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CONTENTS

Teachings of Sri Ramakrishna	161
The World : An Open Prison —Editorial	162
In the Company of God —Swami Asaktananda	168
The Great Lie—II —Swami Ashokananda	174
The Parliament of Religions—1893 Some New Findings —Swami Balaramananda	180
Human Trends : Human Development in India and the Problems of Our Working Class—II —Swami Ranganathananda	184
Unpublished Letters of Swami Vivekananda—VIII	193
Romain Rolland to Mme Emma Calvé (A Letter)	195
Notes and Comments	195
Reviews and Notices	197
News and Reports	198

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No. 4

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

TEACHINGS OF SRI RAMAKRISHNA *

श्रीरामकृष्णोपदेशावलि: ।*

SWAMI · RAMAKRISHNANANDA

चित्ते मायापरिच्छिन्ने विभुर्नैव विकाशते ।
रूपं मलसमाच्छन्ने दर्पणे किं प्रकाशते ॥१॥

1 In the mind veiled by māyā, the Reality does not manifest. Is ever the face reflected in a mirror covered with dust?

यथा घनघटाकाशे सूर्यमावृत्य तिष्ठति ।
महामाया तथैवेह विभुमावृत्य वर्तते ॥२॥
मायायां विगतायान्तु विभुः सर्वत्र भाव्यते ।
जलदेस्पगते सूर्यो यथा सर्वत्र दीप्यते ॥३॥

2 & 3. Just as the sun remains covered in the sky darkened with rain clouds, similarly Mahāmāyā covers the Reality here (in the Jīva); and as after the clearing of the clouds the sun shines everywhere; in the same way, after the disappearance of māyā, the Reality becomes manifest in everything.

तरङ्गसंकुलेऽम्भोधौ चन्द्रबिम्बानि खण्डशः ।
खेलन्तीव यथा चन्द्रं संविभज्य सहस्रशः ॥४॥
तथा सुचञ्चले चित्ते संसाराबद्धचेतसां ।
पवित्रेऽपि ब्रह्मभावाः क्षणमायान्ति यान्ति च ॥५॥

4 & 5. As in a boisterous sea the moon appears to be broken into thousands of pieces as if dancing, so in the turbulent mind bound to the world, even in moments of purity, the reflection of Reality appears and disappears in an instant.

* See *Vidyodaya* (a Sanskrit monthly), Bhātpāra: The Oriental Nobility Institute, September-October (Bhādra), 1896, pp. 193-99. The Sanskrit rendering is by Swami Ramakrishnananda, a direct disciple of Sri Ramakrishna. The English translation is ours.

THE WORLD : AN OPEN PRISON

(EDITORIAL)

A prison gives the idea of a place where convicts are kept confined in fetters either to await trial or to undergo punishment for their crimes. Generally they are kept hand-cuffed in cells under lock and key, except, it is said, in Arabia, where they are tied to the posts under the roof of the sky to suffer from heat and cold. The jailors often take the inmates out for getting some work done through them, under the vigilance of the guards, but they are in no way free to act according to their will. At times they are let out under probation or parole, but are expected to return behind the bars sooner or later. Although, according to some students of penology, 'the prison is a relatively recent invention' dating some '300 years', the history of mankind will prove that the idea is at least as old as the birth of Lord Srī Kṛṣṇa who chose to be born in Kamsa's prison. It may be admitted, however, that day by day reformatory developments are taking place in the penal systems and penal practices of the advanced nations, and the prisoners are being treated more like human beings than like animals. Countries like the United States have revolutionized their penal system so much, that out of 'nearly 1,300,000 offenders', the police department is keeping more than half the number on probation or parole under supervision in the free community. This system has a twofold advantage : In the first place if the criminals move about freely in the society, there is a chance of their easier rehabilitation ; and secondly, it is less expensive too. Even in India, penal practices are becoming so humane these days that, a police officer told us, a criminal who has chosen criminality as the blessed goal of life, wants to re-enter the jail no sooner than he is let out of it. A prison has, as it were, become

his home for life. Some offenders are known to us who, while undergoing punishment, lived in the lock-up, and after being released, had their den in the same jail compound. Such criminals become so much accustomed to crime that they never feel even in dream that they are doing anything wrong which is not befitting a human being.

But why unnecessarily blame these poor fellows who have chosen criminality as their cherished goal and the prison-house as their permanent abode? According to Vedanta, all mortals are sailing in the same boat. They too are chronic offenders and have chosen wrongdoing as their precious ideal and the world-prison as their permanent home. All men are offenders in the Vedantic sense, and there is a Vedantic test for proving this.

The Vedantic Test

Once upon a time, there was a test prevalent in Indian society to detect offenders : After arresting the suspect, the police would ask him to hold a red-hot axe, and if his hand burnt, he would be proved a criminal and put to death. On the other hand, if the person were innocent, his hand would not burn, and thus proved, he would be freed.¹ the sage Ārunī told this example

1. Similar ordeals were in practice until recent times in many parts of Asia and Africa. In the early Middle ages it was widely used in settlement of legal questions in Western Europe, especially by the Germans. It was in vogue in England as well, as a regular form of trial, and it continued there till the jury system was adopted by them. There were numerous forms of ordeals depending upon the nature of the crime ; for instance : walking through fire, putting the hand into a flame, walking on hot plowshares, plunging the hand into molten metal

to his swollen-headed son Śvetaketu, while explaining to him the nature of the Reality. He said :

My dear, they [i.e. the police] bring a man whom they have seized by the hand, and say, 'He has taken something, he has committed a theft.' [When he denies it, they say :] 'Heat the axe for him.' If he has committed a theft [but denies it], then he makes himself a liar. Being *false-minded*, he covers himself with falsehood, grasps *the heated axe* and *is burnt*. Then *he is killed*. But if he did not commit the theft, then he makes himself what he really is. Being *true-minded*, he covers himself with truth, *grasps the heated axe*, and *is not burnt*. *He is released*. As that [truthful] man is not burnt [so also one who has known Sat is not born again]. Thus in That [Sat] all that exists has its self. That is the Truth. That is the Self. That thou art, O Śvetaketu.^{1a}

As is their wont, veteran culprits never confess their crimes, and pose as innocent. That is why in modern times there are lie detectors, and in those days there was the hot-axe text for detecting them. But Vedanta believes in the 'old is gold' policy, and prefers the hot-axe method for detecting criminals in the Vedantic sense. The life in this world is their hot axe, and if an ignorant person (*mithyā-abhisandha*—one who takes this false world as real) holds it, he suffers from burns (the threefold misery); and if a wise man (*satya-abhisandha*—one who has realized that Brahman alone is real and world false) comes in its contact, he does not suffer from *burns* (misery) and is liberated. Because according to Vedanta: 'Brahman alone is real and the world illusory; the Jīva is none else but Brahman; there is no multiplicity anywhere—*Brahma satyaṁ jagan mithyā; jīvo brah-*

maiva nāparaḥ; neha nānāsti kiñcana.' And one who has realized this Truth, is free from worldly fetters and is immortal. About such wise men it is said in the *Gītā*: 'He whose mind is not shaken by adversity, who does not hanker after happiness, who has become free from affection, fear and wrath, is indeed the Muni of steady wisdom. . . . That calm man who is the same in pain and pleasure, whom these cannot disturb, alone is able, O great amongst men, to attain to immortality. . . . [He] is not moved even by heavy sorrow.'²

On the other hand, regarding the man of the world, Vedanta says: 'He who identifies himself with the objective universe which has been denied by hundreds of Śrutis, Smṛtis and reasonings, experiences misery after misery, like a thief, for he does something forbidden.'³ Not only is such a person burnt by the threefold misery of this world, but, according to Vedanta, 'He who sees as though there were multiplicity in this world, goes from death to death.'⁴ That is, he is born again and again.

In the light of this Vedantic test, it is for everyone to judge for himself whether this hot axe of worldly life burns him or not; and if the answer is yes, then in the Vedantic sense 'he is an offender—*stena eva saḥ*'. Millions and millions of such offenders are moving about in the open prison of this world, not wishing in the least, like those jail-birds spoken of before, to be freed from it. They too have chosen this world for good as their blessed abode and worldly happiness as their cherished goal of life. And God's penal system and penal practices are so superior in every respect to those of the human beings that everyone gets the due punishment or reward according to His unmistaking Law of Karma.

or hot water, and so on. Usually it was considered that 'if the accused was innocent, God would spare him.'

^{1a}. *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*, VI. xvi. 1-3.

². *Śrīmad-Bhagavad-Gītā*, (hereafter *Gītā*), II. 56. 15; VI 22.

³. Acārya Śankara's *Vivekacūḍāmaṇi*, 331.

⁴. *Katha Upaniṣad*, II. i. 10.

His is an all-pervading court, an all-pervading vigilance, and an all-pervading prison. The culprit may go to the moon or to Venus, His all-pervading hand can catch hold of his neck. Unwilling to get out, men thus suffer in this world-prison birth after birth.

There are, however, some fortunate souls in every age who, being tormented by the burns, wish to get out of this prison. Such aspirants approach the realized souls who are ever ready to help the escapers, and pray to them : 'Save me from death, afflicted as I am by the unquenchable fire of this world-forest, and shaken violently by the winds of an untoward lot, terrified and [so] seeking refuge in thee, for I do not know of any other man with whom to seek shelter.'⁵ It is really surprising that although people suffer so much in this world, there are very few who feel the burns and the bondage. One amongst thousands becomes aware of it, and out of these rare souls hardly do a few make an attempt to break the prison walls. The reason why men, intelligent though, cannot feel the bonds is that they are very subtle. It is, therefore, meet that something be told here about them :

The Fetters :

According to Vedanta, ignorance (*ajñāna* or *avidyā*) is the main fetter which binds living beings to this world. From this fundamental bondage results the formidable bond of desire (*kāma*), which is expressed in infinite forms. In the *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad*⁶ this multiform fetter of desire is termed *viśvarūpa-eka-pāśa*, which has been explained by Ācārya Śaṅkara in his commentary as '*nānārūpa ekaḥ kāmākhyah pāśah*—one multiform fetter known as desire'. Desire (*kāma*) expressed in various

ways makes a man perform good or bad actions (*karma*), for which living beings have to either suffer burns in this world, or get some enjoyment in reward. The Conscious Intelligent Force called God, 'the bestower of the fruits of actions—*karma-phala-dātā*', manages this task more efficiently than any legal system in the world.

Although action (*karma*) and desire (*kāma*) are due to ignorance (*ajñāna*), all these three powers serve individually and collectively as fetters. That is why the Vedantists say : 'A man is said to be in bondage because he is bound by the fetter of ignorance—*ajñāna-pāśa-baddhatvāt amuktaḥ puruṣah smṛtaḥ*.'⁷ And we have seen above that some call desire itself a fetter (*kāmākhyah pāśah*). There are others who say that good or bad 'actions [*karma*] bind a man, and knowledge releases him—*Karmaṇā baddhyate jantuh, vidyayā ca vimucyate*.'⁸

Even though some Vedantists recognize ignorance, desire and action as separate bonds, actually they are not so; because actions depend upon desire and desire in turn depends upon ignorance. That is why Ācārya Śaṅkara calls the combination of these three forces a bond. He refers to it as '*avidyā-kāma-karmādi-pāśa-bandham*—the bondage caused by the fetter of ignorance, desire, action and the like.'⁹ So the difference is only in the emphasis, and not in the principle. Just as a thick rope may be made up of numerous fine threads and fibres, in the same way the bondage of living beings may be composed of infinite forms of expression of these three forces. From this point of view Lord Kṛṣṇa says in the *Gītā* that men are 'bound by a hundred ties of hope—*āśā-pāśa-śataiḥ baddhāh*.'¹⁰

5. *Vivekacūḍāmaṇi*, 36.

6. See Ācārya Śaṅkara's commentary on the *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad*, (hereafter *Śv. Up.*), 1. 4, with Hindi translation, Gorakpur: Gīta Press, 3rd edition, [hereafter Gita Press], p. 95).

7. *Śv. Up.*, Introduction; (Gīta Press, p. 23).

8. *Ibid.*, (Gīta Press, p. 22).

9. *Vivekacūḍāmaṇi*, 55.

10. *Gītā*, XVI. 12.

Ignorance (*avidyā*) is composed of three *guṇas*—*sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*—, and gives rise to three types of desires and three types of actions in turn, which bind a man. In Sanskrit *guṇa* means a rope; therefore, these three forces combined make a strong tricoloured rope for binding living beings to the world. That is why the Vedantists say: 'When one is bound by these fetters, he is called a *Jīva—pāśa-baddhastathā jīvah*; and when one is free from bondage, one is *Sadāśiva—pāśa-muktaḥ sadāśivah*.'¹¹

Ignorance (*ajñāna*) is also called in Vedanta '*mithyā-pratyaya*—the false experience' or the false vision of life. It is this false vision or world realism, which gives rise to varied desires in man. These numerous expressions of desire have been classified by the *ṛṣis* into fifty offshoots—'*pañcāśata-pratyaya-bhedāḥ*', which are nothing but fifty different kinds of fetters. In his commentary on the *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad*¹² Ācārya Śaṅkara gives a vivid description of these fifty offshoots while explaining the term '*śatārdhāram*'. There they have been called 'fifty spokes' of the wheel of the world—*Brahmacakra*. In the *Kalpopanīṣad* of the *Brāhma Purāṇa* (chapter 60) the fifty offshoots have been described as 'fifty formidable forces—*pañcāśat-śakti-rūpiṇaḥ*'.¹³ A man has been chained down to the earth by these powerful bonds. Although a detailed description of these fifty forces may sound rather ancient and scholastic, it will help a spiritual aspirant a great deal if he knows about the fetters.

The Fifty Bonds:

The fifty bonds as described by Ācārya Śaṅkara in his commentary on the *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad* (I. 4) comprise: the five misconceptions (*viparyayas*), twenty-eight dis-

abilities (*aśaktis*), nine inversions of satisfaction (*tuṣṭis*), and eight inversions of perfection (*siddhis*). These forces function differently in different persons, and all of them may not function in any one man.

I. *The Five Misconceptions*: The five misconceptions (*viparyayas*) are *tamas*, *moha*, *mahāmoha*, *tāmisra*, and *andha-tāmisra*. *Tamas* means the identification felt by an individual with the eight kinds of Prakṛti,¹⁴ i.e. with the world as such. *Moha* here means the infatuation of an individual to attain the eight occult powers (*aṣṭasiddhis*). It may also mean craving for any kind of supernatural power. *Mahāmoha* means the deep infatuation of a person for objects of the five senses available in this world (*dr̥ṣṭa*), and in the heavens (*ānuśravikā*) about which he has heard so much. For those who do not believe in the heavens, it may mean the melodies 'unheard' which 'are sweeter' still. Every man has a fascination for such a sweetness, but he does not know, it is a fetter. *Tāmisra*: When a man fails to get these seen and unseen sense-objects for enjoyment, he loses his temper, which in turn clouds his mind. This clouded state of one's mind is known as *tāmisra*. It is a fetter. *Andha-tāmisra*: After toiling for a long time a person may get an object of his love, but hardly has he enjoyed it a little, he becomes invalid and can't enjoy it. This inability to enjoy torments his heart very much and darkens his mind. This clouding of the mind out of deep anguish is called the *andha-tāmisra*. These five kinds of misconception function in every individual to some extent and bind him down.

