God to men.

Sri Ramakrishna underwent great physical pain due to cancer in the throat, although as a perfected yogi he could have thrown off his body any day. One reason for this could have been that there yet remained things to be done regarding Narendra's training. Only a few days before the Master's passing away, Narendra attained Nirvikalpa Samadhi and became a knower of Brahman. In as much

as he had already accepted the Mother Kali, epitomizing the *lila* (creative) aspect of Reality; now with his experiential knowledge of Brahman, epitomizing the undifferentiated Absolute (*nitya*), his spiritual realizations attained supreme fulfilment. Sri Ramakrishna did not delay any more. As already mentioned, he transmitted all the wealth of his realizations, superhuman powers, and Divine vision to his disciple and thus self-emptied himself in one sense, and self-annexed in another. Thus was attained perfection in Sri Ramakrishna's Narendrasadhana. After this he did not retain his body for more than two or three days; for there was no further need of it.

4

The superb skill, like that of a master-sculptor, with which Sri Ramakrishna fashioned the inner being of Narendrasadhana from the first day of their meeting in this world to the last day of his life, is a unique theme for meditation. With Narendrasadhana as the pivot, the mission and message of Ramakrishna's incarnation was to stream forth to the new frontiers of man. This was why he bent all his devotion, earnestness, skill and steadfastness, to the building up of Narendrasadhana.

As has been said before, the main object of this Incarnation was to convey to man the transmuting and saving power of God's love for man. Of this, there are some practical aspects—the making of the way through opposing forces, the sounding of the trumpet, announcing the advent and propagating the message. After accumulating all his treasures for distribution, Sri Ramakrishna had grown impatient in waiting. His personal agony now for devising ways of distributing this treasure among all.

As a result of going through twelve years of rigorous Sadhana, Sri Ramakrishna's physical frame had become delicate in the extreme. Still his heart's desire was to go from door to door in order to remove the

sufferings of people, give them the saving knowledge and his love. But it was impossible to accomplish this tremendous task through the instrumentality of his own delicate body. And on this account he bore in his heart a pain which few could know.

Girish Ghosh said:

One day, having gone to Sri Ramakrishna, I found him weeping and soliloquizing: 'My Nitai²¹ used to go on foot from door to door and gave his love to men. And what a pity, I cannot go to Calcutta without a cab!' On another occasion he said: 'I shall serve people even while subsisting on "sago" water.'²²

Sri Ramakrishna was so engaging, delightful and full of fun. But in his heart of hearts there was all the time this agony of long-accumulated compassion for the Jivas. Nobody knew it; nobody would understand it. And so, one day he told in smiling sorrowfulness this parable of a ghost's futile search for a companion:

One cannot realize God without renunciation. Who will accept my words? I have been seeking a companion, a sympathetic soul who will understand my feelings. When I see a great devotee, I say to myself, 'Perhaps he will accept my ideal.' But later on I find that he behaves in a different way.

A ghost sought a companion. One becomes a ghost if one dies from an accident on a Saturday or a Tuesday. So whenever the ghost found someone who seemed to be dying from an accident on either of these days, he would run to him. He would say to himself that at last he had found his companion. But no sooner would he run to the man than he would see the man getting up. The man, perhaps had fallen from a roof and after a few moments regained consciousness. ...

During one of Narendrasadhana's early visits

²¹. Reference here is to Nityananda, companion of Sri Chaitanya.

²². See 'The Minute Book', 8 August 1897.

I touched his chest and he became unconscious. Regaining consciousness he wept and said: 'On, why did you do that to me? I have a father! I have a mother!' ²³

Who knows what agony the snow-capped mountain may feel looking on at the desert craving for a few drops of water? As soon as he saw Narendra, Sri Ramakrishna knew that this lad was to be the channel for the outflow of his pent-up compassion for man. Like the ancient King Bhagiratha who by the power of his austerities brought down the celestial river Ganga from heavens to earth, he would carry with the sounding of the conch the flow of his love for man to all directions, all countries and all peoples. And it was not only that he was to convey the teachings as to how to attain liberation of the spirit—one could very well find those in the scriptures; he was to specially convey to the suffering, sorrowing, groping and seeking people of the world, in a thousand surging streams, the rejuvenating power of God's love for man.

After giving everything of himself to Narendra, Sri Ramakrishna became a 'fakir'. What does this mean? It means that he became permeated in the consciousness of Narendra. Once the Master had said to Naren, 'I will go and live wheresoever it will be your pleasure to take me, carrying me on your shoulders—be it under a tree or in the humblest cottage!' ²⁴ And he inspired Narendra to spread out in all directions, while he retained the key of final release in his own firm grip.

Thus Vivekananda is the new self-manifestation of Sri Ramakrishna himself. Vivekananda was not only a disciple but verily the Master's self-revelation. About Narendra he once said, 'I look on Narendra

as Atman. I obey him.' ²⁵ Knowing the essence of this truth full well, Girish Chandra Ghosh said: 'One who thinks of Vivekananda as apart from Ramakrishna is ignorant.' ²⁶

If Vivekananda were different from Sri Ramakrishna, it would have been possible for him to remain in meditation in a cave. Because he was not apart from the Master, he had to become a *parivrājaka*—a wandering monk, and a wonderful monk at that. God has become everything. Therefore Sri Ramakrishna forcibly pulled Narendra from his seat of meditation and threw him out amidst that becoming of God which we call the people. Through making Vivekananda a wanderer, he made his own love flow through villages, towns, cities—by the sides of cottages and human habitations of various sorts—in all directions.

To those people who were engaged in sincere worship of God living near about Dakshineswar, Sri Ramakrishna went uninvited and showered his grace on them. All might not have recognized this 'new man' who came covering himself with a wrapper. But the fact remained, the Lord whom they worshipped had really come to respectfully place on their doorsteps the offering of grace.

But there were in far-flung areas other people, who, being benighted by ignorance and delusion were totally forgetful of God; who though engaged in the cruel battle of life, were sundered from the source of all power; who were unclean, smeared with mud and filth, and engaged in awful actions. To bring home to these people God's love and light was the most urgent work. And so Sri Ramakrishna made Vivekananda a wakeful wanderer.

On dusty roads, in the humble hamlets where our poorest live in destitution, under limitless blue sky, in lonely forest, on moun-

²³. *Gospel*, pp. 748-49.

