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Prabuddha Bharata

OR

AWAKENED INDIA



By Karma, Jnana, Bhakti, and Yoga, by one or more or
all of these the Vision of the Paramatman is Obtained.

ADVAITA ASHRAMA
MAYAVATI, HIMALAYAS



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Prabuddha Bharata

Started by Swami Vivekananda in 1896

A MONTHLY JOURNAL OF THE
RAMAKRISHNA ORDER

MARCH 1986

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O L D A G E H O M E

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No. 3

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

INTEGRAL VISION OF VEDIC SEERS*

'Truth is one: sages call It by various names'

यज्जाग्रतो दूरमुदंति दैवं
तद्गु सुप्तस्य तथैवेति ।
दूरङ्गमं ज्योतिषां ज्योतिरेकं
तन्मे मनः शिवसंकल्पमस्तु ॥

यत् प्रज्ञानमुत्त चेतो धृतिश्च
यज्ज्योतिरन्तरमृतं प्रजासु ।
यस्मान्न ऋते किञ्चन कर्म क्रियते
तन्मे मनः शिवसंकल्पमस्तु ॥

That luminous [Atman] which goes out [through the sense organs] during the waking state and goes inward during sleep¹—may that one, far-reaching, Light of all lights make my mind will what is good.²

Śukla Yajurveda 34.1

That which is [the source of] awareness, memory and will, that which is the immortal Light in all living beings, that without which no action whatsoever can be performed—may that [Atman] make my mind will what is good.

Śukla Yajurveda 34.3

* Given here are two stanzas from a hymn in the *Vājasaneyī Samhitā* of *Śukla Yajurveda*, widely used in ritualistic worship. Many of our mistakes and failures in everyday life happen because we act 1. without self-awareness, 2. without goal orientation, and 3. without the support of a strong will. Before we begin any action we must make sure that our actions are governed by a conscious, goal-oriented will. This conscious goal-oriented willing is called *samkalpa*. The purpose of this hymn is to generate this *samkalpa* in us. It is usually chanted before starting any religious rite. But it may also be repeated before starting *any* good work in your home, office, factory or hospital : such a practice will definitely improve your work

efficiency and may in due course lead to spiritual awakening. They may be repeated even before going to sleep at night.

1. *Tathaiva-eti* may also mean that the Self goes on even during sleep to see dreams. The *Isa Upaniṣad* (4) says that the Atman travels faster than thoughts, and the mind and the senses cannot overtake it. It is by rousing the Atman that we make all our actions and thoughts alert and self-directed. If constant self-awareness is practised during the waking state, it will continue even during the dream state.

2. This hymn may be used either as a prayer to God or as an autosuggestion

ABOUT THIS ISSUE

This month's EDITORIAL is a brief survey of the socio-economic changes currently taking place in India.

IN RECONCILIATION: SPIRITUALITY IN THE HUMAN MILIEU OF TODAY Swami Nityabodhananda touches upon three important problems of the modern world: how to attain harmony within ourselves, how to effect harmony between science and religion, how to establish harmony among the different religions. The author who is the founder-head of the Vedanta Centre of the Ramakrishna Order at Geneva is a distinguished scholar and advanced thinker, well-known all over Europe through his books and lectures in French and English.

Swami Atmasthananda, Assistant Secretary, Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, traces the source of the service activities of the Ramakrishna Mission to the lives and teachings of Sri Ramakrishna and the Holy Mother, and gives a brief account of how relief work is conducted, in the illustrated article **RAMAKRISHNA MISSION'S RELIEF SERVICE: A CONSPECTUS**.

SRI KRISHNA'S FIRST SERMON is a lucid running commentary on the second chapter of the Gita based on the tape-recorded discourses of Swami Sridharananda which are quite popular in Lucknow. The comments of the author, who is the secretary of the Ramakrishna Mission Sevashrama, Lucknow, follow in a general way the interpretation of Śaṅkara but are based chiefly on the author's own wide experiences and mature wisdom.

SRI RAMAKRISHNA'S VISIT TO EAST BENGAL by Swami Prabhananda is not only a painstakingly researched and interesting account but an important historical document. The author, an Assistant Secretary of the Ramakrishna Math and Rama-

krishna Mission, is an authority on Ramakrishna-Vivekananda literature.

IN SRI RAMAKRISHNA AND FRANCIS OF ASSISI AS LOVERS OF GOD Dr. Martin Kämpchen first provides a brief and rather inconclusive comparison between the two ways 'love' is understood in Hinduism and Christianity, and then studies certain traits common to both the saints. The author, who holds a Ph. D from the University of Vienna, is a research scholar at Visvabharati, Santiniketan.