II. *The Nine Inversions of Satisfaction*: The nine inversions of satisfaction (*tuṣṭis*) make a person feel that he has attained the goal he was panting for, and now there is nothing to worry about. They remain

11. *Skandopanīṣad*, 7; also *Kulārṇava Tantra*, 9U.

12. See *Śv. Up.*, I. 4; (Gita Press, pp. 88-93).

13. See *Śv. Up.*, I. 4; (Gita Press, p. 93).

14. See *Gītā*, VII. 4.

quite contented in the world as if it were heaven, never feeling that they are in bondage. Such attitude of theirs further intensifies their ignorance, and ties them fast to the world. The nine inversions of satisfaction are : (1) *Prakṛti-parijñāna* : All intellectuals—worldly as well as religious—come under this category. They have a thirst for knowledge—arts, sciences and philosophies—, and when they get it, they remain satisfied, as if they have attained their cherished goal. They hardly know that their knowledge is nothing but a fetter. (2) *Upādāna* : Some spiritual aspirants are very keen about their spiritual progress to start with, but once they get the monk's robes, they are never seen meditating. They are under the impression that by taking the monk's vows they have attained the supreme goal. This attitude of theirs serves as a fetter, because it prevents them from struggling for Liberation. (3) *Kāla* : Some scholars feel that they have mastered the scriptures, what is the necessity of taking the monk's vows? The scriptures say that everyone will attain Liberation when the proper time comes—'*banata banata bana jāi*' ; '*kāle hobe re, kāle hobe!*' So I am bound to be liberated sooner or later, why should I struggle? This attitude binds the poor fellow to the world. (4) *Bhāgya* : Some aspirants struggle hard in the beginning, and when they do not see any positive result in their lives, they become despondent and think : 'Why should I struggle so hard? Freedom (*mukṭi*) depends upon ones stars, and if they are not favourable, howsoever one may struggle, nothing is going to happen! So take life easy. Such an attitude makes his enthusiasm tepid and he gradually loses whatever merit he has earned, and remains a bound soul.

Besides these, there are five more types of contentment (*tustis*) based upon false dispassion : (5) At times people run after the objects of enjoyment putting their heart and

soul into them, and when they fail in their attempt they think : 'Oh, the nature of the world is like a mirage ; howsoever one may run after it, it recedes.' Thus thinking they remain contented with whatever titbits they get in this world as a result of their karma, but never do they struggle for Liberation. Such an attitude is a fetter. (6) There are others who think that even if one becomes successful in getting the desired objects, it is very difficult to preserve and keep them in good tune. With this thought they remain contented, hardly knowing that this type of satisfaction is a bondage. (7) There are some who succeed in obtaining the desired objects and are able to maintain them as well, but when they get blows through their enjoyment, they become fed up. As a result, they always see faults in the objects, so much so that it becomes the philosophy of their life. Such people neither enjoy the world nor do they struggle for freedom. Their philosophy acts as a fetter. Due to callousness even some spiritual aspirants also may develop such a philosophy of life and leave the spiritual struggle. But it should be known that it is a binding chain. (8) There are some who think : 'The objects stimulate a desire for enjoyment in man, but he is never satisfied in spite of their repeated enjoyment even till death.' With this knowledge they leave the objects, sit in a corner and croak ; but never do they struggle to come out of the world-prison. That is why such a croaking contentment is a chain. (9) Some noble-minded souls have the philosophy of life that if they struggle to get better objects for their enjoyment, others will be deprived of them, and this will mean *himsā*—causing harm to others. *Himsā* will lead in turn to hell and suffering. (Oh, what a lofty philosophy indeed ! !) With this knowledge they remain satisfied with whatever coarse enjoyments they get ; but never make an effort to break through the prison-wall. Needless to say, this pseudo-noble philosophy of theirs is an iron chain.

III. *The Eight Inversions of Perfection* : Besides those mentioned above, there are other bonds in the form of the eight inversions of perfection—*aṣṭasiddhis*. There are always some men in the world, who want to attain supernatural powers, and that becomes the sole aim of their lives, not Liberation. But they hardly know that the occult powers will bind them tightly to this world, and cause burns and death. The eight inversions of perfection are : (1) *Uha* : Some prodigious souls know many things since their childhood without being taught by anyone. They can talk high philosophy and deliver learned lectures without any preparation or education. In the long run such men become proud of their learning, and this pride in turn becomes a fetter. (2) *Śabda* : There are others who learn a thing no sooner than they hear it. They do not need any extra study to memorize the subject. This power acts as a binding chain for them. (3) *Adhyātma* : But there are some men who become masters of any art or science only after studying it. The pride of learning is their bond. (4 to 6) *Duḥkha-vighāta* : There are three kinds of misery in the world, namely, the *ādhyātmika*—those pertaining to the body and mind, such as pain and anguish ; the *ādhidāivika*—those coming from divine visitations or scourges of Nature, such as cyclone and earthquakes ; and the *ādhibhautika*—those due to other creatures. And there are some heroes who can bear without grumbling the least any kind of hardship or misery of these three types. This power of endurance (*titikṣā*) results in knowledge which makes them all the more powerful. But sorry to say, this is a fetter. *Duḥkha-vighāta* is of three types depending upon the three types of misery. (7) *Suhrd-siddhi* : There are some whose brains do not play if they are alone, but when they are surrounded by their friends (*suhrds*) wonderful knowledge flows from their mouths, and in due course they pose

as teachers. This pride of teachership (*gurugiri*) is a bond. (8) *Dāna* : In those good old days, pupils used to bring some gifts for the teacher who in return would give knowledge. Perhaps the more the gifts, the more the knowledge, which could make the pupils proud. Or there are some people who have a sort of mania for charity, so much so that their charity becomes a fetter, as they take pleasure in charity and never struggle for Release.

IV. *The twenty-eight Disabilities (aśaktis)* : Life in the world is never perfect. Some people are born blind, some lame, some dumb, some deaf, some mad and so on. Besides, some are always on the lowest rung of the ladder in society without any power, position, name, etc. In such circumstances individuals feel their disability so much that they always brood over it. This results in intensifying the sense of reality of the world in them, and serves as a fetter. According to Vedānta, there are twenty-eight types of disabilities (*aśaktis*) which can prick one's conscience like a thorn and make one miserable. The first category comprises the external disabilities of the eleven organs—five organs of knowledge, five of action and the mind—depending upon the defect in or absence of them in man. For instance : if a man loses his feet by polio, he feels the deficiency at every moment ; and in addition, if his friends tease him, it develops into a sore of his heart. Such a person can never think of Liberation, if he does not leave brooding on his deficiency. Thus is he bound. Besides these, the non-attainment of the nine inversions of satisfaction (*tuṣṭis*), and the eight inversions of perfection (*siddhis*), constitute the internal disabilities. Constant brooding on these develops into a bond.

From this description of the fifty bonds, one can find for himself where he stands.

In the *Kulārṇava Tantra* (*Ku.T.*, 13) men are said to have been bound by eight fetters

(*aṣṭapāśas*), namely, the sense of : aversion (*ghrṇā*), shame (*lajjā*), fear (*bhaya*) ; doubt (*śaṅkā*), hidden craving of the heart (*jugupsā*) ; the pride of : family (*kula*), character (*śīla*) and caste or class (*jāti*). But on critical analysis it will be revealed that these eight reactions of the mind have their root in the basic ignorance (*ajñāna*).

In the *Vivekacūḍāmaṇi*, Ācārya Śaṅkara sums up the bonds into three. He says : 'Owing to the desire to run after society, the passion for too much study of the scriptures and the desire to keep the body in good trim, people cannot attain to proper Realization. For one who seeks deliverance from the prison of this world, those three desires have been designated by the wise as strong iron fetters to shackle one's feet. He who is free from them truly attains to Liberation.'¹⁵

Sri Ramakrishna classifies men in the world into four categories according to their respective conditions. They are the bound (*baddhas*), those struggling for Liberation (*mumukṣus*), the Liberated (*muktas*) and the ever-free (*nityamuktas*). Sri Ramakrishna says :

A fisherman cast his net into the river and had a large haul. Some fish lay in the net calm and motionless, not exert-

15. *Vivekacūḍāmaṇi*, 271-72.

ing in the least to go out of it. Others struggled and jumped but could not extricate themselves, while a third class of fish somehow managed to force their way out of the net. In the world, men too are thus of three kinds—those who are bound and never strive to be free, those who are bound but struggle for freedom, and those who have already attained freedom.'¹⁶

Needless to say, the fourth category of people, the *nityamuktas*, are never caught in the net. On another occasion, Sri Ramakrishna has said, 'The fettered ones are never awakened. How sorrows assail them, how frauds deceive them, and how dangers threaten them! Yet they do not 'wake up', . . . The man of the world suffers so much, yet in a few days he forgets everything.'¹⁷ Such is the fate of the fettered ones—to grind and grind eternally in this prison-house of the Lord. It is because : so subtle and betwitching are the bonds, so efficient His penal system, so faultless His judgment, and so open His prison—this world ! Glory unto Him !

With all this knowledge in view, it is left to every thoughtful inmate whether to remain contented with the life of a jail-bird, or to struggle for Liberation.

16. *Sayings of Sri Ramakrishna*, Madras : Sri Ramakrishna Math, 1971, saying No. 35, p. 35.

17. *Ibid.*, saying No. 207, p. 80.

IN THE COMPANY OF GOD

SWAMI ASAKTANANDA

Sometimes a cliché—time-worn expression—is more adequate than well-chosen words ; it 'hits the spot', so to speak. For instance, I am sure you are all familiar with the cliché : A man is known by the company he keeps. But have you ever thought of it in connection with God? A

man or woman who has found the real Self, the bliss and serenity of the Truth, walks hand-in-hand with God ; in other words, such a person is in the company of God.

Let us discover what being in the company of God really means. The great saint-

seer and philosopher, Acharya Shankara once said, 'Rare is the combination of three things: 1) the body of a human being; 2) a desire for liberation; and 3) the protecting care of a holy man.'¹ Of course, we all know the meaning of the words 'human being', 'liberation', and 'the company of holy men'. But do we know them just as words, or do we truly understand them, and apply them in our lives? Let us search for the meaning of these words.

According to the Jews and Moham-medans, God created man after creating the angels and everything else. After creating man God asked the angels to salute him. They all obeyed, except Iblis; therefore God cursed Iblis, and he became Satan. What does this allegory teach us? It tells us that this human birth is the greatest birth we can have.

The Hindus believe that we obtained this human body after many births. The Bengali word for a human being is, Mānuṣ. The Bengali folk would often impart meaning by splitting the word; so, Mān+Huś. Those who have Mān, which means honour, pride, dignity or divinity; and Huś, which means consciousness, are Mānus. That is to say, a real man (Mānuṣ) is one who is truly a dignified divine being, and who is proud to feel that he is a devotee of God.

We have taken many births, perhaps as animals or even plants; and it is due to some karma that we have assumed this body of a human being. Why? The Hindus believe, one obtains the human form in order to know God; in other words, to obtain liberation. The general belief is that animals' bodies are Bhogashariras, which means, these are bodies for enjoying the fruit of bad or good karma. The human body is given to us for performing karma in this world, which is also called Karma Bhumi—a place for doing karma. What karma? and where does it lead us? It is karma

which is good and selfless and which leads us to a knowledge of the Divine.

Man, after coming into this world, does various things—he experiences many pleasant and unpleasant things; still he is not satisfied. He wants more and more pleasure, love, satisfaction, and freedom from death and misery. He has searched for the ultimate Reality from the very beginning of his existence. Then he discovers that fulfilment is not in death, but in everlasting life; eventually, like a flower opening to the warmth of the sun, man reaches for the ultimate: the Supreme Being whose nature is Sat-Chit-Ananda—Existence-Consciousness-Bliss Absolute. Where did man find that Supreme Being? In Heaven? Somewhere in the sky? Of course, wherever you imagine your idea of Heaven to be, there is God. And in the sky—dawn or dusk, storm or calm—there too is God. But man knew there was more to his search than this. He completed the circle, and returned to the point from which he started—the human soul. And there he found the God whom he was searching—in Heaven and sky, temple and church, hill and dale—closer than he had ever imagined, in his own Self.

We are indeed blessed to have this human body. It gives us the opportunity to worship God in any form or image, and better still, to recognize God in the living man. We may build hundreds of temples, churches, mosques, synagogues; but none will be worthwhile unless we find the real home of God within the human heart. Swamiji once said, 'The only God to worship is the human soul in the human body. Of course, all animals are temples too, but man is the highest....'²

But the thought may occur, 'If the human body is a temple of God, why do human beings behave at times like wild brutes?' Yes, our daily newspapers are evidence of

1. *Vivekacūdāmani*, 3.

2. *The Message of Vivekananda*, Mayavati : Advaita Ashrama, 1962, p. 34.

this brutish nature of man. And surely it must be that man does not realize the Being who is the embodiment of love and compassion, of purity and knowledge, hidden deep in his core.

And so, the second of the three rare qualities we discussed earlier is man's desire to discover this Reality in him: 'Mumukshutva', the desire for liberation. We hear the word 'liberation' quite often these days. But what does it mean in connection with our soul? It means freedom from the bondage of good and evil, freedom from birth and death—becoming immortal. And how do we achieve this liberation? By realizing the Divinity, God.

Now we come to the third rare element in human beings, 'Mahapurushasamshraya'—seeking the company of holy men. Why should we seek such company? What could it do for us? Let us find the answers:

The scriptures, like the Upanishads, the Bible, the Koran, the Tripitaka, etc. have one purpose—to impart spiritual knowledge, the knowledge of God, the opposite to secular knowledge; and to bring love, peace, harmony and liberation to human beings. But even if we chant hundreds of passages from all these scriptures, of what use will it be if we do not strive to understand the underlying meaning they offer, if we are not able to reflect their teachings in our lives? Now, unless there are people who have realized the truth through the scriptures, and who live by this truth, nobody would believe in the value of the teachings offered by the scriptures.

Therefore, we must look to holy men in whose life the truths of the scriptures have been revealed. They are men who have verified the truth of the scriptures, who have had personal experience. They are men who have known God, who have seen God; yes, men who have talked to God. And through such men, spiritual knowledge is attainable. Therefore, there is a great necessity for the

company of holy men. No matter which subject we choose to study, as a child or as a man, we all know the need for a teacher to guide us; and in order to understand the subtle teachings of the scriptures, we need a holy man to lead us.

Jesus Christ, said, 'I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.'³ In the Hindu scriptures also we find this statement: '*Devo bhūtvā devān apyeti*—One attains the gods by transforming oneself into a God.'⁴ One has to become God to attain God. The physical, mental, intellectual and spiritual states must be brought to a certain height of perfection, the epitome of perfection, which is God.

Let us split our theme of thought into two groups, and define them: 1) being in the company of God, and 2) how we can be in the company of God.

1. *Being in the Company of God:*

If God is our constant companion, we cannot hate any living creature. The man who truly lives in the warm security of the Lord can only reflect compassion and love for his neighbour. To him the whole world is kith and kin; such a man sees beyond the world's trivial bigotry regarding colour, caste, creed or nationality. He has freed himself from the delusion of 'I' and 'mine'. The man who is in the company of God has mastered self-control; he forgives without knowing why or how; his very presence glows with contentment; pain and pleasure he treats equally with composure. Such a man keeps his mind constantly attached to one thought, that of the Lord. He has dedicated his body, mind and intellect to the Lord. A man who walks with God knows no jealousy, envy, anxiety or fear; he is an upright man. He may love without worldly attachment, serene in the Divine Presence

3. John 14:6.

4. *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*, IV.i.2.

therefore he is free from birth and death—he becomes immortal.