²⁴. His Eastern and Western Disciples, *The Life of Swami Vivekananda*, Mayavati: Advaita Ashrama, 1974, p. 605.

²⁵. *Gospel*, p. 666.

²⁶. See 'The Minute Book', 6 June 1897.

tain paths and speechless cave, flaming Vivekananda came to realize religion in a new way. He realized 'my God' in the poor, hungry, sick, miserable and the wicked. And he received the intimation of a new path. Through meditation he had realized the one Reality as Brahman. Now he realized God again as many. He saw Him sparking everywhere. He has become every-

thing. That was why the adoration of God-become-everything is one of the most effective forms of worship and the surest way of salvation.

This message of Vivekananda was verily God's love brought to man in a most powerful, creative and helpful manner.

(To be continued)

EARLY DAYS AT SHANTI ASHRAMA—VI

GARGI

6

There at the Ashrama to welcome the Swami home were four students, three of whom—Gurudasa, George Roorbach, and Margaret McConochie—had stayed through the winter months. The fourth was young Dr. Adams, who had returned in March. Gradually others arrived. In May came Mr. and Mrs. Aspinall, to remain, except for some coming and going on the part of Mr. Aspinall, until February of the following year. And in June—the valley beginning now to bake—Mr. William Pingree, a member of the Alameda Home of Truth, Mrs. Frances Hickok, the sister of Annie Rix Millitz (founder of all the Homes of Truth), Eloise Roorbach (a leader of the Alameda Home of Truth and a friend of Swami Vivekananda), a Mr. Horning, and Mary Magee (Mrs. George E. Magee) all crossed Mount Hamilton to the retreat, and thus for a week or so there were again twelve (possibly thirteen) students in residence.

Throughout this second period of nineteen weeks (April 25 to early September) eighteen students in all stayed for varying lengths of time at the Ashrama. But although this attendance was a little larger than that of

the first period, the increase was not necessarily a sign of growth. The turnover had been great. Many of the students of the first period had not come back, and almost fifty per cent of the present group were newcomers. Further, during this second season only two students, Gurudas and Miss McConochie, remained the entire time, and only seven stayed more than half the time. Others, arriving when they could, remained for periods ranging from one to six weeks.

According to Ida Ansell, this second season was by no means as happy as had been the first, and although her memories of these days are neither detailed nor clear, one gathers from them a certain tension. 'The first period', she wrote, '... had been one of almost complete happiness with much encouragement and few scoldings, but now the inevitable discipline began, and the hard blows fell frequently. Conditions and personnel were different too. ...' Subjective as this comparison may have been, Miss Ansell gives in these same memoirs what is probably the most telling and most touching comment on the situation existing between the Swami and a large number of his students. 'Once Swami found me weeping,' she wrote, 'because my effort to persuade some

of the others to comply with his expressed wish that there be more economy in the kitchen had failed and they had offered, if I could not afford the extra expense, to pay my share. "Swami," I sobbed, "they simply will not understand." "Never mind," he said, "you did your best, that is enough. And Baby," he added, "if I wept every time they don't understand, I should be weeping all the time."

There was no respite for Swami Turiyananda. If harmony reigned, it was because of his constant vigilance. 'At the Shanti Ashrama', he reminisced many years later, 'people with strong individualities and different natures lived together harmoniously. I had to look after them for almost twenty-four hours a day. They had regular work to do, study class twice each day, four times meditation, and the rest of the time I used to converse with them on God. Early in the morning I would go to each cottage and wake everyone by chanting OM, OM. I gave impartial love to all.' 'Many times', he recalled on another occasion, 'I had to scold the inmates.' And the inmates did not always receive the Swami's scoldings with good grace. This, at least, had been true in New York, and there is no reason to believe that it was not also true at Shanti Ashrama where the students were, for the most part, 'self-opinionated' and untrained.

'He never hesitated to correct our shortcomings in a bold, straightforward way, for which we, in the West, were hardly prepared,' Gurudasa wrote in regard to the Swami's stay in New York. 'Some of the students took exception at the unceremonious method in which the Swami rebuked them. They were greatly annoyed and offended when he laid bare their weak spots in the presence of others, or even in private. ... Another difficulty the Swami had to meet was that some students thought that he did not understand them.'

Although few, if any, of the students failed

to benefit from the Swami's constant care and frequent scoldings, few were able to benefit fully. Almost sixty years later, Eloise Roorbach, then a very old woman, wrote down her memories of the Ashrama. As we have seen above, Mrs. Roorbach arrived in June of 1901. She remained for twelve or thirteen months, perhaps longer, and then went to New York where she lived for many years, engaged in magazine work. Later she returned to California, but never became a member of the Vedanta Society. Her letters and notes, written in 1958 in response to an inquiry and heretofore unpublished, constitute one of the very few reminiscences of the early Ashrama days and perhaps the most representative. When she lived at the Ashrama, Mrs. Roorbach was neither as immature as Ida Ansell nor as spiritually advanced as Gurudasa. Except that she remained at the retreat longer than most, she was an average student, and her reminiscences give what one feels is a balanced, though incomplete, account. Her notes and letters have been pieced together to form the following more or less consecutive story but have not otherwise been edited:

Swami Turiyananda was in charge of the Ashrama when I arrived. There was a dining room, three [two?] walls of which lifted out to form sort of a shield from the sun and to let in air. The fourth side was a kitchen, with a wood-burning stove. There was a meditation house where we held meetings. Several tents with wooden floors, tent walls, and an awning over all, raised a little above the walls for air space. Each of us had a cot bed, simple furniture made mostly of boxes, and an airtight stove, in which we burned large pine cones. We all lived in separate tents so we could be alone and study. The men in one section, the women in another. We went to bed early and got up early, trying in every way to simplify our lives. We were very much tormented with ants. So we kept a circle of ashes about a foot wide all around the tent; they would not cross this.

In the evenings we walked back and forth from the dining room to the entrance gate, talking and listening to stories of Indian life. In the cold weather there would often be snow on the ground. When it rained we wore raincoats and wide rain hats. In the summer it was very hot and we would find the hours in which we cooked unbearable. Our expenses were kept by Sumati [Margaret McConochie]. After our monthly trip to town for provisions she would divide all our expenses by the number of people staying there—never very many, seldom more than four, six or eight. Each person's share ran about fifteen dollars a month up to not more than thirty-five dollars.