Swami Ekatmananda, President, Vivekananda Ashrama, Shyamala Tal, has provided an interesting profile of **SIR PATRICK GEDDES**, the distinguished social scientist of Scotland, who was a friend of Sister Nivedita and Swami Vivekananda.

We are grateful to Katharine Whitmarsh of Santa Barbara, California, for the brief article **SWAMI VIVEKANANDA AT CAMP PERCY** (based on her personal recollections) and the accompanying photographs. The author is a niece of Mr. Francis Legget and was blessed by Swami Vivekananda when she was a child. She is also the chief author of the monumental work *A Concordance to the Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*.

RECOLLECTIONS OF TAGORE is a short talk given at the Sanskriti Society, Washington D.C in May 1971 by Dr. Kurt F. Leidecker who is emeritus Professor of Philosophy at Mary Washington College and a director of the Thomas Jefferson Institute for the Study of Religious Freedom, Fredericksburg, Virginia. He is an outstanding scholar and Indologist.

RELIGIOUS SITUATION IN AMERICA TODAY by Swami Sarveshananda of the Vedanta Society of Chicago and Prof. William

Buchanan, former Assistant Professor of Languages at Olivet College, Michigan, is a brief survey of the major religious trends in American society today.

Prof. Ranjit Kumar Acharjee's article

THE TRIBALS OF TRIPURA is an outstanding contribution to the sociology of tribal life. The author who is the head of the Department of Philosophy, Ramakrishna Mahavidyalaya, Kailashahar, North Tripura, is a versatile scholar.

SOCIO-ECONOMIC CHANGES IN INDIA

(EDITORIAL)

Addressing a seminar on 'New Perspectives of Economic Growth' organized by the FICCI¹ in December 1985, the eminent Indian economist Dr. A. M. Khusro asserted confidently that India will be the leading economic power in the 21st century. Just as the Americans are currently dominating in the present century and the British did in the last century, the French in the 18th and the Dutch the 17th, so would India assume the forefront in the international scenario in the next century. 'Indian economy has not only sparked off but the fire is on', he said, and added that there was at present a tremendous social awareness in each citizen for a better standard of living. Referring to the central-eastern belt of the country as 'sleeping giants', Dr. Khusro stated that if these giants woke up quickly and contributed to agricultural growth, the nation as a whole would have tremendous economic security. He also spoke of a 'second demand revolution' for industrial goods taking place as a result of the rapid enhancement of the purchasing power generated by farmers, and wanted the industry at large to gear itself to meet this ongoing development.²

1. Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry.

2. Report in *The Times of India*, 28 December 1985.

Had Dr. Khusro made this statement ten years ago, people would have shrugged it off as an official gimmick. The situation is quite different now. The present youthful prime minister of India has succeeded in creating a mood of optimism in all estimations about the nation. His constant reference to 'taking India into the 21st century' has given the nation a much needed goal orientation. It has acquired greater realism and integral thrust than the existing ideologies which have been reduced to shibboleths by contemporary political events.

Most Western nations which see India as a hopelessly poor country struggling for survival, do not understand the perspective in which India sees its future. What India hopes to achieve in the 21st century is not mere economic survival but the recovery of what it has lost—the unrivalled splendour of its past epochs. Until the end of the Middle Ages India was one of the wealthiest nations in the world—the only one among them which got all its wealth from its own indigenous resources without plundering other nations—and the inexhaustible storehouse of spiritual wisdom. The spiritual and material wealth of this country had for centuries flowed out to feed and enlighten other nations. This steady flow was cut off by foreign conquests and sucked dry by colonial

exploitation. To resume the flow, to become once again the provider and purveyor of material and spiritual sustenance to global community—that is what India seeks to achieve in the 21st century. At any rate, this is the understanding that should guide policy making in India.

This goal, however remote it may seem to be, can be attained if this nation undergoes a cultural renaissance and thorough social transformation. The present indications are that these changes are already on foot. Our purpose here is to study these ongoing processes, the forces acting upon them and the obstacles on their paths.