A picture of this is painted in a story found in the Jewish teaching:

Rabbi Moshe of Sambor, the younger brother of Rabbi Zevi Hirsh, spent much time as a youth, trading with village peasants. When he returned from these visits for afternoon prayer, he said that he felt as if his whole body were lit up by a great light. He tells the story himself in this way: 'I once asked my brother and teacher, "Why is it that sometimes, when I have been travelling on business and come home to pray, I feel illuminated—almost as though the Divine Presence had come to me?" And my brother answered in his usual clear, direct way, "Why should you be surprised at that? When a traveller walks in the way of God—whether he knows it or not—all the holy sparks, which cling to the herbs of the field and the trees of the forest, rush forth and attach themselves to such a man; and this illuminates him with a great light."'

In the teachings of Mohammed, the prophet of Islam, we find that God speaks of the man in His company, the man He loves: 'I am his hearing by which he heareth; I am his sight by which he seeth; I am his hands by which he holdeth; and I am his feet by which he walketh.'⁵ And throughout the teachings of Lord Jesus Christ, we find Him always in the company of God. He knew nothing but God; He preached nothing but God; He was one with God. Jesus Christ said: 'If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not. But if I do, though ye believe me not, believe the works: that ye may know, and believe, that the Father is in me, and I in Him.'⁶

5. *The Sayings of Muhammad*, trans. and ed. Allama Sir Abdullah Almamun Al-Suhrawardy, Calcutta: Sir Hassan Suhrawardy, 1938, No. 397.

6. John 10:37-38.

Also, in the Buddhist scripture, *Dhammapada*, we learn how a man can become really happy, how he may light up the world around him with knowledge, purity and love. It says:

Tranquil in body, speech,
and mind, O Man,
Who so, in every way,
is well restrained,
Who all the world's desires
hath thrown aside,
He, is the 'Tranquil' called.
Rouse then the Self by the self,
by self examine Self:
Thus guarded by the Self,
and with thy mind
Intent and watchful, thus O Man,
Thou shalt live happily. . . .
Lo, ye! A man, though young
he be, that strives
To grasp the teaching
of the Awakened One,
Lights up the world, as,
from a cloud released,
The moon lights up the night.⁷

Our Indian scriptures and history are filled with wonderful stories of the lives of God-intoxicated men and women.

2. *How We Can Be in the Company of God:*

So far we have discussed the joy, liberation and peace to be found in the company of God. Now, let us think of how to achieve this bliss.

When we are thirsty, we automatically respond to the urge created by the thirst, and quench it by drinking water. Thus, we feel refreshed. Similarly, when we want to be in the company of God, we must thirst for Him—we must feel a tremendous urge to be in His company. So, first and above all we must hunger and thirst for

7. *Dhammapada*, 378-79, 382.

God. Of course, you may say: 'How can one develop a thirst? When I am not thirsty, I am not thirsty.' All right, but there is a way to develop a thirst for God. We start by telling our mind to be watchful, to discriminate. We look at the world with open eyes, and see people running after health, wealth, wife, husband, children and fame: and even those who have achieved the realization of all their dreams are still unhappy. Perhaps, for a moment they find happiness, like a child with a new toy. But there is no abiding joy in earthly pleasures. As soon as a plateau of achievement is reached, a new desire is born, like fire which spreads with the pouring of oil. The desire to have a vision of God—to be in the company of God—comes from a tremendous dissatisfaction with the temporary pleasures of the world.

So, we must have a desire for the vision of God, a desire for the realization of God. Along with this, one must have faith; and with faith, one has to find a chosen ideal. Once this has been done, we must apply concentrated effort to follow spiritual disciplines step by step. Earnest seekers will, I believe, learn the steps through the grace of God, and through a spiritual teacher who will guide them. We all know it is not easy to replace old habits with new; thus, the step-by-step progress in spiritual practice can be very difficult. Years may pass, leaving us on the first step; but there is a remedy. Men of realization tell us to practise harder and harder, to pray sincerely for God's mercy; and God replies by helping us to climb one more step.

The path is slippery and dangerously sharp, like the edge of a razor, say the great Upanishadic seers. It is easy to fall, to come down a few steps if the lamp of discrimination is not constantly burning to guard our foot-steps. Our objective, of course, is to reach the ideal, but we cannot

comprehend or achieve this immediately. Step by step, slowly and steadily is the answer. Also, the name of our chosen ideal, God or deity should be remembered as frequently as possible—as we work, rest or pray. To worship our chosen ideal with flowers or other ritualistic practices will help to develop concentration; as concentration grows, so does joy and peace. Repeat the name of the Lord more and more; thus, the body and mind become purer. 'Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.'⁸ The first stirring of desire to know God can be cultivated if we treat it like the tender shoot of a plant—tend it daily, water it with love and effort.

If we watch our mind, our mind will help us to progress towards our goal. 'Mind is the cause of bondage and liberation,' says the scripture. So the mind has to be trained. The seers warn us that, to begin with, this can mean a great struggle—it will require much patience. We know that the mind is most susceptible to suggestions, but we must not condemn its tricky ways too much; we have to take a positive direction and go forward, but by neglecting its tricky ways. However, to prepare the mind for the company of God, we must offer counter-suggestions—constant thoughts of God, chanting the name of the Lord. Through discrimination the mind has to suggest to itself the everlasting joy of the spiritual life—the eternal companionship with the Godhead. Then the mind will accept this suggestion. Then and only then will it become transformed from an instrument of bondage to one of liberation. After a little regular practice, we find that the mind is not completely delinquent; like a child who thinks his parent could just possibly be right, it stops its tantrums and says, 'All right, I'm listening.' And that is the time when we must suggest good

⁸. Matthew 5:8.

thoughts and ideas. With further practice, we may find the mind has become a gentle haven—a place of love, peace and purity.

To purify and steady the mind, to calm all cravings, one has to find solitude where one can contemplate and meditate. If we can give the mind the spiritual food it needs, we may be able to pluck the fruit in this life. The mind fed with spiritual food yields fruit in the form of peace and tranquility. Sri Ramakrishna used to say that the Lord reveals Himself to His devotee, if he thinks of nothing but God. This urge comes by chanting His name, by crying to see Him in a secluded place.

However, he did not advocate giving up the world, the family, friends. He would say: be in the world, but be not of the world. Remain in the world as a maid-servant in the house of a rich man. She does all the household work, but in her heart she knows very well that nothing belongs to her. So, in this world, in your family, you are doing your duties to your household, wife, husband or children as a servant of God, who is your Lord. You do your duty in this manner because you know that everything, including yourself, belongs to the Lord. Practice of this discipline permits us to work in this world with joy and perfection, yet remain unattached. Sri Ramakrishna would say, 'The tortoise lays eggs on the bank of the river; even though she searches for food in the water, her mind remains on the eggs.'⁹ Similarly, one has to perform all duties, and at the same time keep the mind engaged in God.

In the *Bhagavad-Gita*, Sri Krishna says:

Because they love me
These are my bondsmen
And I shall save them
From mortal sorrow

9. See 'M', *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, trans. Swami Nikhilananda, Madras: Sri Ramakrishna Math, 1974, p. 6.

And all the waves
Of Life's deathly ocean.
Be absorbed in me,
Lodge your mind in me:
Thus you shall dwell in me,
Do not doubt it,
Here and hereafter.¹⁰

And let us remember the beautiful words of Jesus Christ: 'But ye know Him; for He dwelleth within you....I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you. Yet a little while, and the world seeth me no more; but ye see me: because I live; ye shall live also... Ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you.'¹¹

And so, there is no end to spiritual life. There is no end to the pleasure of being in the company of God. Although a little growth, a little progress is a beginning in the right direction, we should not allow ourselves to remain satisfied with it. We should ask, 'Have I seen God? Am I in the company of God? Has He been merciful to hold me in His arms?' When the bell for evening vespers used to ring at the Dakshineswar Kali Temple, Sri Ramakrishna would climb to the terrace of a house, and cry loudly, 'O Mother, another day has gone and I have not seen you!' Therefore, let us struggle hard, for the rewards will be great. We have to cry for devotion to Him, for His company.

So let us all pray to the Lord to make us His most beloved devotees, His most beloved companions. Let us be known by the company we keep, reflecting the love, purity and joy of Brahman. Together, let us cry to the Lord in these words.

Ah, how I long for the day
When an instant's separation
from thee,

10. *The Song of God: Bhagavad-Gita*, trans. Swami Prabhavananda and Christopher Isherwood, New York: The New American Library, 1954, (hereafter *Gita*), p. 98.

11. John 14:17-20.

Oh my Lord,
 Will be as a thousand years,
 When my heart burns away
 with its desire
 And the world, without thee,
 Is a heartless void.¹²

¹². *Prayers and Meditation*, ed. Swami Prabhav-

Let us take refuge in the Lord, who promises to his devotees: 'Give me your whole heart, love and adore me, worship me always, bow to me only, and you shall find me: This is my promise who love you dearly.'¹³

ananda and Clive Johnson, Hollywood: Vedanta Press, 1967, p. 94.

¹³. *Gita*, p. 129.

THE GREAT LIE*—II

A LECTURE BY SWAMI ASHOKANANDA

2

In a lecture in San Francisco entitled 'Is Vedanta the Future Religion?' Swami Vivekananda said that it may take thousands of years before Vedanta becomes the religion of mankind. 'The old superstitions must run out,'⁴ he said. Yes, people will have to give up many superstitions. It is a superstition that I think I have a body; it is a superstition that I think I have to appear on this platform at eleven o'clock and hold forth. It is a superstition that I think there are people who do not know about the truths of Vedanta and that I have to explain these things to them. That is a superstition because it is false. The plain fact of the matter is that everyone knows everything, because everyone is really this infinite Brahman. The idea that I have to talk and others have to listen—that is sheer superstition; yet we do not recognize it as such; we behave as if it were true. We do not want to analyse it and discover its hollowness. All superstitions are like this; inside

there is no truth, no substance, no reality. Outside we have put a coating of honour and importance around them: we give them our respect, and that is why they go on tyrannizing over us. And then there is that stubbornness of the mind of which I spoke. Although I know it is a superstition for me to lecture to you, still I don't know; thinking, I don't think. Well, maybe one day I shall know a little more, and at eleven o'clock I won't come here. I shall suddenly find the whole thing is absolutely meaningless.

Everybody does find that out sooner or later, doesn't he? That is why he dies. Death is not something that happens because some organs have disintegrated or some such thing has taken place. It is, rather, the other way around. Gradually a sense grows in this limited being that life is not worth it. And then gradually the organs of the body on which this so-called life depends begin to give way, and the person breathes his last: his heart and lungs no longer want to function. *He* has given the direction. It is the thought that builds the body; it is the thought that holds the body; it is the thought that lets the body go. That is the fact. Whether we know it or not, we take leave of this stage; we have lectured enough.

* © Vedanta Society of Northern California, San Francisco, U.S.A.

⁴. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, Mayavati: Advaita Ashrama, (hereafter *Complete Works*), VIII, 1971, p. 139.

Of course, you probably do not lecture on Vedanta, but you have had a family to lecture to. When you were a youngster, you lectured your mother; then later you lectured your friends; then you lectured your children. And then you find the whole thing is meaningless, and you go away. That is called death. We have always known that fact in India.

There is a tradition that one should try to keep the minds of great teachers on a comparatively low level. People try not to let their minds go too high; they will laugh, and joke and try to hold their interest—just to keep them in this business. In all traditions you find that great teachers have had to be kept cheerful and merry on this lower level; if their minds remain on a much higher level, they just flit away. They are through with this world—this superstition.

Now here, again, comes this practical fact: whether they accept the philosophy of the unreality of the world or not, all great teachers know and have said that this world has no validity, that there is no method about it. Some people will tell you, 'No, there are laws: things are graded according to these laws; you are tied to them, and you have to go from grade to grade.' Don't you ever believe it! Everything comes according to the measure of your courage. If you are courageous, the highest is in the palm of your hand—now, here and now, in full measure. If you are not courageous, even if the greatest treasure were thrust upon you, you would not dare to look at it and receive it. Everything depends upon your courage.

All great teachers have tried to awaken this courage in man; that has been their greatest teaching. Christ said, 'Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.' That is the same as saying 'God is everywhere; here is Brahman.' Buddha said, 'Enter ye; the portal of Nirvana is open.' Again, he pointed out that there is an ocean of infinite

peace and light, now and here; all you have to do is plunge into it. That is the greatest message they all gave. It is the same message the Monists give in simple, direct, straightforward language when they say, 'You are Brahman. All is Brahman. All is Divinity, which is the infinite Being, infinite Joy, infinite Truth. Each one of you is that now and always. It is not to be attained; it is here and now, within you and outside of you. Do not seek it; just see it! Open your eyes and see it, and it is yours.' That is the great truth.

It is said that when Swami Vivekananda lectured many people of his audience would verge upon a state of Samadhi. Some would actually go into that state; their minds would become absolutely quiet and they would perceive this truth. He once said, 'Do you think I lecture? I do not lecture, I give.' And many have borne testimony—I have heard it from their own lips—that listening to him discourse on the nature of Brahman and the Self they would forget this manifold world; they would feel the one Being everywhere.

My friends, go on investigating within yourself—can you find any limit to yourself? Teachers of Vedanta tell you to imagine yourself as divested of everything you can throw off. I surely can imagine that I am not the body; after all, the body will one day leave me, will it not? So in imagination I think this body is gone. And when the body is gone, then age is gone, sex is gone, hunger, thirst, sleep, the necessity of a house, of occupying a certain area in space—all are gone. Just see the consequences of thinking that this body could not be my true nature! Now, why should you not think that way? How long would you hang on to this body—'a rag, a bone, and a hank of hair'? How long should we hang on to this skeleton and this flesh? No! It is not ourselves, and we do not want to say it is ourselves. So we just forget it.

And when we forget it, we also forget many other things. In knowing myself as the body I say: I am a man; you are a woman. I am old; you are young. I am weak, I am sick; I have to have food, I must earn money, I must have a house, I must have clothes, I must have all kinds of things. Without the body you would find the whole world changed overnight.

Further, when we forget the body, we give up much of our mental activity. Consider how many of your thoughts proceed from the consciousness that you are a body and are perceiving other forms through your senses. Study your dictionary, you will be surprised to see that ninety per cent of the words that indicate conditions or functions of the mind have originated because you have thought yourself to be physical and have perceived other beings as physical. In other words, when you give up this persistent fiction that you are a body, you also give up a great deal of your thought, and your mind quiets down.

I may say that when you reach that state to an appreciable degree your mind really doesn't want to think of external things any more; you have found they are unreal. It is then that you begin to have a glimpse of the world as two-dimensional, like a picture. You know how we say of some beautiful scene, 'Oh, it looks just like a picture!' And when we look at a picture we say, 'Oh, it looks just living;' Why do you think we express our appreciation in these contradictory ways? There is a profound truth in it. When you look at beautiful scenery and say it looks like a picture, what you are trying to say, although you do not know it, is that a higher vision of things—the vision that comes when you are truly yourself—is two-dimensional. As a perceiver of this scenery, you are more yourself, more free; therefore the whole thing is like a picture before you. So we use this expression,

'pretty as a picture!' For the opposite reason we say a picture looks 'almost living'. We think of our own existence as physical, and because we have that obsession, we somehow convert that which is two-dimensional into physical, three-dimensional reality. Some peculiar function of the mind is engaged there. Well, however that may be, when you have reached beyond this peculiar state the mind becomes free, and things are actually picturelike. And just as a picture has no reality or meaning for you beyond being a picture, in the same way, the whole universe loses its meaning.