Every morning we met for meditation in a simple little house devoted especially to classes. It was very difficult for us to maintain the proper posture, to keep our bodies still, and impossible to hold our thoughts to a high subject; for this reason I began to memorize beautiful verses I had read and parts of the Gita so that I would have something to think of when I couldn't think about God. We meditated for one hour and then listened to teachings by the Swami. We asked questions and listened to his reading while he answered us. He was very patient and thorough and never tired of trying to help us. I never saw him disturbed or searching for an answer; he always knew. He was always quiet, sweet, wise, learned, helpful. There could not be any Swami more fitted to be in charge of such a place. I think he was often homesick, but never a word about it. Gurudasa was his comfort, for he was terribly in earnest. The rest of us eager but dumb.

At noon we separated while the women prepared the dinner and the men brought in more water, chopped wood and brought in big pine cones which we used in the early morning in our airtight stoves. The water was quite a distance from our dining room and kitchen and was a job always needing to be done. Our food we got from San Jose once a month, strictly vegetarian. One of the women would go to the only neighbour for milk

and eggs. We made our own bread, and meals were very simple and we raised quite a few fresh vegetables. One day we built a garden with a wire fence around it. Gophers burrowed under the fence so that we had to put a two-foot wire protection under the ground. And also we had to raise the height of the fence several feet so that deer could not jump over it; however, the birds flew over and feasted on our lettuce! The garden was in a spot which nearly always had mushrooms.

One of us got on our old white horse, Nellie, once a week and went for the mail, which took us almost one day because the post office was quite a few miles away (I think about twelve miles there and back). The road passed through cattle country so we did not dare to get off our horse.

Certain days stand out in my memory as very special ones. One day in January I became aware of an exquisite perfume; following it, I came upon a manzanita bush in full bloom, the first I had ever seen—very beautiful.

Another day I found a beautiful canyon in which there were quite a few deer with their fawns. I gathered an armful of a kind of flower that I was unfamiliar with and took them to the meditation room and arranged them in what I thought was a beautiful manner on the altar. When the Swami saw flowers he seemed shocked and very gently said, 'We do not kill the flowers by picking them, but with our hands in the position of salutation we offer them to God. It is the thought He likes, and He is as pleased over a simple leaf, branch or wild flower as if it had been an expensive rose.' I never forgot this, and every time since I make a gift to God I make it from my heart, though I do not lay it on an altar. One of the women embroidered the word 'AUM' on a pillow for the Swami to sit on while meditating. Gently he explained that he could not sit on such a sacred word, but stood it up beside him where he could see it.

Sometimes we meditated out under a tree and our old horse Nellie used to come and stand almost without moving

and look on with the greatest interest, never disturbing us.

Swami Turiyananda was our only teacher while I was there. I could write for hours on his beautiful life and words. He had no one to help him but Gurudas. He often spoke gratefully of his help. Turiyananda was sad because he did not have more advanced students. We all had childish minds, no real enthusiasts among us. We were interested, determined to understand and to be Vedantists. But it was all over our dumb heads. We will never forget the ideal, the daily talks, the complete change in our lives and purposes. But we did not get far. Too immature! Still, the most wonderful experiences of my life were my meeting with Swami Vivekananda and that stay at the Ashrama. I am deeply grateful for them.

(About the flowers—it is probable that Mrs. Roorbach mistook Swami Turiyananda's meaning. In India it is customary to offer cut flowers to the Deity, and, according to Ida Ansell, a vase of flowers was customarily placed on the altar in the meditation cabin. This and the offering of incense constituted the only external worship).

Gurudasa was indeed, as Eloise Roorbach said, Swami Turiyananda's comfort, and it is primarily through his reminiscences that we learn the nature of the Swami's teachings at the Ashrama. Their tone was always monistic, not only in his classes, but throughout the day in his conversations and his casual talk. 'The work of Swami Turiyananda at the Shanti Ashrama was character-building,' Gurudasa wrote in *With the Swamis in America*, and went on to quote him :

'Be yourself,' he used to say. 'and be strong. Realisation is only for the strong, the pure, the upright. Remember that you are the Atman. That gives the greatest strength and courage. Be brave; break through the bondage of Maya. Be like the lion; don't tremble at any-

thing. Swamiji has taught you that every soul is potentially Divine. Realise your own divinity, then you will realise that all souls are Divine. ... The sun of Atman is always shining. Remove the cloud of ignorance and the Atman will reveal itself in your heart. When you realise that, then you are a man. Otherwise you are not different from beasts.'

And when asked, how this can be realised, he answered, 'Through meditation. Meditation is the key that opens the door to Truth. Meditate, meditate! Meditate till light flashes into your mind, and the Atman stands self-revealed. Not by talk, not by study, but by meditation alone the Truth is known.'

Thus day after day, from early morning till night, the Swami tried to help the students live what Swamiji had taught, strove to fulfil the essential purpose of the Ashrama. 'My boy,' he was to say to Gurudasa toward the end, 'I have given you the very best that India has to give: it is a great treasure, keep it carefully.'

Nor was his personal guidance of the other students less a treasure. Years later, recalling the Ashrama days, he once said: 'While I was in the West, the Lord made me do his work. I felt that I was but an instrument in his hands. Whenever an inquirer came and asked a question, I used to see the face of the Lord, and the answer seemed to come directly from him through my lips. And the seeker would leave satisfied.'

Characteristically, the Swami did not mention in later years—perhaps did not even remember—the unhappy side of his task. Fortunately for the sake of history, however, Alice Hansbrough, to whom he had by now given the Sanskrit name Shanti ('peace'), left the Ashrama sometime in the latter part of June, making it necessary for him to take up his correspondence with her. His first letter was undated, but its envelope bore the postmark 'De Forest, June 25, '01':

My dear Shanti

Your kind note to hand. Thanks for your kindly taking so much trouble for me. Perhaps by this time you have come to know that Mrs. Clarke and Mrs. Kelley both came up to Lick Observatory to come to the Ashrama. I am sorry they had to go back for want of any arrangement of conveyance. We got no notice whatever previously. Yet when Dr. Adams learnt from the post peon [Mr. De Forest, perhaps] about two ladies on the mountain top wishing to come to the Ashrama he hastened to ride up there asking Mr. Gerber to follow him next morning through Sadhu Charan [George Roorbach]. He telephoned from mountain top to Smith Crick, Rita [the hotel in San Jose] & Stage Co & found they were gone. I am so sorry for them but what can't be cured must be endured, so I take it as Mother's will it was to be so. Mrs. Kelley has gone to

the east with Mrs. Clarke for a month and has asked me to write to their Chicago address. I am sorry you had to leave the ashrama. We miss you so much everyone of us. May Mother bring you back soon. But real Shanti is still in the ashrama; shadow has gone only. Thank you my arm is very much better. I will come out tomorrow. Please give my best wishes and love to all friends you meet and accept them yourself. Excuse haste & bad writing

Yours in the Mother
Turiyananda

Herewith I send you the copies of snapshots Dhira sent for you.