Changes in economic perspectives

The financial policies of the present Union ministry, especially the liberalization of the government's control over private industries in India and over foreign investment, have attracted world-wide attention. During the past year the central government has announced several measures which have helped to improve the climate of foreign trade investment and technology transfer. Private sector participation in the telecommunications field, which has all along been the monopoly of the government, is now permitted. The import-export policy announced in April 1985 has introduced stability and permitted the import of several commodities. Licensing has been modified by abolishing the category of automatic licences, and many items on the automatic permissible lists have been transferred to open general licence (OGL). Concessions have been announced for accelerating industrial development. For example, several industries have been delicensed under the Industrial Development Regulation act. The limit for companies under the Mono-

polies and Restrictive Trade Practices (MRTP) Act has been raised from Rs. 20 crores to Rs. 100 crores. Efforts are being made to streamline the bureaucracy and relax control over trade and investment. The government of India budget for 1985-86 provided several concessions in an effort to accelerate investment and growth. The tax burden has been reduced and the tax structure is being rationalized. Non-resident Indian businessmen operating in other countries are being encouraged to invest in India.

In an interview published in the international quarterly *Leaders*, the prime minister spoke about the rationale behind the new economic policies of his government: 'We are making a judicious combination of deregulation, import liberalization and easier access to foreign technology... Competition within our domestic economy is being fostered. Progressively, we will open our economy to the winds of international competition. In the end, quality-consciousness and cost-efficiency will come out of the pressure of competition.' Asked why not go immediately into full-scale liberalization—why not do a Singapore—the prime minister replied that for a large country like India, 'there is no alternative to self-reliance. We are so large that we can neither afford to depend on the world, nor can the world afford to keep us dependent. That is the logic of our self-reliance.' He predicted a massive expansion of industry and infrastructure in India by the year 2000, which would reduce the share of agriculture in total economy to a quarter.

As is clear from the speeches of chairmen of leading companies appearing in newspapers in recent months, the central government's liberalization policies have generated considerable optimism and enthusiasm in business circles in India, and a new wave of expansion and other

economic activities in the private sector has already risen. U. S. businessmen, who had been discouraged by their past negative experiences in India, have expressed cautious appreciation of the new attitude of the Indian government. Quite a few big companies have started exploring the Indian market. More significantly, several smaller U.S. firms also, it is reported, are showing interest in investing in India. Some U.S. experts believe that it is the Indian market that will provide the green signal to the international business community in the next two decades. The other South East Asian countries like South Korea and Thailand have started showing the 'amber light', meaning, 'Let us stop and see.' As regards Japan, it has already begun a large-scale economic invasion of India's industrial fortresses.

Till now interest in Indian economy has been focussed mainly upon production and manufacture of goods. The enormous potential of the services sector has received scant attention. Services are intangibles provided by bankers, architects, insurers, doctors, lawyers, advertisers, travel agents, airlines, journalists and many others. The economy of most industrialized countries is dominated by services. About two-thirds of the U.S. gross national product (GNP) and 70 per cent of U.S. employment are derived from services. Although less than a quarter of international commerce is stated to be in services, its share is rising. In the 1970s trade in services grew three times more than trade in goods. India is the world's third largest source of professionally trained man-power. The Indian service industry today has both technological and managerial excellence to provide innovative services at competitive prices anywhere in the world. Improvements in the services sector will not only enable this country to meet its deficits in merchandized trade but will radically alter

its position in global economic competition.

The image of India as a hopelessly poor country is changing. Authorities in the World Bank have predicted that the miracle of the 'green revolution' of the 1970s will pale in comparison with the miracle of industrial progress that India is going to achieve in the coming decades.

What made the present government step down from its rigid socialist stance and swing towards the right? What were the compulsions behind this sudden shift in national policy? The answer is, a timely perception of the economic realities of the present-day world. Winds of change have started sweeping the worlds of macro and micro-economics, and economic experts advised the government to unfurl its sails. In this context it is necessary to understand some of the important developments which are modifying economic perspectives in all countries.

1. *Failure of Socialist economy.* Communist countries do not have the problems of inflation, black money, large-scale unemployment and exploitation of the poor. But they have other problems like bureaucratic inefficiency, chronic shortage of essential commodities, low productivity etc. Russia is successful in stockpiling nuclear weapons and in space travel but has failed to raise enough food for its people. The failure of agriculture in Russia, forcing that country to import huge quantities of food grain from capitalist countries, reveals a structural flaw in communist economy. The ideological and political conflicts between Russia and China and between China and Vietnam have shattered the possibility of communism becoming a universally acceptable ideology. The fundamental Marxist principle of self-realization through work has not been actualized in the lives of workers in any communist country.