Then comes another change. Through these infinite picturelike forms, you begin to see that all you have been seeking is beauty. Some people gather beautiful paintings. The subjects may be very different; but all the paintings have one thing in common: each represents beauty in one form or another. In the same way, you find the whole world of forms has significance for you because of its beauty; for that reason it has meaning—no more than that.

Great mystics always have been artists. They may not always be able to transfer their aesthetic sense into verse or onto canvas or into sculpted figures, but they always have a lively sense of the beautiful. Of course, if they happen to have been born with artistic talent, then they become exquisite artists: there is a quality about their work which you don't find in the works of ordinary artists, however excellent their technique might be. These mystics contribute something ineffable. It has to be so, because, you see, they find God to be true, to be good, to be auspicious, and to be beautiful. But, of course, since God is beauty itself—since beauty exists in itself—the mystics do not care for form any more. Their minds go to the very essence of beauty, which is also the essential Being.

Now, when we analyse ourselves in this way, we find that whatever is dependent on our physical senses or on the state of our mind is unreal. Such things do not have to be there; they have not contributed anything; they have only kept us hampered. Whatever we saw in them was borrowed from our own reality, which has very little dependence on anything external—mental or physical. And so we ask, why did this world have to be there?

Then we discover something else: we find that there was no objective compulsion for us to think in terms of this world. As I said earlier, many people will tell you that you have to go through various lower stages before realizing the monistic truth. Well, in a sense that is true; Swami Vivekananda himself accepted it, but he also gave a good answer to it. He said, 'Yes, in order to reach a certain state you have to pass through the intermediate stages. But to pass through a stage doesn't require a certain period of objective time.' It is not that everyone will have to remain in one state for, say, five years. You see, it is generally admitted that there comes a time when your life becomes very fluid, and you can just jump over many intermediate stages. We are now rigid as it were, frozen, and therefore we have lost fluidity of movement. But when you have become purified, when you have become free of the idea that you are physical and have to behave in such and such a way, then you will become unfrozen; rigidity will go from your being, your mind will become fluid and quick, and you will find that you can pass over many intermediate stages with lightning speed. You may say that those stages are passed through, however fast. Yes, but the passage is so quick it is like jumping over many steps without your feet touching them at all. That state comes. Of course, it is a very exquisite condition of the soul; only those who experience it can know it.

In the meantime, you might say that everybody has to pass through the intermediate stages; but to pass through a stage is a process, and like every process it can be quickened. The pace depends on your own eagerness. Say you are asked to read a passage from a book: you slowly pronounce every syllable and stop after every word; then you yawn after every sentence; then you doze after every paragraph; then you wake up, and find you have forgotten where you were reading; so you turn the pages until you come upon that paragraph; and then you read it over again to pick up the train of thought; then you have to go back. . . . You think I am making too much of it? That is exactly what we do in the course of one lifetime and through many lives.

That is why the Hindus cry out: 'O Thou Self-sustained One, save me from the pain of being born again!' So much waste! Only a few years are given to us to achieve something in one lifetime. It takes nearly twenty-five years to make the body fit to remember in a vague way what it gained in the past; then it requires many more years to remember the details. And then, if we have remained free and whole-hearted, we can try to achieve new things. But soon we find our energies are sagging, and we say, 'Let us consolidate what we have gained; we won't try to conquer new territory.' That's one life—just one life. In youth you have a desire for truth, you are idealistic, your mind is a little free; but no, you don't care then; you just forget about it and plunge into things that harden your mind. Then later on you think, 'Maybe I should pursue this truth a little.' But by then your mind has frozen and doesn't obey you any more, doesn't respond. One part of the mind wants to pursue truth, another part is no longer able to carry out the wish. That is the way

things happen here. So much waste! So much waste!

So you must not allow yourself to forget your youthful desire for truth; you must carry on. If you do, you can quickly go ahead: you do not have to repeat the whole thing over and over. The Swami said that if you are wholehearted in your pursuit of truth you really can accelerate your growth. Only you must take care not to do the wrong thing: on the one hand you must not be lazy, and on the other hand you must not stumble in your great hurry. Both are wrong; both are *pramāda*. *Pramāda* is that tendency which causes us to make mistakes. Psychologists say that when a man makes mistakes it is unconsciously intentional; in other words, it is not a mistake. But Vedantists make a distinction between unconsciously intentional 'mistakes' and mistakes made by the conscious man. We say that when the conscious man makes a mistake, it is called *pramāda*. He does not think things through; nor is he careful in every step of the process; somewhere he becomes careless and stumbles; somewhere in the chain of his thought he has made a logical error, somewhere his emotion has gotten away from him. That kind of mistake is *pramāda*, and that is the source of trouble.

If you do not make any such mistake, you can go quickly through different steps, and in a short time you can achieve a great deal. And, as I have pointed out, after you have reached a certain state you do not have to go through every part of the process; you can jump over the intermediate states without touching them. In other words, your progress becomes miraculous. The Theists, knowing about this fact, call it the grace of God, the Monists say that it is the grace of man's essential nature. Actually, there is just one Reality, which I am, which you are, which everything is, which God is, and that is full

of grace, full of miraculous powers, full of truth, full of goodness, all in infinite measure. When that Reality is uncovered to some extent, it begins to shine forth; it flashes with new glory and new power, new revelation. If you think of God, you say that glory is of God; if you think of the Self, you say it is of the Self. And if you are logically minded, you know that both are the same: there is no use quarrelling about language; you can use any language you like.

When you have reached that state, you never identify yourself with the body or the mind. You continually deny the validity of this physical existence and the mental existence that hinges on it. You never accept their reality—not even their partial reality. You recognize that you used to think in an ignorant way only because you chose to do so. There was no earthly, or heavenly, or transcendental reason for having had this kind of thought. 'Thine only is the hand that holds the rope that drags thee on,'⁵ Swami Vivekananda said. I am holding the rope which is binding me down. I just give a little pull and the knot comes undone—free!

Once in San Francisco someone said to Swami Vivekananda, 'Swamiji, the world is like a school, isn't it? We come here to learn.' He said, 'No. Who told you that? You are just tumbling in a circus. You choose to make a fool of yourself, that's all—no earthly reason.' You see, you did not have to learn anything, because you were perfect to begin with. But some people like to join the circus and make fools of themselves. 'Great fun, great fun!' And when they get tired of tumbling they will go away. That is a truer idea. What lesson to learn, my friend, when all wisdom is within yourself? What to gain and what to get rid of when you are the All? Out of this false sense of lack comes all the selfishness,

⁵. *Complete Works*, IV, 1972, p. 394.

all the sense of limitation, all the fear from which we are suffering. This 'great lie' has poisoned our existence through and through. Poisoned our being!

Consider a world, or even part of a world, where people live who have persuaded themselves that they are not the body, not even this mind; they are the Spirit, and they are full of grace. They do not have to fear death, because they are immortal by nature. They do not have to gain anything; therefore they are not ambitious or greedy. Consider a community in which the majority of people are impressed with this thought. What a world it would be!

If you say, 'Well, those who think they are not body won't cook, they won't eat; everything will go to pieces.' Yes, that's a logical conclusion, but, you see, it is not psychologically correct. The mind is much larger than its merely logical functions. You have a spinal column, but is that your whole skeleton? Logic is, as it were, the spine of your mind; it holds the mind in the right direction, but that is not all of the mind. The psychological part of the mind will tell you—logic or no logic—that illumined people still cook and eat; they have houses, they run, laugh, joke; they do all those things—and yet they are free of those things. They do only the minimum; their activity never exceeds a certain reasonable limit. When a great sculptor chisels a beautiful human form in marble, he does neither more nor less than is required by the beauty he wants to express. Illumined people behave in the same way. If they eat, or play, or laugh and joke, they exert themselves only to the extent that their behaviour in no way submerges their inner beauty. They will do everything with the most perfect restraint. When a perfect flower blooms, there is restraint of its colour and form; everything is controlled from within, not from without, and everything is just right. In the same way, the mental and physical life of such a

person becomes beautifully restrained. We are of course speaking here of people who have attained to their own true nature and yet continue to live in the body. Those who do not remain in the body go into the Eternal, and you can no longer see them in this world of time. But those who live here will act as I have described. Consider how wonderful a community of such people would be!

And what prevents us from living that kind of life individually? You would be a greater person than you have ever been—more efficient and respected, more useful and worthwhile. It is all wrong to say that in this world we cannot live the truth. It is more correct to say that we have decided to follow one peculiar form of thinking and do not want to change. We like our own little groove; we do not want to come out of it. If you choose to come out, there is nothing in this world that will stand against you. As a matter of fact, our sages say that although in the primary stage there will be some struggle, afterwards this very world will become a great stimulus for your further spiritual growth. Everything will stimulate you to further spiritual consciousness.

So let us deny this falsehood, friends. Let us tell ourselves the truth at every opportunity. When we look at a person, let us say, 'This is God Himself. This is Spirit and not the body or the mind.' Let us say of ourselves that we are Spirit, not this body, not this mind. And let us not only say these words, let us make them penetrate our actions, our emotions, and our thought. Let us be true both internally and externally; let us be Spirit in everything. You will be surprised to find that wonderful power is coming within you, you will be surprised at your ability to rise higher and higher in the scale of this realization. Everything will become changed for you.

(Concluded)

THE PARLIAMENT OF RELIGIONS—1893 :

SOME NEW FINDINGS*—II

SWAMI BALARAMANANDA

Receptions to the Delegates of the Parliament:

The Parliament of Religions was not merely a dry intellectual show, where every delegate was to pour forth before the audience his digested or undigested intellectual stuff. The delegates were given from time to time warm receptions, not only by the organizers of the Parliament, but also by some prominent citizens of Chicago. So the function as a whole had a heart-warming effect as well, which brought them closer to each other. As a matter of fact, these receptions took place during the days of the Parliament itself; but they were not previously discussed, for the fear of interrupting the proceedings of the main session.

On the evening of September 11, Dr. Barrows gave a reception at the residence of Mr. and Mrs. Bartlett, to all the foreign delegates who had assembled in Chicago to participate in the Parliament of Religions. About this reception, the *Chicago Daily Inter-Ocean* of September 12, wrote :

HUMANITY THE BOND

All Creeds Meet at the Altar of Hospitality

The reception given last night at the residence of Mr. and Mrs. A. C. Bartlett, No. 2720 Prairie Avenue, in honor of the dignitaries visiting the city in connection with the Religious Congress, is without precedent in the history of society.

* As already announced in the asterisked footnote on page 107 of the previous issue, the reports from the Chicago newspapers and other archives partly reproduced in this article with the kind permission of Swami Bhashyananda, the Minister in charge of the Vivekananda Vedanta Society, Chicago, Ill., U.S.A., were collected by the monastic and lay members of the Society. We are thankful to them for their invaluable labour of love.

Never before were there brought together so many representatives of different tongues, creeds and people. . . .

The affair was unique and interesting, and the assemblage which honoured it was the most notable, perhaps, that was ever brought together.

It was 9 o'clock before the guests began to arrive. In the drawing room awaiting them were Mr. and Mrs. Bartlett, Rev. Dr. John Henry Barrows, Mrs. Potter Palmer, Mrs. Henrotin, and Mr. and Mrs. D. B. Heord.

ALL CREEDS REPRESENTED

According as the guests of honor arrived they were introduced to the ladies and gentlemen named above and took their place in line, where the general guests were presented to them. The following were some of the notables present: [In the long list of dignitaries, Swamiji's name is mentioned as: 'Swami Vivekananda, Madras'].

. . .

The house was beautifully decorated for the occasion. Flags of all nations were displayed in the hall and outside, amid electric lights; the cross and crescent of the Orient were seen side by side with the stars and stripes of the United States. . . . The tall and stately form of Bishop Keane was seen beside a swarthy son of the Orient habited in a rich red gown and a gorgeous turban. . . .

A mandolin orchestra concealed behind a screen of palms played a select programme during the reception. Refreshments were served. Among those present were [Here is given a long list of 'Messrs and Mesdames' who were present, besides the delegates]. . . .

This reception will give an idea, how warmly the delegates were received in America at the time of the Parliament.

Next, a grand public reception was given by President C. C. Bonney on the evening of September 12, in the halls of the Art Institute. A brief description of this occasion was published next day in the *Chicago Inter-Ocean* which reads as follows :

RECEPTION TO VISITORS

A fitting close to the work of the Parliament of Religions yesterday was the general reception tendered the foreign visitors in the evening by the officers of the Auxilliary and the General Committee of the religious congresses.

Upward of 1,000 persons, native and foreign, met on the upper floor of the Art Institute and filed past the reception committee. Among them were the majority of the delegates who graced the platform at the opening session, and many of the leading society people of Chicago who are interested in the Congress.

In the main vestibule the visitors were given a cordial welcome by the reception committee. . . . The ladies of Chicago acted gallantly in escorting the brethren from the Far East. . . . Mrs. Wakeman did the needful for the handsome Vivekananda, of India; . . . The remainder of the evening was given to the presentation of the distinguished delegates, who made some of their happiest speeches. . . . Vivi Kananda came next, and he had a happy reception and was very much at home. . . .

Another Chicago paper, the *Tribune*, also reports the account of the reception, and gives an additional information that a dozen short speeches were delivered on this occasion by the delegates of the Parliament. It may be assumed that, basing upon the report quoted above, Swamiji also was one of the speakers.

On Thursday evening, September 14, Mrs. Potter Palmer gave a grand reception to the delegates at the Woman's Building in Jackson Park, Chicago. She made a delightful address of welcome on this occasion, and at her request some delegates spoke on the condition of women in their lands. According to Dr. Barrows' *World's Parliament*, Swamiji was one of the speakers.³⁶ But in the two available newspaper reports we do not get the name of Swamiji amongst the names of the dignitaries present on the occasion. In the programme

³⁶. See J. H. Barrows, *The World's Parliament of Religions*, Chicago: The Parliament Publishing Company, 1893, (for short *World's Parliament*), I, p. 156.

announced in the *Chicago Evening Post* of September 14, prior to the reception, Swamiji's name is mentioned amongst those who would speak on the occasion. It read: 'Address...Saunie Vivekanander'. It may be however assumed that Swamiji was present for the reception.

Next, a delightful reception was accorded to the delegates and other dignitaries on the afternoon of September 16, by Mr. and Mrs. E.W. Blatchford. The account of this reception was published in the leading papers of Chicago. Mr. Eliphalet W. Blatchford was a foremost lead manufacturer, who was prominent in the cultural, educational and religious affairs of Chicago. The report of the reception published in the *Chicago Tribune* of September 17, reads in part:

IN ROBES OF STATE

DELEGATES TO RELIGIOUS PARLIAMENT
BRILLIANTLY FETED

...Mr. and Mrs. E.W. Blatchford, No. 375 La Salle Avenue, gave a large and brilliant reception yesterday afternoon from 5 until 7 o'clock. The rooms were tastefully decorated with branches of roses and pots of palms. In the music room Clarence Dickinson rendered a number of selections upon the grand pipe organ. A large number of representative Chicago people were present, as well as most of the distinguished delegates to the Religious Parliament. These last, in their brilliant robes of state, formed a strong contrast to the sober garb of the remainder of the guests. . . . Of the notables in attendance on the Parliament the following were present: [In this list Swamiji's name is mentioned as 'Mr. Swami Vivekananda', amongst other dignitaries.] . . .