The snapshots the Swami refers to were most likely taken in San Francisco. Dhira (Mrs. Petersen) was not at the Ashrama at any time during this second period.

UNPUBLISHED LETTERS OF SWAMI VIVEKANANDA*—VII

To Sister Christine

34

Vedanta Society,
102 East 58th Street,
New York,
9th June 1900.

Dear Christina,

I could not write more as during the last few weeks of my stay in California there was one more relapse and great suffering. However, I got the benefit out of it inasmuch as I came to know, I have really no disease, except worry and fear. My kidneys are as sound as any other healthy man's. All the symptoms of Bright's disease etc. are only brought on by nerves.

I wrote you one, however, from 770 Oak Street, San Francisco, to which I did not get any reply. Of course, I was bedridden then and my address book was not in the place, I was in. There was a mistake in number.

I cannot believe, you did not reply willingly. As you see, now I am in New York, and will be here a few days. I have an invitation from Mrs. Walton of Cleveland, Ohio. I have accepted it. She writes me, you are also invited, and have accepted her invitation. Well, we will meet in Cleveland then. I am

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

sure to see you before I go to Europe. Either there or anywhere you wish. If you don't think it would be possible for you to come to Ohio, I will come to any other place you want me to come to say goodbye.

When is your School going to close? Write me all about your plans ; do !

Miss Noble [Nivedita] wants me very much to go to Cleveland. I would be very very glad to get a few weeks' seclusion and rest, before I start, with friends who do not disturb me at all. I know, I will find rest and peace that way, and you can help me any amount in that. In Cleveland of course there will be a few friends always and much talkee talkee as a matter of course. So, if you think I will have real peace and rest elsewhere, just write all about it.

My reply to the Cleveland lady depends on your letter.

How I wish I was in Detroit, or elsewhere just now, among friends who, I know, are good and true always. This is weakness ; but when the physical vitality is lowered and the nerves all unstrung, I feel so so much to depend upon somebody. You will be glad to learn, I made a little money in the west. So I will be quite able to pay my expenses.

Write soon.

Yours affectionately,
VIVEKANANDA.

35

Vedanta Society,
102 East 58th Street,
New York,
13th June 1900.

Dear Christina,

There is no cause of any anxiety, as I wrote, I am healthier than ever. Moreover, all the past fear of kidney troubles has passed away. 'Worry' is the only disease I have, and I am conquering it fast.

I will be here a week or two, and then I come to Detroit. If things so happen that I cannot come, I will sure send for you. Anyway, I am not going to leave this country before seeing you. Sure, sure, I must see you first, and then go to Europe.

Things are looking cheerful once more, and good luck, like ill, also comes in bunches. So I am sure, it will be smooth sailing every way now for some time at least.

With love to Mrs. Funke,

Ever yours in the Truth,
VIVEKANANDA.

36

Vedanta Society,
102 East 58th Street,
New York,
15 June 1900.

My dear Christina,

I am getting better every day, only this New York is a bad place for sleep.

Again, I am working some, though not hard, to get the old friends together and put the thing in shape.

Now you know, I will in a week or so finish this work and then be ready for a real quiet of a week or two or more.

Detroit, alas ! will be no better than New York. With so many old friends ! How can you avoid friends whom you really love?

I will have perfect freedom at yours, sure, but how can I avoid seeing friends? and the eternal visiting and paying visits and much talkee, talkee? Do you know any other place within eight or ten hours (I want to avoid night rides) of ride from New York, where I can be quiet and free from the people? (Lord bless them). I am dead tired seeing people just now. Just think of that and everything else ; if after all you think Detroit is the best place for me, I am ready to come.

Yours truly,
VIVEKANANDA.

PS—I am also thinking of a quiet place.

V.

378

Vedanta Society,
102 East 58th Street,
New York,
20th June 1900.

Dear Christina,

I am two days late in replying to your most beautiful letter. As you say, Mother will send some way, I am sure. Most possibly I will be in Detroit next week. If anything happens to delay me, don't be anxious. I will not leave the country without seeing you. It is absolutely necessary.

Well, Mother seems to be kind again and the wheel is slowly rising up. Did you hear of my friend Miss Müller? Well, she left me in India, and, they say, tried to injure me in England. This morning I get a letter from her that she is coming to the States, and wants to see me badly !

Her defection was a great blow to me, as I loved her so much, and she was a great helper and worker. She has plenty of this world's goods and brains, but like myself, she now and then gets into violent nervous fits. Now, of course, there is good excuse for her age, none for me. She wants to come by the end of June. I, of course, want her to come earlier. So I wrote to her just now. If possible, I will wait in some quiet country place. But I will come to Detroit anyhow.

With all love,
VIVEKANANDA.

8. A line from this letter has been published in the *Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, Mayavati : Advaita Ashrama (hereafter *Complete Works*), VI, p. 433. It has been wrongly addressed to Nivedita, who was then in New York in the Swami's company. The letter has been reproduced here in full.

Vedanta Society,
102 East 58th Street,
New York,
27th June 1900.

Dear Christina,

This is my plan just now. I will have to remain in New York a few days yet to see my books through. I am going to publish another edition of *Karma Yoga* and the London lectures in a book form. Miss Waldo is editing them, and Mr. Leggett will publish.

Then I think if I am to remain in this country a few weeks more, it is better that you get a rest and change. Newport⁹ is a celebrated seaside place—four hours from New York. I am invited there. I will go there this week, and as promised I find quiet and retirement and freedom. I will try to find a place for you and wire you as soon as found.