The most serious set-back in Marxist

economics was the fall of Maoism. It was formerly believed that behind the Bamboo Curtain China was bringing about an economic miracle. But the recent official revelations have dispelled such illusions. It is now known that at least three million people perished in the famine that raged during the Cultural Revolution. Mao's attempt, which the Russians dubbed as mysticism, to eliminate all distinctions among the three classes of intellectuals, industrial workers and peasantry ended in a disastrous failure. In recent years under the leadership of Deng Xiaoping, and in the name of modernization, China has borrowed heavily from the World Bank, is seeking technical collaboration with U.S.A., has allowed its citizens private ownership and free enterprise to a limited extent, and is trying to attract foreign capital investment. China has also been importing food grains in recent years.³

2. *Failure of Keynesian economics.* Until the end of the First World War commercial activity in most countries was of the nature of free enterprise based on the principle of laissez-faire. Adam Smith, the father of modern economics, believed that government regulation of people's economic activities was harmful and the economic system of a country was self-regulating by itself—as if guided by some 'invisible hand', prices, wages and rents would find their natural level, and the goods and services required by the society would be produced in the most effective way. But with the progress of industrialization it was found that wealth got accumulated in the hands of a few who exploited the poor and that, without some central control, prices, employment and

business activity fluctuated violently. The depression and unemployment of 1930s developed into a serious economic crisis. It was then that John Maynard Keynes produced his theory advocating a certain degree of government interference in private business enterprise. Earlier economists had assumed that supply and demand balanced each other automatically, but Keynes showed that demand had to be created by increasing people's capacity to save and invest. For this he suggested that the State should manage the level of demand, through taxation and government spending on goods and services so that there was sufficient purchasing power to ensure that labour, machines and other productive sources were fully employed. It was the application of Keynesian principles that produced the New Deal, Roosevelt's plan which took USA out of the great Depression, and the prolonged period of full employment and industrial boom in Europe after the Second World War. Government control over private enterprise increased with the development of the concept of Welfare State (which was partly inspired by the Marxist ideal), greater spending on defence and the need to contain inflation. At present about a quarter of all goods and services is bought by the State in Britain, the USA and West Germany.

However, several global factors like hike in oil prices, the success of Japanese economy (which emphasizes human relationships in management more than capital), the prolonged recession and stagflation experienced by western countries, particularly the USA, have exposed the inadequacy of Keynesian theory to deal with the economic problems of the present-day world. Several leading economists of today like Milton Friedman are advocating a drastic cut in government's control over private economic activities. According to

3. For a comparative study of Soviet and Chinese models of socialist economy see, Vinod Mehta, *Two Great Economics, the Soviet and the Chinese* (New Delhi: Sterling Publishers, 1982),

them the Keynesians overemphasized the 'demand side' of economics whereas the 'supply side' is equally important. What gives mobility to industry is increased productivity. The economic policies of the Reagan administration in the U.S. are based on this view.

This view seems to have influenced policy makers at Delhi too. The effort made during the last three and a half decades to eliminate the poverty-line and uplift the sunken masses to a higher level of prosperity through equitable distribution of wealth has not been successful. The view that is gaining acceptance among the policy makers at Delhi now seems to be: 'Let there be first of all more goods available in this country; the surplus of wealth will then enforce distribution by its sheer mass.' The government wants to create a situation in which 'commodities will chase consumers'.

3. *Example of South East Asian countries.* The above view seems to have been fostered also by the tremendous economic success attained by four South East Asian countries: South Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong and Singapore. Among these South Korea is unique in that the economic miracle there has been brought about solely through indigenous efforts, and not with the help of multinational corporations as is the case with the other three countries. Japanese occupation and the Korean War had left the economy of South Korea in ruins with only a skeleton of a managerial and technical cadre. By contrast, when the British left this country, India had a sizable entrepreneurial class securely established in cotton and jute textiles, steel and light engineering industries. In 1961 the national product of South Korea was 82 dollars per head of population. By that time India had completed two five-year plans and its per capita figure was \$ 70. By 1984 the Indian per capita figure

had climbed to \$ 200, but South Korea's figure had jumped to nearly \$ 2,000!

South Korea's economic miracle has been attributed to that country's adoption of an 'export-led' or 'outward-looking' growth strategy. During the early years Korea too had adopted stringent protectionist measures to guard its domestic consumer goods market, and did not encourage multinationals to enter there. But once its domestic economy got a firm footing, the government launched a relentless export promotion drive. By contrast, too many controls kept Indian industries stifled for more than twenty years, even after the initial period of growth, with the result that there was little surplus left to be exported. The present government seems to have woken up to the realization that the entire range of controls which were devised to channel investment for certain socio-economic objectives has lost much of its relevance. The present view is that fiscal control should replace physical control and it should be oriented toward growth rather than revenue.