A fairly long report of this reception was published in the *Chicago Sunday Inter-Ocean* of September 17, in which Swamiji's name is mentioned. In addition the paper wrote: 'The affair was utterly devoid of the stiffness and uneasiness which are almost inevitable when any considerable number of strangers are presented to each other for the first time. So very well have the

foreign visitors been taken care of since their arrival in Chicago that they have already ceased to be strangers, in the ordinarily accepted sense of the term. Mr. and Mrs. Blatchford's duty was not so much to give introductions as to help in the renewal of acquaintances already, though very recently, formed.'

From Dr. Barrows' *World's Parliament* we learn that besides Mr. and Mrs. Blatchford, many other prominent persons in Chicago 'extended cordial hospitalities in their homes and churches to the men of the Orient, . . . who were made to feel the warmth, courtesy and pleasure of a true American welcome.'³⁷

Addresses Before the Scientific Section:

Parallel with the main sessions of the Parliament of Religions at the Columbus Hall of the Art Institute, were held in Hall 3 the meetings of the Scientific Section, 'where papers of a more scientific and less popular character were read. These papers were often followed by free conferences over the topics treated.' The *Life* records that Swamiji spoke at the Conferences of the Scientific Section on eight occasions,³⁸ out of which only four have been reported in Dr. Barrows' *World's Parliament*. Merwin-Marie Snell, often mistaken by the Indian newspapers of those days and also by some biographers of Swamiji's life as a lady, was the Chairman of this Section, and a great admirer of Swamiji. The report of Swamiji's first address at the Scientific Section appeared in the *Chicago Daily Inter-Ocean* and *Chicago Herald* of September 23, which read:

In the Scientific Section yesterday morning Swami Vivekananda spoke on 'Orthodox Hinduism'. Hall 3 was crowded to overflowing and

37. *World's Parliament*, I, pp. 156-57.

38. See Eastern and Western Disciples, *The Life of Swami Vivekananda*, Mayavati: Advaita Ashrama, 1965, pp. 309-10.

hundreds of questions were asked by auditors and answered by the great Brahmin Sannyasin with wonderful skill and lucidity. At the close of the session he was thronged with eager questioners who begged him to give a semi-public lecture somewhere on the subject of his religion. He said that he already had the project under consideration.

Address at the Special Session on 'Women in Oriental Religion' :

From an invitation letter, which has recently come to light, it is known that Swamiji and four other speakers delivered addresses at the above mentioned Session. It reads:

THE WORLD'S CONGRESSES OF 1893

...

The Woman's Branch of the Auxiliary
Mrs. Potter Palmer, President
Mrs. Charles Henrotin, Vice-President

Mrs. Potter Palmer and Mrs. Charles Henrotin announced a special session on 'Women in Oriental Religion' to be held Friday, September 22nd, at 3 p.m., in Hall 7 of the Art Institute, Michigan Avenue, foot of Adams Street. The following gentlemen will address the audience:

Hon. Ibrahim Hakky Bey,
H. Dharmapala,
P. C. Mazoomdar,
Swami Vivekananda,
Kinza Ringe Hirai

Clarence E. Young
General Secretary

World's Congress of 1893, Chicago

A report of this Session was published in the *Chicago Daily Inter-Ocean* of September 23, which read in part :

WOMEN OF THE EAST

THEIR PRESENT AND FUTURE CONDITION DISCUSSED AT A SPECIAL SESSION

As many women as could crowd into Hall 7 yesterday afternoon flocked thither to hear something as to the lives of their sisters of the Orient. Mrs. Potter Palmer and Mrs. Charles Henrotin sat upon the platform, surrounded by turbanned representatives of the women of the East. . . .

Swami Vivekananda said : [This address of Swamiji's has been published in the *Complete Works*³⁹].

The same report of Swamiji's speech was published in the *Chicago Daily News*, *Chicago Herald* and *Chicago Record*, of September 23. The invitation letter and the newspaper reports confirm the fact that the address published in the *Complete Works* was delivered at this session on September 22, afternoon. In the light of this definite information the footnote given in the *Complete Works* below this address, needs correction. Hereby, the doubt expressed in her *New Discoveries*⁴⁰ by Marie Louise Burke is also clarified.

A Talk at the Universal Religious Unity Congress :

From the Chicago newspaper reports it is known that Swamiji spoke on September 23 before a session of the Universal Religious Unity Congress, which was one of the Congresses held in conjunction with the Parliament. It appears that the sessions of this Congress took place in Hall 7 of the Art Institute. The report of this programme was published in the *Chicago Sunday Herald* and *Chicago Inter-Ocean* of September 24, and Swamiji's speech quoted in both is the same. The report in the latter reads :

FOR RELIGIOUS UNITY

'Recognizing the unity of interest in the human family we welcome the light from every source and earnestly desire to constantly grow in the knowledge of truth and the spirit of love and to manifest the same in helpful service.' This was the creed that was unofficially adopted yesterday by the Universal Religious Unity Congress. ...

Swami Vivekananda said : [For Swamiji's address quoted here, see *Complete Works*⁴¹].

39. See *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, Mayavati: Advaita Ashrama, (for short *Complete Works*), VIII, 1971, p. 198.

40. See Marie Louise Burke, *Swami Vivekananda in America: New Discoveries*, Mayavati: Advaita Ashrama, 1958, (for short *New Discoveries*), p. 71.

41. See *Complete Works*, VIII, p. 199.

A Lecture at the Unitarian Church :

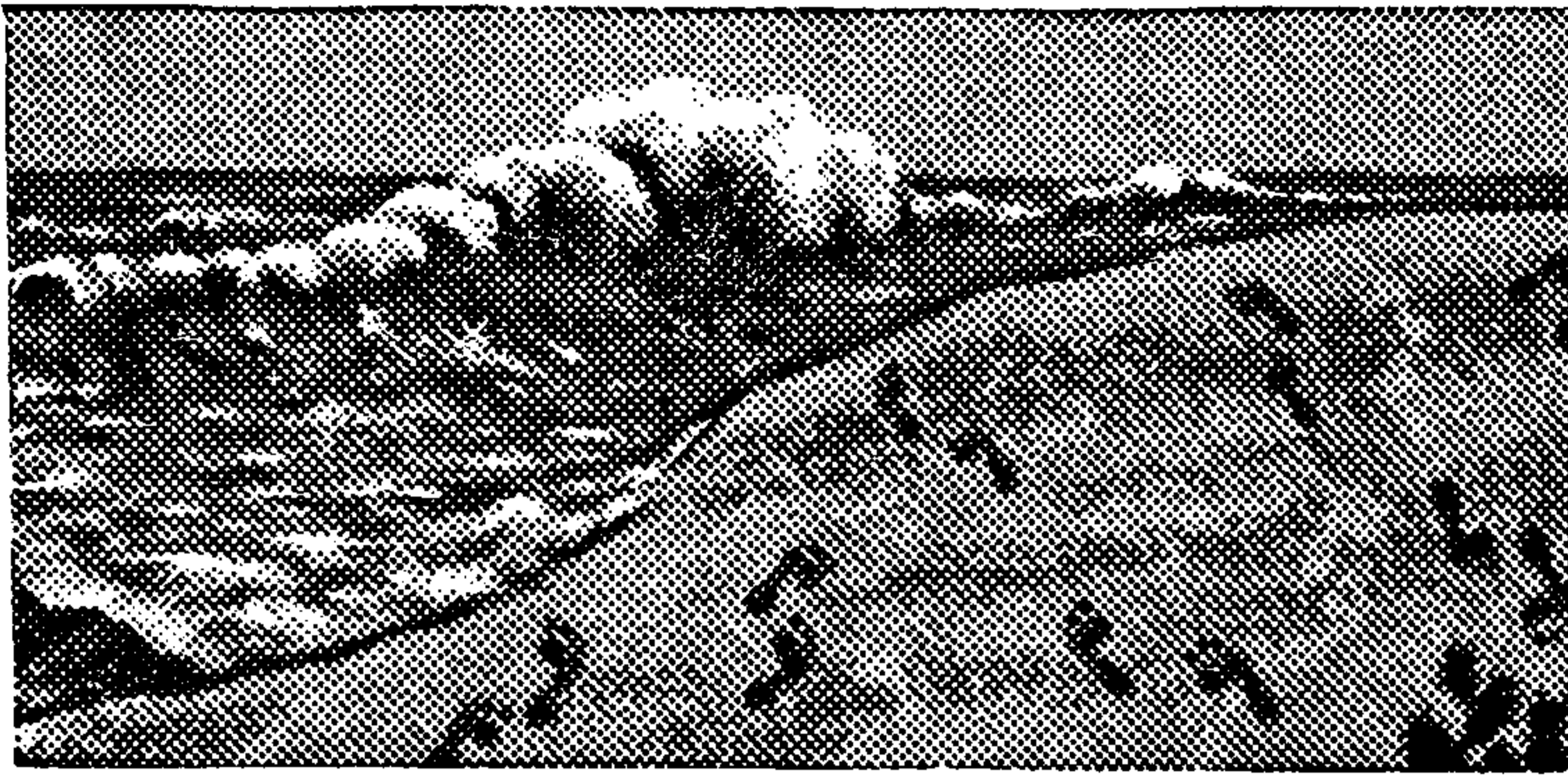
Although Swamiji's days were already crowded while the Parliament was in session, he spoke on Sunday, September 24, at the Third Unitarian Church at Laflin and Monroe Streets on 'The Love of God'. A report of his speech which appeared in the *Chicago Herald* of September 25, has been published in the *Complete Works*.⁴² It was captioned : 'BRAHMIN IN A CHRISTIAN PULPIT, SWAMI VIVEKANANDA PREACHES TO UNITARIANS ON THE LOVE OF GOD'.

Thus we have seen in a new light Swamiji's activities during the days of the Parliament. He played a unique role in this Conference of religions held at Chicago. The Christians—at least some—had expected in the heart of their hearts that the Parliament would automatically reveal the superiority of their religion over all others, and gradually the whole thinking world would come under their banner. But the Divine Will was just the contrary. It was proved through this World's Parliament of Religions that all religions have some truth to give to mankind, and that all of them are necessary for men of varying temperaments. The Truth—'Truth is one, men call it by various names'—declared in the Vedas ages ago, and the teaching—'as many creeds, so many paths' to the same Goal—of Shri Ramakrishna, were upheld in the Parliament. It is well said : 'Truth alone triumphs—*Satyameva jayate*', and it did triumph in the Parliament as well. Not only the entire religious world, but the followers of Swamiji's own religion learnt a good lesson from the Parliament. Thus Swami Vivekananda served as an eye-opener to all. Sister Nivedita has rightly pointed out :

Of the Swami's address before the Parliament of Religions, it may be said that when he began

(Continued on page 194)

42. See *Ibid.*, p. 200.



HUMAN TRENDS

HUMAN DEVELOPMENT IN INDIA AND THE PROBLEMS OF OUR WORKING CLASS—II

SWAMI RANGANATHANANDA

9. *Bhakti and Bhajan : Their Unique Social Contribution*

How did we achieve this kind of a unique social situation in India? People increasingly resort to drink to get stimulated, to get a kick when they are tired, when they are depressed, when they feel inwardly empty. It is then that people resort to the bottled, and other modern capsuled forms of, kick from the outside. If anyone needs it, and if he or she has no other way to overcome that inner privation, let him or her have it, says the Indian tradition. After all, man must feel stimulated, must feel trim. But our spiritual teachers and guides, and our people in general, said that there is something else which can do this service to man, and which is a pure stimulus free from the evils associated with these other ones. That is the contribution of the science of religion in its expression as *bhakti* and *bhajan*.

If nothing else is available that can lift him or her up from the depths, let him or her resort to these external aids. Our Vedānta and our sages did not and do not want our people to become killjoy ascetics. They present the very nature of God,

Brahman, and the very nature of man, Ātman, as *ānanda* or *rasa*, joy : *Raso vai sah*. And they discovered the science of it and the technique of its manifestation in man—rich or poor, learned or ignorant, man or woman. Accordingly, Sri Ramakrishna classifies all human joys into three categories: (1) *viṣayānanda*, i.e., *ānanda* arising from *viṣaya* or sensual or organic satisfaction; (2) *bhajanānanda*, i.e., *ānanda* arising from *bhajana* or worship of God and devotional singing of His name and glory; and (3) *brahmānanda*, i.e., *ānanda* arising from the *experience* of Brahman, from the *realization* of God, the one infinite Self in man and nature. The first one is natural and ordinary, and man shares it with all animals. As such, it does not express the true glory of man. The third, on the other hand, is too high and rare, and beyond the easy reach of most human beings. But the second is available to all.

When a man begins to appreciate this second joy of *bhajanānanda*—a joy welling up from within—the earlier one of *viṣayānanda*, which is also authentic and valid, and not devil-made as some religions present it, begins to have less and less attraction for him. Giving up of *viṣay-*

ānanda is not presented by Vedānta as an end in itself. As man experiences purer and higher joys, he spontaneously and increasingly sheds his attraction for the earlier ones, just as a child sheds his attraction for toys naturally, as his attraction for knowledge and books arises and grows. *This is a sign of his inner spiritual growth*—a growth not witnessed even in the highest of the animal species. This is the criterion of what twentieth-century biology calls his *psycho-social evolution*, which it treats as the specific field of evolution at the human stage, over and above the organic evolution of the pre-human stage.

Sri Ramakrishna personified, in the modern age, the fullness of this twofold joy or bliss of *bhajanānanda* and *brahmānanda*. These truths about the riches hidden in the depths of the human spirit are illustrated and expounded in the lives and teachings of our innumerable lovable saints and devotees—Hindu, Muslim, Sikh, Christian, Jewish and Buddhist. They find expression in songs such as '*Rām ratan dhana pāya maine*—I have found the gem of Rāma [in my heart]' in Hindi; and '*surā pān kari nā āmi, sudhā khāi jay kāli bole*—I do not drink *surā* or ordinary wine, I drink the *sudhā* or nectar arising from singing *jai kāli* [victory to Kāli],' as often sung by Sri Ramakrishna in Bengali; and '*nidhi cāla sukhamā? Rāmuni sannidhi seva sukhamā? nijamuga balku manasā!*—O my mind! tell me truly, which conduces to happiness—wealth or the realization of Rāma?', as sung by Tyāgarāja in Telugu.

This profound truth is revealed in a silent tribute paid by the great Bengali dramatist and intellectual, Girish Chandra Ghosh, himself a great devotee of the joy of the bottle, to Sri Ramakrishna, the great devotee of the joy of Divine Name. Sri Ramakrishna used to attend and enjoy the dramatic performances of Girish at his Star Theatre in Calcutta, whose actors and

actresses he used to bless after the performance. One day, Girish, who had only just then known Sri Ramakrishna and had been attracted to him but had not known anything about his spiritual greatness or the loftiness of his God-intoxicated states, went to meet Sri Ramakrishna in the Dakshineswar temple. As he entered Sri Ramakrishna's room, he found Sri Ramakrishna in an intoxicated condition. Seeing him in that inebriated state, Girish told his companion that Sri Ramakrishna seemed to have drunk a wine stronger than what he himself was accustomed to! There cannot be a truer and better tribute by the inebriation of the wine of the bottle, from the outside, to the inebriation of the wine of the love of God, from within! It is also the Indian national, as also the universal, tribute of all *viṣayānanda* to *bhajanānanda* and *brahmānanda*.