I am sure, in Detroit you cannot have rest. A little change of place and quiet from time to time is a great factor in renewing one's vigour.

Well, if you think that you would have better rest and quiet in Detroit, drop a line and I come. It is only seventeen hours from New York to Detroit, and I am quite strong to undertake it. I am free to go already; only I really want you to take a good long rest for some weeks at least.

Don't be afraid of expenses. Mother has amply provided that and will provide so long I am unselfish.

Think all the pros and cons, and write at your earliest convenience.

I am going to Newport anyway just to see what it looks like. I will write you all about as soon as I am there.

Ever yours in the Lord,
VIVEKANANDA.

39¹⁰

The Vedanta Society,
New York,
102 East 58th Street,
2nd July 1900.

Dear Christina,

Your last letter had a note of vexation. It is quite natural, but on my part the delay has its excuses. Arriving here I found the Society nearly broken to pieces—they had all quarrelled. That had all to be patched up.

Then came a gift of land in California; and suddenly as I was getting ready to start last week, it so happened that the way opened for Turiyananda

9. Newport is a fashionable seaside resort on Narragansett River in Rhode Island. Dr. Kate Stanton alias Brahmacharini Shāntikāma, a disciple of Swami Abhedananda, belonged to this place. Most probably, it was she who invited Swamiji to visit the town for taking rest.

10. A sentence or two from this letter have been published in the *Complete Works*, VI, 1972, p. 433, wrongly in the name of 'Nivedita'. The letter has been printed here in full for the convenience of the readers.

to go to California. He goes today or tomorrow. I am trying to go with them [Swami Turiyananda and Miss Minnie Boock] as far as Detroit,¹¹ but Mother knows, as I always say.

You pray to Mother. It is hard work to be a leader. One must crush all his own self under the feet of the community. Anyway, I am coming as soon as I can. Do not worry. I am getting strong every day.

Yours truly,
VIVEKANANDA.

PS—We¹² have a house all to ourselves here now. The first floor for lectures, basement for cooking and dining, the second we live, the third we rent.

Two of our old friends are in charge of the cooking etc. We pay them four dollars a week. Abhedananda wants me to invite you to come and live here, as he does not want me to leave New York just now. But I do not think that plan very good, though I am ready to stand all the expenses. It is best for all that I come to Detroit. I am coming as soon as Mother allows me. Don't worry, everything depends on Her.

40

Laquebot
A Bord le [On Board the] *La Champagne*,
Friday morning, 9 a. m.,
3rd August 1900.

Dear Christina,

It is foggy this morning. We are in the channel—expect to reach at 12 noon. It has been a very bad voyage¹³—rolling and raining and dark nearly all the time. Terrible rolling all through. Only last night I had good sleep. On other occasions the rolling makes me sleep well, but this time I don't know what was the matter; the mind was so whirling. Anyway I am well, and soon to reach land.

Hope to reach Paris this evening.

I send this to Detroit expecting you there.

With all love and blessings,
VIVEKANANDA.

41¹⁴

Paris,
28th August 1900.

Dear Christine,

Just this hour got your letter, for which relief many thanks. I have been a bit nervous about you.

11. Next day (July 3, 1900) Swamiji confirmed his visit to Detroit by sending a telegram to Christina, which read: 'Started reach tomorrow Wednesday 2 p.m. come station.'

12. Due to the efforts of Swami Abhedananda, the Vedanta Society of New York had its own house at 102 East 58th Street, New York.

13. Swamiji left New York for Paris on July 26, 1900. Now he was on his way there.

14. Between August 3 and 28, 1900, Swamiji wrote three letters to Christina from Paris

So you are now in Detroit, after enjoying your visit to Miss Waldo, and with your shoulders to the wheel again!! Such is life, grind, grind. And yet, what else are we to do? Grind, grind! Something will come—some way will be opened. If it does not—as it won't probably ever—then, then, what then? All our efforts are only to stave off the great climax—for a season—death! Oh, what would the world be without you death! Thou great healer! The world as it is, is not real, is not eternal, thank the Lord!!

What can the future be—any better?—pish! That must be an effect of this one—at least like this, if not worse!! Dreams! oh, dreams. Dream on Christina. Dream, the magic of dream! is the cause of this life—it is also the remedy. Dream, dream on—dream! Kill dream by dream! What news have I? No news; I cannot get out of the clutches of the old! 'News, old news', that is all. I am trying to learn French. Talking to the big bugs here. Some are very appreciative already—to talk. Talk to all the world of the eternal riddle—the eternal spool of fate, whose thread-end no one finds and every one seems to find, at least to his own satisfaction; at least for a time—to fool himself a moment, is it? Well now, great things are to be done. Who cares for great things? Why not do small things as well? One is as good as the other. The greatness of little things, that is what the *Gita* teaches; bless the old book!!

'The past buried and the future burned.' Is that the only way out? Seems to be. I had not much time to think of the body. So it must be well. Nothing is ever well here. We forget them at times, and that is being well and doing well. I am strong and happy at times. Only myself and misery have been such long friends—I can [can't?] keep it long off my sight. It is all will, going on.

We play our parts here—good or bad. When the dream is finished—we have left the stage, we will have a hearty laugh at all this. Of this only I am sure.

Ever yours in the Lord,
VIVEKANANDA.

42

6 Place des Etats Unis,
Paris,
15th September 1900.

Dear Christina,

Your letter was very reassuring. I am so glad this summer did you good. So you did not get enamoured of New York City.

Well, I am getting enarmoured of Paris. I now am living with a M. Jules Bois, a French savant, who has been a student and admirer of my works.

He talks very little English; in consequence, I have to trot out my jargon

dt. August 14, 14 and 23. As these letters have been already published in the *Prabuddha Bharata* of March 1977 (pp. 92, 93), they have not been reproduced here.

Some excerpts from this letter of August 28, 1900, have been published in the *Complete Works*, VI, pp. 435-36, addressed to 'Nivedita' by mistake. The letter has been published here in full to restore the link.

French and am succeeding well he says. I can now understand if people talk slowly.

Day after tomorrow I go to Bretagne [Brittany] where our American friends are enjoying the sea breeze and the massage [?].