4. *People's capitalism.* Some economists, notably the American John Kenneth Galbraith, believe that the capitalist and communist systems are becoming more and more alike.⁴ Even without going into the technicalities of the issue, it is easy to see that this belief of Galbraith is becoming true to some extent in countries like India. The wings of large industrial houses⁵

4. This is known as Convergence Theory. According to the Zero-sum approach, a nation has to choose either capitalist free enterprise with all its drawbacks or bureaucratic socialism with all its drawbacks: there is no third way. For a masterly analysis of the crisis in modern economics see, Samuel Bowles, David Gordon and Thomas Weisskopf, *Beyond the Wasteland* (New York: Verso Publications, 1985).

5. It is pertinent to point out in this context that India's large industrial companies are

have been clipped through a variety of measures such as the abolition of the managing agency, nationalization of banking and general insurance, the Monopolies and Restrictive Trade Practices Act, etc. They no longer occupy a dominant position; it is the government-owned public sector that dominates the economic scene in India. State-owned financial institutions exercise much control over the private corporate sector. Moreover, the wide dispersion of share holding among the public and the fact that modern management is done by professional, technical personnel, have ushered in the concept of people's capitalism. Some of the government-owned public sector companies (Balmer Lawrie and Hyderabad Allwyn, for instance) allow private share holding to the extent of 24 per cent.

There is one more factor which reduces the gulf between capitalism and communism: the growth of the middle class. The middle class acts as a harsh critic of capitalism and at the same time tries to rise at the expense of the poor. The middle class thus prevents a country from being run over by rank capitalism and also by revolutionary communism. The growth of the middle class (now estimated to be 70 million—more than the total population in several developed countries) especially the rise of the new class of small entrepreneurs (around 2 million) has considerably altered the socio-economic map of India during the last ten years.

pygmies compared with the giant corporations in the West or in Japan. The total assets of Tata Steel, the biggest private company in India, are only 0.98 per cent of those of Exxon, the largest U. S. company and only 0.82 per cent of the Royal Dntch Shell, the largest non-U.S. company. The aggregate assets of the top 542 private firms in India amount only to Rs. 14,760 crores which is only a fourth of the assets of Exxon.

The Bolsheviks had long ago rejected Democratic Socialism as utopian. But Pandit Nehru revived it and made it the foundation of India's national policy. After him Smt. Indira Gandhi made a heroic effort to make this ideal a living reality in the life of the nation. The policies of the present government do not indicate a rejection of this ideal but a more realistic approach to it.

One puzzling aspect of economic planning and activity in India—puzzling especially to western observers—is the absence of Gandhian influence upon them. The question why India ignored, if not rejected, Gandhian economics after independence has not been adequately explained by Gandhians themselves. Pandit Nehru is often blamed for adopting western methods of industrialization and the Soviet model of planning. But at that time most of the closest followers of Gandhiji like Rajendra Prasad, Sardar Patel, Acharya Kripalani and eminent Gandhian thinkers were not only alive but holding high offices in Central and State governments. Why did they not protest?

The truth of the matter is that there were several compelling reasons for ignoring Gandhian economics. The gruesome communal riots and the Kashmir War (followed later on by other wars) showed the impracticability of nonviolence as a social or political strategy and also the need for large spending on defence. Maintenance of a huge army and providing it with sophisticated weapons called for immediate development of industries, communication and transport. Secondly, Gandhian economics had been developed specifically for Indian conditions, and its nation-wide adoption would have meant the isolation of India from international trade and commerce. Thirdly, villages were too numerous and too backward, and the

infrastructure available then was adequate only for urban development.⁶

Pandit Nehru, however, did not neglect villages. He more than compensated for his rejection of the Gandhian paradigm in two ways. In the first place, he conceived the coexistence of village economy and industrialization, and initiated massive schemes of State-sponsored rural development programmes. Secondly, he swallowed pride and sought foreign aid.⁷

Social Changes

Along with the economic change, and partly impelled by it, there is going on in India a radical transformation of the society. Ever since independence the country has been engaged in melding its numerous distinct societies into nationhood and adapting its ancient civilization to the conditions of the modern world. Owing to the immensity of population, the backwardness and inaccessibility of villages, the complexity of social organization and the bewildering diversity of cultures, this social transformation appeared to be slow during the first two decades; but its snowballing effect has picked up momentum and the country is now all set for a social revolution.