But Girish did not understand the true meaning of his own assessment of Sri Ramakrishna then. But he understood it fully, by degrees, later, when he began to experience *bhajanānanda* himself and spontaneously gave up *viṣayānanda*, including all drinking, without Sri Ramakrishna ever exhorting him to do so even once!

It was this positive approach to what is called the drink, drug and sex problem, and not the negative reformist approach, that India has contributed to human development ages ago and that she offers to man in the modern age both in India and abroad. *Bhakti* and *bhajan* give a joy that comes from within man, giving him freedom from external dependence. And what else is freedom? As defined in our Sanskrit tradition (*Manu Smṛti*, 4.160):

*Sarvam para-vaśam duḥkham
sarvam ātma-vaśam sukham;
Iti vidyāt samāsena
lakṣaṇam sukha-duḥkhaḥ*

'All external dependence is sorrow, all self-dependence is happiness ; thus should you know in brief the nature of happiness and sorrow.'

To establish our people in freedom, it is necessary to show them, by precept and example, the way of self-dependence in man's search for happiness and the stimuli for the same. The *bhajan* component of our *bhakti* tradition has served our people all these centuries as the bulwark of their spiritual freedom and as the source of their creative joy. By joining soul-stirring music to *bhakti* or devotion to God, the *bhajan* technique has saved our people from over-dependence on harmful external supports and kicks, and made them into cultured decent people even in the context of their worldly privations of ignorance and poverty. This is what Gandhiji referred to and popularized as *Rām-nām*. After a whole day's work, our working people enjoyed the singing of *Rām-nām* and became refreshed and reinvigorated. What a beautiful blessing ! Suppose that blessing is taken away from a worker ; how is he or she to remove his or her tiredness and get restimulated and refreshed ? The 'modernist' answer is : go to a bar and have a hearty drink. And then ? Return home intoxicated and engage in brawls and quarrels, destroying the peace of the home while emptying the hard-earned purse ! Such modernist people would measure the progress of a society in terms of the number of drink and sex night clubs provided for its people ! This is not, certainly, modern wisdom but only a modernist folly ! This reveals a poor notion of progress—this frittering and wasting of hard-earned wages without any human development either within oneself or within the family, without any qualitative improvement in human life. This tragedy will not happen if culture, which is essentially an inner spiritual enrichment, is added to secular education, economic betterment and political awakening.

10. *Search for Stimulants : Healthy versus Harmful*

In our modern industrial society, and in our urban context of human life, work is often humdrum, life is often dry and prosaic. Men and women need some source or sources of stimulation to bring poetry and joy into their lives. One such widely available source is the cinema, and now also the TV. They entertain ; to that extent, they are fine ; but in the absence of the spiritual nourishment coming from pure religion, these can and do also degrade ; to that extent, they are dubious in their contribution to human development, and need to be utilized judiciously. The Report of the United States Federal Commission on the causes and the prevention of violence in America has pointed its accusing finger at American T.V. So, side by side all these, something more, that can both entertain and enrich, stimulate, as well as deepen human life, and direct surplus human psychic energy to higher levels of psychosocial evolution, is necessary. That something else is, and can be, only pure religion, which is comprehended in what the Indian tradition terms *yoga*, with its myriad expressions in physical *āsanas*, meditation, worship, prayer, *japa* or repetition of divine names, holy study, holy company, dedicated work and *bhajan*. Our people had been fortified by one or other of these creative stimuli, which gave them inner strength to stand firm against the vicissitudes of history, a fraction of which has destroyed many other mighty civilizations. *We shall be wise to keep firm our hold on these precious legacies from our past*, after removing from them all that is superstitious, all that is magical, all that smacks of exploitation, all that is weakening. We need to distill out of them, in the modern period, all that constitutes the pure spiritual nourishment of the human soul that culturally uplifts and qualitatively enriches human life, and make them available to our working classes.

We must take the warning from the bitter experiences of the otherwise advanced nations of the modern West that serious psychic and social distortions such as drug explosions, drink explosions, crime explosions and sex explosions are inevitable, and make all human development turn into human tragedies, if man is deprived of the spiritual nourishments coming from pure religion, coming from the depths of the human soul, coming from the divine spark of the Ātman inherent in everyone. Why are these nations rocked by all these types of explosions—nations considered most highly developed economically, educationally and politically?

It is India's firm conviction, based on the comprehensive philosophy of life of her Upaniṣads and the *Gītā*, that our philosophy of human development should strive to achieve, and integrate together, human development in the *abhyudaya*, or the external socio-economic field, and human growth in the *nih-śreyasa*, or the internal spiritual field.

These explosions are mutually related and are to be traced to the one single source of spiritual malnutrition. The American Journal *Newsweek*, in its issue of 24 January 1972, has published a lengthy despatch on the problem of the rising curve of venereal diseases in the U.S.A. Post-Independence India also is faced with this rising problem, according to Government of India statistics. Introducing the despatch, the Editor of *Newsweek* says (quoted in my book *A Pilgrim Looks at the World*, Volume Two, p. 457) :

From every quarter of the nation, the statistics flood in. Venereal disease in the U.S.A. is epidemic and the incidence of syphilis and gonorrhoea is rising sharply among the middle and upper classes, whose members hitherto fancied themselves above the scourge. Now the VD victims include executives, physicians, and an ever-rising number of young people, particularly high school

and college students. Medical men blame the Three P's—Permissiveness, Promiscuity and the (contraceptive) Pill.

I have studied the problems of the American working class relating to economic advancement along with cultural lag during my tours of the States. I have found the workers there well paid ; and the working hours per week have also been reduced. A carpenter, a plumber, or a mason earns ten to twelve dollars per hour ; there is also acute shortage of such skilled labour. It is difficult to procure their services for your domestic purposes. If you phone for a plumber, you often get the reply : Oh, he is busy or he has gone with his wife to the Mediterranean on a cruise, or to some other far-away country on a holiday ! That means they have plenty of money to spend ; they can go here and there ; and that is fine. But if you ask the question : what is the nature of their life? are they really happy? do they spend the hours taken off from working hours to improve their minds? is there a qualitative enrichment in their personal and family life?—you may more often get a negative answer. Their life is certainly more exciting, but not more rich ; for that excitement entirely comes from the outside, while that richness has to come from within. Earlier generations had obtained a measure of that spiritual enrichment from Christianity, however narrow and circumscribed it might have been ; but it is missing in the post-war period.

Our saints and sages have presented religion, therefore, as the science and technique for deepening the spiritual awareness of every human being. Its gifts are not from the outside but are from within man himself. It imparts to man true freedom and installs him in his true dignity. It makes man realize that his value and dignity as man are not mainly derived from the money he earns, the organic satisfactions it yields, or the power he acquires and handles—which are all variable and alienable—but

that it is derived from his intrinsic nature, from the focus of the inalienable divine nature inherent in him. '*Svalpamapyasya dharmasya trāyate mahato bhayāt*—Even a little realization of this invariable and inalienable truth saves one from great fear,' says Śrī Kṛṣṇa in the second chapter of the *Gītā*.

A poor man envies a rich man; a rich man envies one richer than himself. Where is human dignity and self-respect in such a situation? It only provides the endemic breeding ground of human alienation with all its attendant social evils. Money is a focus of value; but man is a greater focus of value, says Vedānta. When a society overvalues money, it also devalues man. Feudal societies in the past, and modern materialistic urban societies today are one in committing this serious blunder. Our poor man in India in the past had derived a sense of basic human dignity from *bhakti* and *bhajan* and the teachings of our saints. If any one insulted him, he left his service and went away; for him, his dignity and self-respect were more valuable than his wages. But in our money-centred urban society of today, we find both the poor and the well-to-do tending to become increasingly bereft of the sense of honour and self-respect, exhibiting meanness in inter-human relations, and thus eroding the cement of mutual trust that integrates man with man and man with woman in an ordered society and family. This is the difference that the presence or absence of the nourishment and stimulus of pure religion makes in the human situation.

11. *Need for a National Re-education*

We see that, in the modern age, in spite of economic upliftment, in spite of technological excitements, there is much human stress and strain and suffering, alienation, tension and suicide. We don't want to convert our homes and our society in India into well-furnished citadels of such human

unfulfilments. We want our homes and our society to be suffused with the human values of love, peace and joy. This kind of qualitative enrichment of human life can never come merely by increase of income, by increase of political awareness, by wide diffusion of secular education. These are all necessary, but not sufficient. *Here is a profound truth about man which challenges us and our wisdom today. Recognition of this truth will give us a much needed national re-education.* The West is already showing us the stirrings of such a re-education—and that too from our own sources. It is seeking to nourish itself spiritually from the rich Indian inheritance of her past and present.

The contemporary spontaneous Western response to authentic Indian spiritual techniques of meditation, *bhakti*, and *bhajan*, which I have experienced everywhere abroad, must make our people rethink our concepts and programmes of human development in our own country. Busy people in the modern West—intellectuals, housewives, workers, students or teachers, long for this spiritual nourishment. They demonstrate once again the truth which our people have found demonstrated again and again, that *bhakti* and *bhajan* are to be preferred to drink, drug and unrestrained sex, as sources of creative relaxations and joys. Through the former, one becomes richer inside without becoming poorer externally; through the latter, one becomes poorer in the soul as well as in the purse.

This is unfortunately what is happening in post-independence India and creating great problems for our infant democracy. The price we shall be called upon to pay for this neglect of cultural refinement and qualitative enrichment of human life, in a context of expanding economic opportunities, is going to be heavy. Since independence, there has been a galloping of the drink evil in our country, along with bribery, corruption, and other corollaries. The

explosions rocking Western society are not very far away from our society also. Discerning thinkers and patriots in the nation are becoming slowly aware of the seriousness of this problem. And I am happy to find that our working classes themselves have begun to recognize the drink evil as their enemy working against their cultural uplift. They are voicing through their trade union organizations, their protest against opening new liquor shops close to their factories and demanding closing of the existing ones on pay days. They are realizing the havoc and ruin they work on their individual and family welfare. They need to be helped to achieve a rise in their standard of life corresponding to the rise in their standard of earning. The opposite of this is human folly leading to human tragedy. That kind of self-cancelling process has to be reversed. Because, our people, though poor, have some notion of their inherent spiritual nature; long centuries of poverty did not destroy their spirit; poverty did not make them into economic commodities to be purchased for a few paise or rupees.

12. *The Two Foci of Human Dignity and Equality*

It is true that God or the ballot paper has no meaning for a starving man; religion is not for empty bellies, is a saying by Sri Ramakrishna himself; the only form in which God can come to a hungry man is in the form of food, adds Swami Vivekananda, his disciple. To this we have to add now that politics and the ballot paper also have no meaning for an empty belly.

But today, during our elections, we are witnessing not only our poor, but even our middle income groups, offering themselves and their precious democratic political franchise as commodities to be sold for five or ten rupees to the political candidates or parties concerned, whom they want also to transport them free to the polling booths.

And the candidates and parties also, on their part, encourage all these! Why? Because our people have not been educated to attach that value to themselves as citizens, and to the two foci of their dignity and equality, namely, *the ballot paper* in the hand, which is the external political focus, and *the human soul within*, which is the internal spiritual focus, which they attach to the money which they get as commodities. Where is the democracy and human dignity in all these? These certainly are not an index of human development but of human degradation. Is it not the greatest blot on a society, especially on a democratic society, that such human devaluation and money over-valuation is allowed to take place? But it is happening in our country, which we are proud to call the largest democratic state in the world. And it will continue and worsen until we wake up and begin to emphasize and stress in our educational, social and political processes that human dignity proceeds not from the pocket but from the soul, from man's inalienable divine nature. That is the meaning of the Vedāntic *mantra*: *Sivo'ham* or *mukto'ham* or *buddho'ham*—'I am the good', or 'I am the free', or 'I am the awakened'!

Thus we see that, through this Vedāntic message, even the poorest will capture a sense of human dignity, a sense of human worth, which nobody can alienate, sell, or purchase. If money becomes the central criterion of human value, then the poor shall always be striving to get more money, shall be always either cowering before the rich or seeking opportunities to rob them individually, or rise in revolt collectively; and the rich shall always be looking down upon the poor or protecting themselves with counter-revolutionary measures.

But there is another focus of value which all—rich and poor alike—have as their inalienable personality constituent, just like the political ballot paper which the rich

and poor alike have in their hands in a democracy ; and that is what Vedānta calls the intrinsic divine nature of man, the Ātman. The Prime Minister has just one ballot paper ; the wage earner also has just one ballot paper ; the rich man has one, the poor also has one. That is called equality in a democracy. No one in a democracy has more than one or less than one ; each one has an integral political value ; this is the political equality and sovereignty of man in a democracy, corresponding to his spiritual equality and sovereignty as the Ātman, integral and whole. That political equality soon becomes a sham and a joke if it is not sustained by that spiritual equality. There is no better and more inspiring song of democratic equality than what Śrī Kṛṣṇa sings in the *Gītā* (XIII. 27-28):

*Samam sarveṣu bhūteṣu
tiṣṭhantaṁ parameśvaram ;
Vinaśyatsvavinaśyantaṁ
yaḥ paśyati sa paśyati—*

‘He who sees the Supreme Lord existing equally in all beings, imperishable in those that perish, he (indeed) sees.’

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

‘Seeing the (one) Lord equally existing everywhere (as the one Self in all), he does not injure the Self by the self, and thus attains the highest state.’

13. Practical Vedānta

Swami Vivekananda always stressed this Vedāntic approach to human development. In his speech on ‘Vedānta in Its Application to Indian Life’ referred to earlier, he said :

These conceptions of the Vedānta must come out, must remain not only in the forest, not only in the cave, but they must come out to work at the bar and

the bench, in the pulpit, and in the cottage of the poor man, with the fishermen that are catching fish, and with the students that are studying. They call to every man, woman and child, whatever be their occupation, wherever they may be. And what is there to fear ! How can the fishermen and all these carry out the ideals of the Upaniṣads? The way has been shown. It is infinite ; religion is infinite, none can go beyond it ; and whatever you do sincerely is good for you. Even the least thing well done brings marvellous results ; therefore let everyone do what little he can. If the fisherman thinks that he is the Spirit [the Ātman], he will be a better fisherman ; if the student thinks he is the Spirit, he will be a better student ; if the lawyer thinks he is the Spirit, he will be a better lawyer ; and so on : and the result will be that the castes will remain for ever. It is in the nature of society to form itself into groups, and what will go will be these privileges.

Caste is a natural order ; I can perform one duty in social life, and you another ; you can govern a country, and I can mend a pair of old shoes ; but that is no reason why you are greater than I, for can you mend my shoes? Can I govern the country? I am clever in mending shoes, you are clever in reading the Vedas, but that is no reason why you should trample on my head. Why if one commits murder should he be praised, and if another steals an apple why should he be hanged? This will have to go. Caste is good ; that is the only natural way of solving life. Men must form themselves into groups, and you cannot get rid of that. Wherever you go, there will be caste. But that does not mean that there should be these privileges. *They should be knocked on the head.*

If you teach Vedānta to the fisherman, he will say, I am as good a man as you : I am a fisherman, you are a philosopher ; but I have the same God in me as you have in you. *And that is what we want: no privilege for anyone, equal chances for all.* Let everyone be taught that the divine is within, and everyone will work out his own salvation.