I go with M. Bois for a short visit; *après cet* [after that] I don't know where I go. I am getting quite Frenchy, *connaissez-vous* [do you know]? I am also studying *grammaire* [grammar] and hard at work. [Sentence torn off.] In a few months I hope to be Frenchy, but by that time I will forget it by staying in England.

I am strong, well and content—no morbidity.

Au revoir [Good-bye].
VIVEKANANDA.

43¹⁵

The Math, Belur, Howrah Dist.,
Bengal, India,
19th December 1900.

Dear Christina,

...I meant to take rest in India a few months, and then next summer—to England once more. Nivedita is not in yet; I hope she will arrive soon.

I am getting on somehow with my travels and rests. Things are not so bad as I expected.

With all love,
VIVEKANANDA.

44

The Math, Belur,
Howrah Dist., Bengal,
4th April 1901.

Dear Christine,

The subsequent proceedings¹⁶ have been so much interesting, and the interest has been growing so rapidly of late, that one could scarcely utter a word.

I am glad to learn of Mrs. Bull's sweet letter to you; she is an angel. You are peaceful and happy—good. I am growing towards it too.

I am *en route* to Chandranath on pilgrimage.

I have been anxiously awaiting a letter from you, and it seemed it would never come.

15. Between September 15 and December 19, 1900, three letters of Swamiji's, written to Sister Christine are available, of which the English translation of a French letter of October 14, has been published in the *Complete Works*, VIII, 1971, pp. 537-39; and the photostats of the other two have been published in the April and March 1977 issues of the *Prabuddha Bharata*.

A large part of this letter dt. 19 December 1900 has been published in the *Complete Works*, VI, p. 440, wrongly addressed to 'Nivedita'. The last two paragraphs of the letter read as printed here.

16. What exactly the 'subsequent proceedings' were, is not known, as no communication between Swamiji and Christine during the first quarter of 1901, is available to us. The Swami was now on pilgrimage to East Bengal, with a large party, and he was too busy to write to anybody during this period. He might be referring to this.

I am sure to be happy—can't help thinking so. After so 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?

Margot is doing splendid work in England with Mrs. Bull's backing. Things¹⁷ are going on nicely.

I am sleeping better and the general health is not bad.

With everlasting love and blessings,
VIVEKANANDA.

PS—Please enquire of Miss Waldo about the publication of *Karma* and *Jnana Yogas* and write.

45

The Math, Belur,
Howrah Dist., Bengal,
13th May 1901.

Dear Christine,

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.

I have beautiful letters from everywhere this morning and am quite happy. I paid a long visit of two months to Assam and different parts of Eastern Bengal. For combined mountain and water scenery this part of the country is unrivalled.

Either I am to go to Europe this summer and thence to the U.S., or you come over to India—things are all getting ready to that end. Mother knows Her ways. For one thing I am calm, very calm, and hope to keep a hold on this state for a long time ; and you are my best help to keep this poise ; are not you? I will write more in my next ; just now these few lines—and a hundred pardons I beg for their scantiness. Yet silence tells more sometimes than all the speech in the world.

With all love and blessings,

Ever yours in the Lord,
VIVEKANANDA.

¹⁷. Sister Nivedita.

NOTES AND COMMENTS

Teachings of Sri Ramakrishna: In this instalment a parable of Sri Ramakrishna regarding 'Fishwives and Their Baskets' has been freely translated from the Sanskrit version published in the *Vidyodaya*, 1896 (*āṣāḍha*, pp. 144-47). This version differs from that printed in the *Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* by 'M' (trans. Swami Nikhilananda, Madras, Sri Ramakrishna Math, 1974, pp. 386, 1009-10). It is not known whether the Sanskrit version is according to what Swami Ramakrishnananda heard from the Master, or whether it is a highly coloured version by the Editor, *Vidyodaya*. Anyway, it will be no doubt interesting for the readers. The Sanskrit verse, of course, was composed by Swami Ramakrishnananda.

On Happiness—II (Editorial): In the

last instalment of the Editorial various concepts regarding happiness according to different Indian thinkers, and some related topics were discussed. In this part, some concepts according to the Western psychologists based upon their modern researches have been placed before the readers, along with subjects like: 'The Experience of Men Regarding Worldly Happiness', and 'Where Is the Source of Happiness?' Regarding worldly happiness, Swami Vivekananda has said: It is derogatory to the glory of man that he should be going after pain, and equally derogatory that he should be going after pleasure. Both should be turned aside by men whose reason is balanced.' Wise men all over the world shun worldly happiness, and seek the Divine Bliss within, at the source.

First Meetings With Sri Ramakrishna—Swami Adbhutananda: After a gap of little more than a year, we are again presenting the readers this popular series by Swami Prabhananda, Secretary, Ramakrishna Mission Vidyapith, Vivekananda Nagar, Purulia, Bihar. The Swami has been suffering from eye trouble, which deprived him of much reading and writing. But we hope from the plenty of treasure which he has accumulated as a result of his painstaking research work, the readers will be able to get some sparkling gems from time to time. In this paper the author very lucidly narrates the 'First Meetings With Sri Ramakrishna of Swami Adbhutananda', who is known to the devotees of the Ramakrishna Order as Latu Maharaj. About him Swami Vivekananda has said, 'Latu is the greatest miracle of Sri Ramakrishna. Having absolutely no education, he attained to the highest wisdom simply at the touch of the Master.' Hope our readers will find this article interesting and elevating.

A Reminiscence of Swami Turiyananda: The late Swami Prabhavananda, the ex-Minister in charge of the Vedanta Society

of Southern California, Hollywood, U.S.A., narrates this unforgettable reminiscence of his life in connection with Swami Turiyananda, a direct disciple of Sri Ramakrishna. Hereby he tells us that the greatness of great men is reflected in all their actions, howsoever significant or insignificant they may be. The incident narrated in the reminiscence speaks of the magnanimous heart of Swami Turiyananda.

Dynamic Message of Swami Vivekananda: Srimat Swami Gambhiranandaji Maharaj, the General Secretary of the Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, delivered this speech on the occasion of the Unveiling Ceremony of Swami Vivekananda's statue at the Vivekananda Polyclinic of the Ramakrishna Mission Sevashrama, Lucknow. In this speech, the General Secretary has told us in brief about the 'Dynamic Message of Swami Vivekananda'. He said: 'He [Swami Vivekananda] wanted the combination of the intellect of Shankaracharya and the heart of Buddha; and here, in Vivekananda, we have this intellect and this heart combined. Here is this combined message. Here is this dynamic message. Here are the new paths opened out for you by Swami Vivekananda.' Hope readers will find this speech inspiring and illuminating.