6. Paradoxical as it may seem, nowadays the Gandhian way of life seems to appeal more to the people in the developed countries of the West. Having stockpiled nuclear weapons capable of destroying the earth several times over, these nations can now speak of non-violence. Having exploited poor nations, depleted natural resources and polluted the atmosphere to the maximum extent, these rich nations can now say 'Small is beautiful'.

7. Less successful were two other measures Nehru adopted: *humanism* as a substitute for Gandhian interest in vegetarianism, prohibition, cow protection, etc; and *secularism* as a substitute for the Gandhian ideal of harmony of all religions.

Not all these changes are good, though. Quite a number of undesirable changes are taking place impeding development in the social field. A few of the significant social changes now going on in India are briefly discussed below.

Restratification of society into classes. Caste, the ridge-pole of Indian ethos, was originally based on division of labour—each caste identifying itself with a particular profession: the Brāhmin with learning and teaching, the Ksatriya with ruling and fighting, the Vaiśya with commerce, and the Śūdra with agriculture and manual work. This identification has to a great extent disappeared now and men of all castes are found in every profession. On the other hand, society is getting restratified into new classes such as: scientists, teachers, politicians, bureaucrats, defence personnel, businessman, industrial workers and farmers. Thus at present in Indian society two kinds of stratification run parallel to each other: caste and class.

It is possible that in due course the class structure may eventually supplant the caste structure. However, there is no immediate prospect of this happening. On the contrary, caste identities have become very strong and exert a decisive influence on all socio-economic and political events in this country. This is because of the association of caste with privilege. Formerly privilege was associated with the upper castes; now it is associated with the lower castes.

Greater awareness of collective power. Through the *satyāgraha* movement Gandhiji had earlier roused the awareness of collective power in the people. This awareness has become stronger after independence. The last three general elections have clearly demonstrated that the masses have a good grasp of the political scenario of the country and of the power vested in them.

to alter it. The wars with the neighbouring countries have further strengthened the sense of collective power. Democracy has enabled every citizen in India to share this collective power. Had this awareness of collective power prevailed in this country two hundred years ago, the foreign conquest of India would not have taken place.

Along with this there is also a growing awareness of the superior power of the intellect. Indians have always regarded themselves as intellectually equal to western people. The recent achievements in nuclear and space technologies and the work of Indian scientists have considerably boosted the nation's faith in its intellectual self-sufficiency.

One noteworthy effect of this awareness is the elimination of the alleged superiority of certain 'martial' communities like the Rajputs and the Sikhs. Bravery, heroism and patriotism are not the monopoly of any particular caste or race; democracy allows every community and race to bring out these qualities present in them. Moreover, the machine-gun, the guided missile and the supersonic jet have reduced chivalry to a medieval relic.

The rise of the land-owning community. Before independence land was owned mostly by upper caste Hindus. With the abolition of zamindari and land reform measures adopted by State governments, these people lost most of their holdings and moved to urban areas. During the last thirty years the ownership of land has been steadily passing on to some lower caste communities all over India many of whom had formerly been landless tenants. Through various stratagems these communities have been acquiring even those lands which the government had distributed to Harijans and tribals. The land-owning class has become a formidable force in rural areas. It is this class that opposes

the rise of Harijans, partly out of jealousy and partly out of fear of losing cheap agricultural labour. Massacre, arson and various other crimes and repressive acts against the Harijans, which have become a regular feature of rural life especially in U.P. and Bihar, are mostly perpetrated by the members of the land-owning community. In cities and towns these communities have acquired power as liquor contractors, slumlords, smugglers and kingpins of the underworld. Political parties depend upon them for the supply of *mastans*, musclemen and hoodlums who seem to be so essential for political activity in this country. In pre-independent India political activity was dominated by the intelligentsia; their role has shrunk in modern times with the rise of the land-owning community.

Social service awareness. It is heartening to note that educated youths are getting more and more interested and involved in social service. There is now a greater awareness among them about the need to eradicate poverty, untouchability and social injustice. Though unwilling to settle down permanently in villages, many of them are willing to render service in rural and tribal areas for short periods.

Gandhiji's plan of basing rural development entirely on village resources, leadership and initiative has not been carried out on a large scale anywhere in India. Everywhere rural development has depended heavily on urban initiative, resources and leadership, and under the conditions prevailing now in India, this seems to be the only practicable course. The disadvantages of this method are quite obvious, the chief of which being that it destroys the self-sufficiency of the villages, makes them subservient to towns,⁸

8. For instance, almost all the milk produced in a village finds its way to the hotels of the nearest town, leaving little for the nourishment of the children of the village.

and ultimately leads to the urbanization of villages and the introduction of the evils of city life into rural life.