Liberty is the first condition of growth. It is wrong, a thousand times wrong, if any of you dares to say : 'I will work out the salvation of this woman or child.'

Bring all light into the world. . . . Let light come unto everyone ; the task will not be finished till everyone has reached the Lord. Bring light to the poor ; and bring more light to the rich, for they require it more than the poor. Bring light to the ignorant, and more light to the educated, for the vanities of the education of our time are tremendous ;³

When I work under somebody for a wage, I temporarily place my body at his disposal in order to seek sustenance for my body and soul. That sustenance of the soul comes only through all such work done in a spirit of dedication and service in a context of dignity and freedom. If I do that work only for the sustenance of the body, it becomes slavery, it becomes the negation of human dignity. This is what is expressed in the famous song of the saint-poet Rāmprasād which Sri Ramakrishna loved to sing : '*Āmi deha bece bhaver hāte Śrī Durgā nām kine enechi*—Selling my body in the market place of the world I have bought and brought Mother Durgā's Name !'

This kind of understanding must come to our people in a big way today, through whatever source it may be—through literature, through art, through music, through religion. This sense of human dignity must come to all in our country, and especially to our working classes ; then only will the millions and millions of our people be able to rise to the full stature of citizenship in our democracy. Then only will our *largest* democracy become also transformed into the *greatest* democracy.

14. Human Development as *Ātma-Vikās*

It is such an awakened working class that can really become a tremendous strength

to the new process we are introducing in our industries, namely, labour participation in management. Such a step calls for the rousing of dignity and self-respect and freedom in our working people. When such people are taken into the management, the management becomes strengthened. It becomes a responsible management, an efficient management, keeping national interest, and not mere sectional interests, in view. It is this kind of human development, human maturity, that we need to achieve in the millions of our working people. *This calls for combining secular and political education with spiritual education.* By spiritual education is not meant education in the creeds or dogmas of a religion. Spiritual education is education for spiritual growth, like education for the other two types of growth, namely, physical and mental. All the three constitute the fullest human development—*ātma-vikās*. If economic development only is stressed, we get some sort of physical nourishment and physical growth. If secular and political education only is stressed, we get intellectual nourishment and mental growth. These two constitute only partial, and not full, development of man. Such partial development may achieve good results in the short run, but will become counter-productive in the long run ; it will result in quantitative enrichment along with qualitative impoverishment. That will be a tragedy which we should not allow in India, but which is already being experienced by many countries abroad. We have the wisdom given to us by our great philosophers and saints, both ancient and modern, which can help us to avert that tragedy. We have our modern teachers like Vivekananda, Gandhiji, and others *who showed us the Indian approach to human development*, and to the raising of our common people.

This is the key-note guidance contained in one of the letters of Vivekananda from America, already quoted earlier : 'Keep the

3. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, Mayavati: Advaita Ashrama, (hereafter *Complete Works*), III. 1973, pp. 245-47.

motto before you : elevation of the masses without injuring their religion.' If we take away that historically acquired spiritual asset from our people in the name of human development, we will convert our nation into a mess of human problems. With more physical energy made available through nourishing food, and intellectual energy through education, but no cultural refinement through spiritual nourishment, we can expect only more tensions and violence in our society, requiring more government, more laws, and more loss of true freedom. *A free, self-regulating, egalitarian, and peaceful society will emerge only when a little ethical and spiritual value will spontaneously rise from the depth of the human spirit and irrigate man's personal and social life.* And we have the methods provided in our rich spiritual tradition by which to evoke these values in all human beings. That is why I have become convinced about the importance of pure religion for human development after going round various parts of India and abroad. Along with all the measures that we are taking to increase the economic strength and rouse the political awareness of our working classes, we must also take all necessary steps to raise their cultural level and increase their spiritual strength. By this alone will they, and the rest of our people as well, achieve happiness and fulfilment and become a source of strength to the nation. And I have every hope that, since we have available to us, as I said before, not only the wisdom of our past but also the reauthentication and reinforcement of that wisdom by gigantic spiritual personalities in the modern period, we shall achieve a high measure of total human development in our country in the coming decades. We have to treat our country as a mighty anthropological laboratory for experimenting on total human development for a seventh of the human race. That is how Swami Vivek-

ananda looked upon modern India. That is how Mahatma Gandhi dealt with our great country. If we have that ideal constantly before us, then whatever we do in the fields of labour, management, industry or business—will have one overriding purpose, namely, this purpose of human development, this aim of enthroning man in India on the pedestal of his true dignity and glory as '*amṛtasya putraḥ*—child of immortality', as our Upanisads proudly proclaim.

15. Conclusion

I have no doubt that such an effort will be slowly initiated in India when *more and more of our people will understand and appreciate the Indian way to human development.* We shall have to cease following any other nation's path to human development, even while learning what other nations have to teach us on this subject.

The example and inspiration of such an India to the rest of the world is going to be tremendous. And we shall repay in ample measure our debt to the world for what it has given us. All this is only a hope of the future. But we have to keep that hope in view. That very hope will give light to our minds, strength to our hearts, and steadiness to our feet. That hope cannot find a better expression, and this talk cannot find a more fitting conclusion, than in the following exhortation of Swami Vivekananda made in the course of his lecture on the 'Mission of the Vedānta' delivered in Kumbakonam in 1897 (*Complete Works*, III, p. 193) :

Teach yourselves, teach everyone his real nature ; call upon the sleeping soul and see how it awakes. Power will come, glory will come, goodness will come, purity will come, and everything that is excellent will come, when this sleeping soul [of man] is roused to self-conscious activity.

(Concluded)

To Sister Christine

(Continued from the February 1978 issue)

46¹⁸

The Math, Belur,
Dist. Howrah, Bengal, India,
6th July 1901.

Dear Christine,

. . . Miss MacLeod is in Japan—enjoying it immensely. I would have followed ; but what with low health, dislike to long voyage etc., I prefer to remain in India.

Then your letters—These are absolutely no information about yourself. What are you doing? How you are—getting fat or thin? What are you doing during the present vacation etc. etc.? Only a few lines of worry about my health—faugh ! Have you had any more communication with Mrs. Bull? I am trying to be as dull as possible. I have got a few goats and sheep, one deer and several cows. Then there are the flower beds, fish ponds and kitchen gardens.

I rise very early, then milk my goats, feed them. A dog puppy and a beautiful black kid are my special favourites. I take some exercise on a pair of dumbbells ; and then the heat having got great, I loll about on a stretcher till 10 A.M. We have two huge mango trees, one Panas [jack fruit] and one Nim [margosa] making a beautiful grove just in front of the monastery building—under them is my favourite place. The fruits are over. We have eaten several thousand mangoes from these two trees. There are some Panases left yet. You never saw a Panas. It is a huge fruit. Some of them so big that a very strong man can scarcely lift one. When they are very big, they grow on the roots underground. Then the ground bursts, and you know by the flowers where to find your fruit.

This is one season for best mangoes—nothing like them in the whole world, Christina. Then our shads are coming up the river. As I am writing, the waves are splashing against the house ; and beneath me are hundreds of small fishing boats, all seeking to catch shads. And then our shads are greatly superior to your American ones. The one thing that is disturbing me is the small steamers continuously going up and down this huge river. They make too much noise. This year the monsoon has not burst well. There have been a few showers only where we need a deluge. People are getting anxious.

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

18. The first paragraph of this letter has been already published in the *Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, Mayavati : Advaita Ashrama, V, 1973, p. 167. The remaining part of the letter reads as given here.

Masses of clouds are there but no rain. It ought to rain for days and nights together and such a downpour; but Mother knows! We are expecting yet. The rains do not suit me however; so there is some gain to me. Yet I am longing to see the rains of Bengal after ten years or more. You ought to be here now to feel the power of growth in vegetables in Bengal. We cannot keep our gardens clean—the grasses and weeds are literally jumping out of the ground in leaps and bounds.

I read in the papers, it is fearfully hot in New York. How is it in Detroit? Keep cool, dear Christina and drink a lot of sherbets and swing on your hammock in the cool of the evening; and when you have time, write me a beautiful long letter. Now goodbye.

Ever yours in the Lord,
VIVEKANANDA.

(Continued from page 183)

to speak, it was of 'the religious ideas of the Hindus', but when he ended, Hinduism had been created. The moment was ripe with this potentiality. The vast audience that faced him, represented exclusively the occidental mind, but included some development of all that in this, was most distinctive. . . .

. . . Behind him, on the contrary, lay an ocean, calm with long ages of spiritual development. . . .

These, then, were the two mind-floods, two immense rivers of thought, as it were, Eastern and modern, of which the yellow-clad wanderer on the platform of the Parliament of Religions formed for a moment the point of confluence. The formulation of the common bases of Hinduism was the inevitable result of the shock of their contact, in a personality, so impersonal. For it was no experience of his own that rose to the lips of the Swami Vivekananda there. He did not even take advantage of the occasion to tell the story of his Master. Instead of either of these, it was the religious consciousness of India that spoke through him, the message of his whole people, as determined by their whole past. . . .

Others stood beside the Swami Vivekananda, on the same platform as he, as apostles of particular creeds and churches. But it was his glory that he came to preach a religion to which each of these was, in his own words, 'only a travelling,

a coming up, of different men, and women, through various conditions and circumstances to the same goal.'⁴³

This partly quoted version of Sister Nivedita's Introduction to the *Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* may not be enough to give a clear idea of what she had to say about his role as a delegate to the Parliament, but it will surely help us in understanding that Swamiji was a delegate by 'divine right'.

This was the first and the last Parliament of this kind. Afterwards, attempts were made to organize Parliaments of Religions on these lines at Toronto, Canada (1895), at Benaras (1897), in Paris (1900), and at Tokyo, Japan (1902); but the attempt could not succeed for some reason or the other. We can say, therefore, that the Parliament of Religions at Chicago was divinely ordained.

(Concluded)

⁴³. *Ibid.*, I, 1972, pp. x, xi, xii.

ROMAIN ROLLAND TO MME EMMA CALVE*

(A Letter)

Villa Olga,
Villeneuve (Vaud),
Switzerland,
4 April 1930.

Dear Madame,

I am deeply touched by your letter. How happy I am that my book did not in any way disappoint the eyes which had the good fortune to see the great Swami and to retain devotedly his image. But now it seems to me that my eyes too have seen him. I lived so intimately with him and with the Paramahansa in these latter years that it is as though I was seated day after day in the little room at Dakshineswar on the banks of the Ganga.

I hope that the good effect of that great thought may enter into the soul of the West, wounded but still hard and contracted. It is a serious moment for the West, which has learned nothing from the troubles it has already had. If it doesn't do something to gain possession of itself, the spell will be cast. It certainly won't be the first great Empire in the world that will have crumbled. The flame of the Spirit will find—will even create—other places to dwell. It is never extinguished.

Please be assured, dear Madame, of my respectful fellow feeling.

ROMAIN ROLLAND.

* In early 1930 were published the *Life of Ramakrishna* and the *Life of Vivekananda*, authored by Romain Rolland. Written in French, these books introduced Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda to Europe. One of the persons to quickly read the books was the well-known opera singer, Madame Emma Calvé, who had known Swamiji intimately thirty years before and who was mentioned in the volume on Vivekananda. She had obviously written to Romain Rolland expressing her pleasure in what he had written. This is the English translation of his reply in French to that appreciation. The letter was discovered by Swami Vidyatmananda (Centre Vedantique Ramakrishna, Gretz, France) at Millau, France, among some keepsakes which once belonged to Madame Calvé. We are thankful to the Swami for sending the photostat of the original and the translation.

Needless to say, the words 'Swami' and 'Paramahansa' occurring in the first paragraph of the letter refer to Swami Vivekananda and Sri Ramakrishna respectively.

NOTES AND COMMENTS

The World : An Open Prison (Editorial): Criminals are invariably disliked by men in general, and the veteran ones more so; but the Vedantic test will show us that from the Vedantic point of view, we too are sailing in the same boat. The only difference is that the offenders are kept in closed well-guarded prisons bound by chains, while we live in the open prison of this world bound by thousands of invisible fetters. The Editorial deliberates on this subject in the light of the teachings of the Upanishadic *ṛsis* and the commentators.

In the Company of God : In this article the author lucidly narrates what 'being in

the company of God' means. He rightly says, 'A man or woman who has found the real Self, the bliss and serenity of the Truth, walks hand-in-hand with God, in other words, such a person is in the company of God.' The author, Swami Asaktananda, is the Head of the Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, Narendrapur, W.B., India. He also worked for some years as an assistant minister at the Vedanta Society of Southern California, Hollywood, U.S.A. .

The Great Lie—II : In this instalment of the speech delivered at the Old Temple of the Vedanta Society of Northern California, San Francisco, U.S.A., the late Swami Ashokananda, Ex-Minister-in-charge, rightly concludes saying : 'So let us deny this falsehood, friends. Let us tell ourselves the truth at every opportunity. When we look at a person, let us say, "This is God Himself. This is Spirit and not the body or the mind."' He has already pointed out in the previous instalment that according to Vedanta the truth is : 'Brahman alone is real and the world illusory ; there is no multiplicity anywhere.' So, to say that the world is real is nothing but a lie, and the Swami urges us to deny it, and see the Reality in everything.

The Parliament of Religions—1893 : Some New Findings—II : In the last instalment of this article, various facts connected with the main session of the Chicago Parliament of Religions were narrated in the light of the Chicago newspapers, with special

reference to Swami Vivekananda. Besides speaking at the main session, the Swami also delivered addresses at the Scientific and Woman's Sessions and at one of the Religious Congresses conducted by the Parliament, and also attended various receptions given in honour of the delegates of the Parliament by the Officers of the Parliament as well as by some Chicago dignitaries. This story has been told in this part of the article, mainly in the light of the Chicago newspaper reports.

Human Development in India and the Problems of Our Working Class—II : In the last instalment of this article Swami Ranganathananda, the President, Ramakrishna Math, Secunderabad, Hyderabad, has pointed out the importance of spiritual and moral disciplines for the development of our working class, because 'man does not live by bread alone'. In this section of his article the Swami is telling about the necessity of *bhakti*, *bhajan* and other Vedantic teachings to mould the lives of the people, as an Indian way to human development. In his concluding remarks he says : 'I have no doubt that such an effort will be slowly initiated in India when more and more of our people will understand and appreciate the Indian way to human development. We shall have to cease following any other nation's path to human development, even while learning what other nations have to teach us on this subject.'

We hope, our readers will find these articles interesting and illuminating.

Unpublished Letters of Swami Vivekananda—VIII : In this issue the unpublished letter of Swami Vivekananda written to Sister Christine on 6 July 1901 is reproduced.

REVIEWS AND NOTICES

ADVAITA VEDANTA: BY DR. R. BALASUBRAMANIAN, Publishers: Centre for Advanced Study in Philosophy, University of Madras, Madras-600 005, 1976, pp. xvi+298, Price : Rs. 12/-.

The book under review presents a clear account of Advaita as expounded by Mandana Misra in his *Brahmasiddhi*, the earliest among the Siddhi literature of Advaita. The author of this book is obviously very much at home with contemporary accounts of Western thought as well as Indian thought; this impression is confirmed by the references made in the body of the book. The book is divided into six chapters. This learned work is of great documentary value as a source for the study of the Advaita Philosophy.