Ramakrishna's Naren and Naren's Ramakrishna—II: The Ultimate Reality, according to Vedanta, is transcendent as well as immanent; and the realization of the Reality in both these aspects is the realization in full. Sri Ramakrishna trained his beloved disciple Naren in this spirit of Vedanta, and made him realize the Reality in both aspects. The Master had brought his disciple down to carry out the mission of his Avatarhood, and for that it was necessary for Naren to be more conscious of his mission on earth, than merging in Nirvikalpa Samadhi, to which his mind was naturally prone. For this purpose the Master gave

Naren all his powers and became 'a fakir'. 'Thus', the author rightly says, 'Vivekananda is the new Self-manifestation of Sri Ramakrishna himself. Vivekananda was not only a disciple but the Master's self-revelation.' Hope our readers are finding this series thought-provoking and elevating.

Early Days at Shanti Ashrama—VI: In the last instalment of the article it was seen that Swami Turiyananda 'ended the first and happiest period' of his work at Shanti Ashrama and left for San Francisco sometime in the third week of January 1901, leaving behind eight hardy souls. Although the Swami was working in San Francisco, Oakland and Alameda, his heart was in Shanti Ashrama with his 'truly dedicated students'. He always longed to return to the

Retreat, but perhaps the Mother wished otherwise. After working for about two months in Northern California the Swami went to Los Angeles by boat on March 24, 1901, 'to take charge of the Class there'. He returned to the Ashrama in early spring, and was welcomed there by his four devoted students who had stayed there throughout winter. Gradually other students arrived there to take advantage of the Swami's holy company. The story thereafter is narrated in this instalment.

We are happy to receive some appreciative remarks about this article.

Unpublished Letters of Swami Vivekananda—VII: In this issue the unpublished letters of Swami Vivekananda written to Sister Christine from June 1900 to May 1901 are being published.

REVIEWS AND NOTICES

PHILOSOPHY—THEORY AND PRACTICE: EDITED BY DR. T. M. P. MAHADEVAN, Publishers: The Centre for Advanced Study in Philosophy, University of Madras, 1974, pp. xi+652, Price: Rs. 45/-.

The title contains the Proceedings of the International Seminar on World Philosophy at Madras University from December 7 to 17, 1970. It includes forty-three papers and deliberations of forty-five participants, roughly half of them coming outside India. Most of the papers have usually two commentators, one Indian and the other a foreigner. Towards the end of the volume the Editor himself has reviewed certain aspects of a number of papers and has also added his own reflections.

Barring a few exceptions (for instance, the paper of Professor N. V. Banerjee of Delhi on 'Some Thoughts on the Problem of Peace') the majority of the papers stick to the theme of the Seminar, that is to say, Philosophy—Theory and Practice. Attempts have been made to analyse key-terms like 'theory', 'practice' and 'philosophy'. The Greek term '*theoria*' and '*praxis*' indicate the difference between speculation and action, analogous to the spectator and actor in a drama (cf. Dr. Margaret Chatterjee of Delhi, 'The Concept of Action: An Attempt at Analysis of a Key Term'). In his paper 'Philosophy Is Not Theory' Professor G. M. C. Sprung of Brock University

(Canada) maintains that philosophy is concerned with truth only; it is the source of both theory and practice, without being either. Whether philosophy is concerned with truth or anything else, there is a general agreement amongst the participants that philosophy is not merely theory; it involves practice as well. In fact theory and practice can't be divorced from each other.

As far as the problem of defining philosophy is concerned, there is very little agreement. Philosophy can be anything that a philosopher chooses to do, say or think. Thus Professor Eliot Deutsch of Hawaii (in his paper 'Philosophy and Freedom of Consciousness') would say that it is insight reflected upon with discipline; its purpose is to achieve insight and understanding for the sake of greater freedom of consciousness. In conformation with the pan-Indian stand, the late Professor S. K. Saksena (see his paper 'Philosophical Theories and Practice') would call philosophy a spiritual endeavour of the whole of man's being. Dr. Sibajiban Bhattacharya of Burdwan has taken philosophy to be self-realization. Philosophy, according to him, is the art of living a tranquil and serene life—it is a skill to be acquired by prolonged training and rigorous practice. Dr. Daya Krishna of Jaipur begins his paper 'Philosophy—Influence of Theory on Practice' with the well-known Marxist thesis that philosophy had tried to interpret the world while

the task was to change it. He feels that philosophy is the most creative enterprise in the cognitive activity of man, and along with the arts it is the most fundamental factor in the shaping of human reality itself. The remarks of Professor Daya Krishna regarding the role of media of expression in the philosophical world are quite valuable. He notes that English-speaking India was unable to produce much in the realm of philosophy, whereas Japan has made a distinct contribution. According to him, one reason for this phenomenon is that most of the Japanese philosophers in modern times (for example: Nishida, Tanabe, Watsuji and others) write in their native language, whereas most of the modern Indian philosophers don't (and Dr. Daya Krishna also falls in the same line). It is a fact that the band of English-knowing philosophers in modern India underrate and sometimes ridicule those who do not speak or write in English and are not called 'modern'. In this context it is interesting to note the contents of a short article on contemporary Indian philosophy (*Dārsanika Traimāsika* [Qtrly], July 1976) Sri Yashadeo Shalya therein notes that several recent titles on the subject have tried to establish that only senior teachers holding commanding positions in the departments of philosophy in Indian Universities are contemporary Indian philosophers or thinkers (two such attempts have been made by Dr. Devaraja and Mrs. Margaret Chatterjee). This is being done on the European pattern but is certainly harmful to the cause of Indian philosophy. The organizers of this Seminar also cannot be spared of such charges, since mostly the senior position-holders in the philosophical scene of India (English-knowing, of course) were invited to participate. The discussion in Sanskrit under the section *Vākyaṛtha*, as announced by the Director of the Centre, must have taken place. But the readers of the volume under review are deprived of the same. This is a serious oversight on the part of the Editor of the Proceedings.