Two problems which need immediate and radical solution are malnutrition and illiteracy. In some states free lunch is provided for school children. But malnutrition affects mostly toddlers belonging to the 1-5 age group. According to the report of the National Institute of Nutrition, Hyderabad, 65 per cent of children of this group suffer from moderate malnutrition and 18 per cent from severe malnutrition. One million children of this age group die every year.

The eradication of illiteracy has always remained one of the most neglected areas of development in India. There are quite a few other areas like the eradication of leprosy, malaria and blindness in children which need concerted action. The government is trying to do its utmost for the welfare of the people, but there is almost an unlimited scope and need for voluntary social service in India. The problem in social service is not money but to motivate people in the right direction in a scientific and organized way. A large number of Hindu religious and secular organizations are at present engaged in voluntary social service. But there seems to be no coordination, mutual consultation or concerted action among them, as exists among the voluntary organizations working under the aegis of Christian churches.

Integration of peripheral communities. For several centuries certain communities, now known as scheduled castes and scheduled tribes, have remained at the fringes of Hindu society. They have never been fully integrated into Hindu society for the simple reason that they have been regarded as outside the four hierarchical castes. The government is doing a lot for their betterment, and many members of these communities have attained high levels

of education, employment and wealth. All this has, however, instead of raising their social status, only provoked the jealousy of caste Hindus who continue to subject them to social discrimination and indignities. How can these peripheral communities attain full integration with the mainstream and a dignified social status?

It is not possible to discuss this vital issue in detail here. It may be mentioned that there are two ways of solving this problem. The first way is to start a powerful religious movement through which the peripheral communities are sucked into the mainstream, made a part and parcel of its cultural framework, and assigned places in the caste hierarchy. In the past this was attempted several times, the most notable of which were the Lingayat movement in the south and Nityananda's Vaiṣṇava movement in Bengal. Similar movements are afoot in modern times also but have not attained great success.

In the second way, an individual or organization penetrates into a peripheral community and tries to transform it by introducing the values of the main stream or secular values. The drawback of this method is that through it the community may lose its original cultural identity and get secularized; even if this is avoided, the community does not get integrated into the mainstream. Most of the social service steps taken by government and private agencies in tribal and rural areas belong to this category.

Need for intellectual awakening. We may conclude this survey of the present socio-economic situation in India by reiterating a point already referred to in these columns on more than one previous occasion. Right from the beginnings of its history India has given primacy to spiritual life, not as a book-centred tradition but as a living unbroken line of experience. However, this interest in

contemplation and transcendence had always been supported by a vigorous intellectual activity. This support crumbled when the vigour of intellectual activity slackened in the 13th and 14th centuries, just when Europe was experiencing a tremendous intellectual awakening. Since then there has been a steady erosion of the intellectual atmosphere in India. By 'intellectual atmosphere' is meant a general social trend which values and favours the pursuit of knowledge for its own sake.

India's contact with the West produced a spiritual awakening in the 19th century and a political awakening in the 20th. These awakenings set in motion two currents of national life which have been running parallel to each other. They can be integrated only through an intellectual awakening of the nation. The absence of this awakening is a major obstacle to India's progress. A lot of social welfare activities are going on in this country, but these are not based on a holistic view of life or indigenous ideology. A lot of technological innovations have been made, but these are not supported by a foundation of interest in basic science. Such a foundation can be provided only by a community of enlightened truth seekers. It is because of the absence of such a foundation that scientific profession in

India is vitiated by selfishness, greed, parochial loyalties and other evils. Many Indian scientists emigrate to the West because they find it difficult to pursue truth here with freedom and dignity.

Some twenty years ago every major American university had at least a hundred Japanese students. Now it is hard to find even a fraction of that number. Most of the former Japanese student immigrants have gone back to their homeland. Perhaps material prosperity may once again create in India, as it did in Japan, favourable conditions for the pursuit of Truth, Goodness and Beauty with freedom and dignity. From this standpoint the socio-economic changes currently going on in India acquire an added significance.

We have only indicated some of the areas of social change currently taking place in India. The emerging picture is the sudden opening of flood-gates and the tumultuous surging forth of a mighty river, dammed up and building up its power for several years. How to prevent the river of prosperity from breaking the banks of the country's ancient spiritual culture, how to take the life-giving waters to the sunken poor, who still constitute 40 per cent of its population—these are the tasks that need the concerted action of all thinking people in India now.

If matter is powerful, thought is omnipotent. Bring this thought to bear upon your life, fill yourselves with the thought of your almightiness, your majesty and your glory.