The first chapter entitled 'The Means of Knowing Reality', gives a lucid scholarly account of the six ways of knowing according to Advaita Vedanta (perception, inference, postulation, comparison, non-apprehension and verbal testimony) and compares and contrasts them with the other notions of Indian Philosophy. Dr. Balasubramanian establishes verbal testimony as a means of valid knowledge, and shows the efficiency of the Vedas as a means of supersensuous knowledge to defend their revelatory status, to explain the truth they hold, to show the way to realization of this truth and to explain the nature of this realization. He also compares the different ways of knowing Ultimate Reality—such as perception, reason, logic, scriptures and Yogic intuition—which are recognized by Advaita Vedanta.

The second chapter discusses almost all the 'Theories of Error' in Indian Philosophy with a view to bring out the full significance of Anirvacanīyakhyāti to which Mandana is committed. In this chapter the author has made his own translations from Sanskrit, marshalled his evidence in a scholarly fashion, and produced a volume of interest both to the students of Hindu Philosophy and Western scholars who may take some comfort from the fact that some of the problems which are being grappled with by modern thinkers have been anticipated, at least in a dim way, by Indian thinkers.

In the third chapter, 'Nature of Reality', the author has discussed how important the methods of dialectical criticism are in the refutation of rival theories, and with what carefulness Mandana Misra tackles them. After a clear exposition of the important role of Karma and Jnana, the author ends his work with the chapter 'The Way and the Goal', bringing out the significance of Jīvanmukti. The author has also discussed the concept of Avidyā which plays an important role

in the discussion of Metaphysical and Epistemological issues in Advaita.

The power of Dr. Balasubramanian's writings lies in the clarity of expression and in the ability to create in his reader the sense of being involved in what he writes, and it is of significance to both the scholar and the layman. An excellent brief Introduction, a Foreword by Dr. T. M. P. Mahadevan and a rich, well-organized Bibliography, enhance the importance of the book, which is a necessity for those doing research in this field.

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AN UNRECORDED CHAPTER OF THE INDIAN MUTINY: BY R. G. WILBERFORCE, Publishers: Academic Press, Gurgaon, 122 001, Haryana, 1976, pp. 234, Price : Rs. 50/-, £ 5, \$ 10.

This account of the rising of 1857, with eight sketches from the personal diary and letters written by Reginald G. Wilberforce of the 52nd Light Infantry at that time, is indeed 'an unrecorded chapter of the Indian Mutiny' as the title of the book indicates. There is a striking similarity of this account with a similar work of Captain Greathed, another actor in the melodrama of 1857.

This book has an explanatory Preface and a tolerably good Index. In nine chapters, the author has noted the distinguished service of his infantry in difficult days through difficult and unfriendly climate and circumstances, mainly in the assault on Delhi and in the Punjab. The interesting anecdotes connected with the mutiny make reading lively.

There is great appreciation of John Nicholson, and the truth is brought out in bold relief that Nicholson's military acumen and leadership was for the greater part responsible for the recapture of Delhi. It was also realized that everything depended on the recapture of Delhi.

In between the lines we get the clearest indication how a handful of British in India ultimately succeeded in defeating the vast majority of the people of this land due to their superior organization and sterling character, which was almost lacking in the Indian leaders and masses. So, the account has a lesson for us as well.

It is a very interesting account and instructive as well. We recommend it to the public without any reservation.

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THE ETHNOLOGY, LANGUAGES, LITERATURE AND RELIGIONS OF INDIA: BY HERBERT H. RISLEY, GEORGE A. GRIERSON AND WILLIAM CROOKE, Publishers: Academic Press, Gurgaon, Haryana, 122 001, 1975, pp. 190, Price: Rs. 40/-.

This is a reprint of the four chapters from the third edition (1907-1909) of *Indian Empire* volume of the *Imperial Gazetteer of India*. The *Imperial Gazetteer of India* was first published in 1881, and its companion volume, the *Indian Empire: Its History, People and Products* appeared in 1882. The contributors were men of profound scholarship who had devoted their lives for oriental studies. Risley had contributed a chapter on 'Caste, Tribe and Race' to the *Report on the Census of India, 1901*. The first chapter in the present volume on 'Ethnology and Caste' is an abridgement of the same. It details the anthropometric variations in the seven main physical types of the Indian people and further describes the limitations of the type scheme adopted by the author. Risley also describes the genesis of the caste system and examines the problem of caste in India from various angles. The second chapter on 'Languages' is contributed by George Grierson. Here a brief survey of all the major languages of India has been taken, and their philological characteristics have also been highlighted. Grierson has contributed the fourth chapter on 'Vernacular Literature' as well. While

the second chapter deals simply with the history and structure of languages, this one deals with the important literary works in the various Indian languages.

The chapter on 'Religions', which is the third chapter in the present volume, is contributed by William Crooke. Here the history of religions in India is traced from 1500 B.C. to the end of the nineteenth century. All the major religions of India together with their sects and subsects have been briefly yet adequately described. The chapter concludes with a brief narration of the progress of Christianity in the then existing Indian Empire.

These essays were first reprinted in Great Britain in 1924 and again in 1931 by Oxford at the Clarendon Press. These are now reprinted in India, obviously on account of their lasting value. It would have been better, however, to have supplemented these essays with notes and appendices covering the latest developments in the respective fields. The inquisitive readers would naturally prefer to consult the recent edition of the *Gazetteer of India, Vol. I (1973)*, issued by the Gazetteer Unit of the Ministry of Education, Government of India, New Delhi. Still it can be reasonably hoped that the present volume would serve as a rich research aid.

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NEWS AND REPORTS

VEDANTA SOCIETY, NEW YORK

REPORT: JANUARY-DECEMBER 1976

(with some later information)

For the Vedanta Society of New York, the year 1976 was one of perseverance, as also of hope and expectation. Fortunately, during the period the health of Swami Pavitrananda (the then Minister-in-charge) remained strong enough to permit him to conduct all Sunday services. He also held members' classes in the library on Thursday evenings, in which Swami Vivekananda's *Jnana-Yoga* was studied. The Tuesday evening scripture classes, open to the public, featured the conclusion of the series of *Gita* lectures given by the Swami several years ago, and continued with earlier discourses which he had given on the *Katha, Isha, Kena* and *Taittiriya Upanishads*. Members and friends, as well as newcomers, found food for spiritual life in these vigorous and inspiring talks.

The celebration of holy days gave special opportunities for worship and service to many

members. As usual, the birthdays of Sri Ramakrishna, Swami Vivekananda and Holy Mother, and the autumnal worship of the Divine Mother were observed with morning meditation in the chapel, followed by breakfast in the Vivekananda Room. Swami Pavitrananda also gave special public talks in honour of these occasions, as well as for Buddha's birthday and on Easter, Christmas Sunday and Christmas Eve. On the latter occasion, the congregation joined in singing carols, following the Swami's talk on the 'Sermon on the Mount'.

On July 4, the fifteenth annual Vivekananda Festival was celebrated at Moss Hill Farms, the country home of two Society members. As usual, Swami Sarvagatananda, Head of the Vedanta Societies of Boston and Providence, came as the special guest. Accompanying him were two monastic members of the Boston Centre, who participated in the musical programme. The festival began with a sumptuous buffet lunch to which all present contributed. In mid afternoon,

a mostly musical programme on the life of Swami Vivekananda was presented. The Swami gave the opening prayer, which was followed by songs, solo and choral, in Sanskrit, Bengali and English. The texts of some of the songs were by Swami Vivekananda. The programme featured two dramatic readings with musical accompaniment, composed by two of the members, and closed with a prayer and benediction by Swami Sarvagatananda. Towards evening, an enjoyable impromptu meeting occurred on the terrace. Swami Pavitrananda talked informally with a group of devotees, and two Indian ladies sang songs.

Each June, before leaving for his summer vacation, the Swami invites the members to supper at the Centre. The happy, informal event took place last year on June 18. After a delicious Indian meal prepared by several devotees, Miss Y.G. Srimati, a close friend of the Centre, sang Indian devotional songs.

The Centre re-opened to the public on Sunday, September 19. Shortly thereafter came the long-awaited news that the Headquarters of the Ramakrishna Order had appointed Swami Tathagatananda, then head of the Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, Baranagore—a large educational Centre of the Ramakrishna Mission in Calcutta—to be Assistant Swami of the Vedanta Society of New York. The news brought great joy and relief to all, especially to Swami Pavitrananda, who had been trying to get a qualified assistant for two years. [Some time was required for the new Swami to obtain his U.S. visa, and he finally arrived in New York on February 15, 1977].

In November, Swami Nihshreyasananda, Head of the Vedanta Societies of Salisbury, Rhodesia and Johannesburg, South Africa, visited the Centre and met with some of the members one evening in the library. In answer to questions, he described the great handicaps under which he had been working to spread the message of Vedanta in southern Africa for the past seventeen years. He charmed all by his keen wit and enthusiasm, which belied his seventy-seven years.

As in previous years, a number of students from Fordham University and New York University visited the Centre for Sunday services and Tuesday classes.

[It may be mentioned here that Swami Pavitrananda breathed his last on November 18, 1977, at the age of 81. His obituary has already been published in the December 1977 issue of this Journal. The present Minister-in-charge Swami Tathagatananda informs us that a memorial service in honour of Swami Pavitrananda was observed at 8 p.m. on Thursday,

December 1, 1977, at the Society's chapel, and Swamis from various Ramakrishna Vedanta Centres in America were present on the occasion to pay tribute to the departed Swami. Besides them, Reverend Donald Szantho Harrington, Minister of Community Church of New York, and Rabbi Asher Block, former head of a Jewish congregation on Long Island, also attended the function and spoke warmly about the Swami.]

RAMAKRISHNA MISSION ASHRAMA KANPUR

REPORT: APRIL 1976—MARCH 1977

Though the Centre had a humble beginning in 1920, it has now developed into one of the primary philanthropic institutions of the city, catering to the spiritual, educational, and medical needs of the citizens.

Spiritual and Cultural: Besides daily worship, prayer and meditation in the shrine, religious classes and Kirtans were held on Sunday evenings in the Ashrama premises. The birthdays of Sri Ramakrishna, Sri Sarada Devi and Swami Vivekananda were observed with Bhajan, worship, distribution of *prasad* and discourses. The birthdays of other Incarnations were also observed with due solemnity.

The Public Library received 328 new books during the year, bringing the total number to 4,930; and 7,098 books were issued to library-members. A separate Children's Section served the growing number of children attending the Library. The Reading Room section received 8 newspapers, 68 periodicals and several news-letters during the year. Average daily attendance at the Library was 92.

Educational: A Higher Secondary School, founded in 1947, is run by the Centre. The results of the School have been in the range 97 to 100 per cent, particularly since 1964. Besides giving the students a thorough general education within the framework of the syllabi, the School has been making an earnest endeavour to ensure the integrated growth of their personalities. Towards this end, a programme of co-curricular activities covering a wide spectrum of essentials for personality development has been undertaken, which includes compulsory physical training, games and sports, social service, Junior Red Cross, St. John Ambulance, Scouting, occasional excursions and so on. The Students' Dairy System, a unique feature of the School, has helped a great deal to instill in the students the sense that school-life is only a continuation of home-life—that both are mutually complementary. It has also helped to a great extent in eliminating corporal punishment and other crude correctives.

During the year under consideration, the enrolment was 689. The School final result was 97 per cent; and out of 121 students appearing, 71 boys passed in the First Division, 44 in the Second and 2 in the Third; 6 boys received Stars, and there were as many as 87 distinctions in various subjects. Out of 129 students who appeared for the United Schools Organization's General Knowledge Tests, 124 passed. At a ministerial-level function in Lucknow, the School received a Government Shield of Honour and a Certificate of Appreciation. For the tenth consecutive year, the School merited the State Efficiency Grant.

Medical: The outdoor Charitable Dispensary, founded in 1924, has been serving the medical needs of a large number of poor patients. Both Allopathic and Homoeopathic systems of treatment are available. The Dispensary has five departments: General Diseases, Ophthalmology, Pathology, Dentistry and Radiology. The total number of patients treated during the year was 1,82,538. Eighty-five minor operations were performed, and 42,067 injections given. The Laboratory handled 502 specimens. The X-Ray Department, a source of relief to the poor patients, examined 551 cases during the year.

Appeal: To enable the Centre to carry on its humble services, liberal contributions by the generous public are requested: (1) towards the purchase of books and furniture for the Swami Vivekananda Centenary Memorial Public Library and Reading Room; and (2) towards the maintenance of the Centre's Charitable Dispensary. All such donations, which are exempt from Income-Tax, may be sent to: The Secretary, Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, Ramakrishna Nagar, KANPUR, 208 012.

SRI RAMAKRISHNA MISSION STUDENTS' HOME, MYLAPORE, MADRAS 600-004

REPORT: APRIL 1976—MARCH 1977

The Students' Home is the foremost charitable educational institution of the Ramakrishna Mission in South India. It owes its origin to the overflowing kindness and sympathy for the poor students evinced by Swami Ramakrishnananda, a direct disciple of Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna, who organized the Ramakrishna Movement in South India. The institution was started in 1905 with five boarders with the blessings of the Swami. The late Sri C. Ramaswami Aiyengar and Sri C. Ramanujachariar did yeoman service to the Home for over half a century. The result is that today the Home has grown into a magnificent institution giving free board and lodging to well over 325 orphan and destitute students at Mylapore. It runs a Residential High School, a Residential Technical

Institute, a Primary School in Mylapore, and a Middle School at Malliankaranai village in Uttiramerur, Chingleput Dist., with a hostel for Harijan boys attached to it.

The Residential High School had on its rolls 172 boys in the Standards VI-XI during the year under review.

The Technical Institute attached to the Home had 109 boarders on its rolls and provided for a Pre-Technical Course of one year and a Diploma Course of four semesters or two years in Mechanical Engineering. Eleven students of the Home are studying at the Vivekananda College for Pre-University, and twenty-five for Degree Courses.

The Centenary Primary School, Mylapore, started in 1935 as a part of the birth centenary celebrations of Sri Ramakrishna by the public, has standards I to V with thirteen sections and a strength of 430 students.

The Malliankaranai School had on its rolls during the year under review 150 boys and forty-one girls. There were twenty-nine boys in the Harijan Hostel.

The normal domestic activities of the Home are in the charge of a committee of students called 'The Seva Pravina Samiti'. Secular teaching is intimately correlated to religious and moral training. Senior students of the Home run a Sat Sabha, where Bhajan singing is practised. In the month of Margazhi (Dec.-Jan.) Bhajans are conducted by this Sabha around the temple streets as is the popular custom in Tamil Nadu.

Important festivals and birthdays of saints and sages were celebrated in a fitting manner. Aksaya Tritiya, the day of the founding of the Home, was observed with due solemnity. During the Navaratri season religious discourses were given by eminent scholars on *Srimad Bhagavatam*.

Among the needs of the Home are:

- | | |
|---|-----------------|
| (a) Altars for enshrining the photos of Sri Ramakrishna, the Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi, and Swami Vivekananda, in whose name the institution has been founded | ...Rs. P. |
| ... | 50,000.00 |
| (b) Improvement of Dormitory and Kitchen | ... 5,50,000.00 |
| (c) School Building, Malliankaranai Village | ... 5,00,000.00 |
| (d) Sadhu Seva Fund for the maintenance of monastic workers | ... 1,50,000.00 |
| (e) Monastic Quarters | ... 50,000.00 |

The Secretary of the Home appeals to the public to come forward to contribute liberally towards these. All such donations are exempted from Income-Tax.