Several papers of the collection relate to areas like philosophy of religion, philosophy of history, philosophy of science, mysticism, etc. In his paper 'Philosophy, Religion and Human Unity' John Hick of Birmingham makes an attempt to explore the bearing of work in the philosophy of religion upon the developing relations between different religious communities. The 'one-world' situation has created a new task for religious philosophers (here John Hick has not made distinction between a philosopher of religion and a religious philosopher) to formulate, not denominational theologies, but human theologies (*mānuṣer*

dharma, in the words of Tagore), which are global in their use of the religious data. Dr. Herbert Herring (of Max Müller Bhavan, Madras), in his paper 'Philosophy of History: Its Scope and Its Limits' reviews the theories of philosophy of history from Hegel on, and shows the difference between the dogmatic (or metaphysical) and the critical (or analytical) philosophy of history. His preference, obviously, is for the latter. Dr. Andre Mercier of Berne, in his paper 'Science as Theory and Praxis: A Main Subject-Matter of Contemporary Philosophy' has pointed out that philosophy of science builds a main part of contemporary philosophy. The role that was played earlier by religion, church, politics, state, etc. successively, is now assigned to science which is shaping (or deshaping?), to a great extent, the growth of humanity. Dr. Louis Gardet of Toulouse, France, discusses the relationship between philosophy and mysticism in his paper 'The Relationship Between Philosophy and Mysticism in Western and Muslim Thought'. By 'philosophy' he means all the efforts of speculation by the light of the human reason, and by 'mysticism' the fruitive experience of an (the) Absolute. He delineates therein three types of relationship between philosophy and mysticism. In the first type the specificity of mystical experience is not recognized. Positivism, Marxism, Hegelian idealism, phenomenology of Husserl and Existential philosophies do not recognize any relation with mysticism. In the second type the two are united in a state of non-distinction, at least in regard to their finalities. Plotinus, Avicenna, Eckhart, Sankara, Heidegger and others, could be taken to be the representatives of such approach. The third type of relation permits hierarchical distinction that is evident most clearly in the Christian concept of the Creator and the creature; where God, because of his graceful nature, transforms the human into a mode that is both human and divine. The philosophy of being as expounded by Jacques Maritain (see his *Quatre Essais sur l'Esprit dans sa Condition Charnelle*) comes closest to this view.

The last paper of this collection, 'Theory and Practice in the University' by Dr. J. F. Staal of California is interesting till the end. Examining several functions of the Universities—for example, pure function (knowledge for its own sake), service function (a service-station for the government and the corporations), critical function (independent and critical organ of humanity), leadership function (intellectual and moral leadership)—he comes to the point of internationalization of

Universities so that the future of science and mankind be saved. Incidentally, the U.N.O. has taken up the task of establishing such Universities, and one is being set up in Tokyo.

The printers of the volume have tried to present it neatly. But, apart from minor typographical errors, in the case of Dr. D. P. Chattopadhyaya the mistakes are biting. His name has invariably been mis-spelt as Debaprasad (instead of Debiprasad), and the Director of the Seminar has introduced him to the readers of the volume (if not to the learned assembly, during the Seminar) as Reader in Philosophy at Jabalpur University, Calcutta. It should be noted that the sister-University in Calcutta, where Dr.

Chattopadhyaya served, is Yadavpur (and not Jabalpur).

The publication of the volume under review makes the deliberations of the Madras International Seminar accessible to the common readers. The moderate price of the book permits even a middle-class pocket to have a personal copy of it. The title is undoubtedly a distinct contribution to contemporary philosophical literature.

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NEWS AND REPORTS

THE RAMAKRISHNA VEDANTA CENTRE

BOURNE END, ENGLAND

REPORT : 1976—JUNE 1977

Established in 1948, the Centre is directed by Swami Bhavyananda, assisted by Swami Tripurananda, at Unity House, Blind Lane, Bourne End, Buckinghamshire, England.

During the period Swami Bhavyananda held regular Sunday services which consisted of a brief period of meditation followed by a discourse. The theme of these discourses throughout 1976 was the *Katha Upanishad*, and in 1977 individual subjects were presented. The evening worship in the Shrine followed, attended by many devotees. Occasional Sundays were set aside for the Swami to answer questions. On Wednesday evenings during the period Swami Tripurananda held classes on the *Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* and on *Inana Yoga* as taught by Swami Vivekananda. A number of visiting speakers gave talks on subjects relating to their own disciplines, and a musical recital and several religious film shows were also included in the programme. The birthday anniversaries of Sri Ramakrishna, Holy Mother, Swami Vivekananda, Buddha and Jesus were celebrated, and also Durga Puja.

In addition to the regular discourses and private interviews, the Swami-in-charge accepted invitations to visit various schools, colleges and religious studies departments of Universities, as well as those from private groups and yoga societies at home and abroad.

There has been a continuing interest in the provision of retreat facilities. In addition to the sixth annual retreat of one week, held at an independent retreat centre in May 1976 by Swami Bhavyananda and Swami Ritajananda of Gretz, France, a group of twelve lay members were privileged to spend a week in retreat at Sarada

Kutir, the Centre's small retreat house in Devonshire. On this and other occasions when small gatherings of devotees were held at the Kutir, it was necessary to accommodate all but a few fortunate male members in local boarding houses.

Book sales have continued to rise and book selling and distribution together with the publication of the bi-monthly magazine *Vedanta for East and West* have formed an important part of the activities.

Towards the end of 1976 the Board of Management decided to seek a single site on which the expanding activities of the Centre could be more effectively conducted. The town house in London and the country cottage in Devonshire were sold and on June 1, 1977, the Centre moved to a spacious house with about eight acres of garden in a Thames-side village, at Unity House, previously owned by the Unity School of Christianity. The house can be reached from the centre of London within an hour by car, and there are satisfactory public transport facilities. In addition to the improved accommodation for monastic members, the building is suitable for division into separate monastic and lay sections, with a separate house for families.

Many members and friends have helped to make the move go smoothly, and already a six-day retreat has been held for a small group of ten people. The Swami will hold two Sunday discourses per month in London at the headquarters of the World Congress of Faiths, and discourses on the remaining Sundays at the Centre. There are plans to hold periodic retreats for small groups. Friends will also be able to make individual retreats. Those members associated with the project are convinced that Sri Ramakrishna has chosen for himself a home fit for the next phase of his work.