—Swami Vivekananda

RECONCILIATION: SPIRITUALITY IN THE HUMAN MILIEU OF TODAY

SWAMI NITYABODHANANDA

An inter religious Congress was organized in Paris by the Sufi-Centre near Paris on the 15th and 16th of March, 1985. The theme was 'Reconciliation: Spirituality in the human milieu of today. In addition to the representatives of the World Religions, a specialist in ecology and human environment was also invited. The present writer was the spokesman for Vedanta. The Congress marked an important event in the progress of inter-religious understanding in the West.

For various reasons the present writer can give a short summary of only one speech, that of the representative of Protestantism, Pastor Pierre Fath. He chose for his subject 'Reconciliation and spiritual life according to the Biblical tradition'. The substance of what he spoke is given below.

The disobedience of the First Man and the fruit of the forbidden tree resulted in his fall from Paradise. That was man's separation from God. This separation-division is the parent of all inner rupture to which man is heir. As man has lost touch with his origin, he has lost contact with the goal also. He commits faults. The Christian idea of sin is to be seen in this light. Sin, either as a state or as an act, should be seen as separation from God. The son is separated from the Father and makes mistakes. But the son returns to the Father. The parable of the prodigal son in the Bible is very symbolical of the human situation. Every human being is a prodigal son. He returns to the Father with the return of faith. And he is accepted by the heavenly Father. This is reconciliation. Jesus Christ as the intermediary between God and man assures this reconciliation; the end of all ruptures which man is heir to.

[The present writer read a short paper in French. What follows is an English translation of it.—Ed. P. B.]

A sign of great promise in our times is the liberalization of the frontiers that separate the different disciplines such as science, religion and psychology. A scientist of awakened mind desires to move about in the vast pastures that religion and psychology offer. A Christian wants to deepen his faith by studying the texts of other religions and by practising their disciplines such as yoga and Zen.

The desire for liberalization issues forth from another desire, namely that of reconciliation. An attentive mind cannot miss the numerous evidences of reconciliation of which the most important are:

Reconciliation with one's own self, the deep self, the seat of self-assurance and auto-abundance ;

Reconciling the diverse disciplines, such as Religion, science and psychology ;

Reconciling the living Faiths of the World, recognizing the specificity of each in the grand concert of the Religion of the Supreme God.

Reconciling with ourselves

We are rarely reconciled, harmonized, with ourselves. We are often in conflict with ourselves. We doubt the power of our potential to realize the goal of our life. The doubt arises as we do not know the truth about ourselves and the power this truth possesses to raise us to the summit. Our inside is torn by doubt, anguish and alienation. Vedanta explains this rupture as a stratagem of our consciousness that divides itself into two in order to put man to the test of joining them into a totality.

Reconciliation of other disciplines

The well-known scientist of Berkeley

University, U.S.A., Fritjof Capra, author of *The Tao of Physics*, is a very eloquent example of the present-day reconciliation between Science and Religion. In the beginning of his book he says: 'This book attempts to suggest that modern physics goes far beyond technology, that the way—or Tao—of physics can be a path with a heart, a way to spiritual knowledge and self-realization.' And towards the end: 'For the modern physicists, then, Shiva's dance is the dance of sub-atomic matter. As in Hindu mythology, it is a continual dance of creation and destruction involving the whole Cosmos; the basis of all existence and of all natural phenomena... The bubble-chamber photographs of interacting particles, which bear testimony to the continual rhythm of creation and destruction in the universe are visual images of the dance of Shiva.'

Western psychologists, especially of the Jungian school, attribute a spiritual character to the collective unconscious which is at the root of consciousness. A student of Vedanta finds striking parallel between Mahat and the collective unconscious.

Reconciliation between the great religions of the world

To be able to cultivate this ground one must fulfil two conditions: the recognition of the totality of divine Presence in each religion and, secondly, the acceptance of the specificity of the discipline proposed by each.

God Supreme is present totally in each religion. The question of inferiority or superiority of any particular religion cannot arise. Between two lighted candles there is no superiority or inferiority. We can add any number of lighted candles. The flames remain total in each of them.

Concerning the total presence of the Divine in each religion, another question may arise: In the context of the multiplicity of religions, is the presence total in each? Is the presence total in every religion in spite of their number?

To this, Vedanta will reply by the doctrine of omnipresence of the Divine. The Divine is present totally in each religion in the same way as the quality of sweetness is totally present in every piece of sugar. One can divide the sugar into cubes or small pieces, but one cannot break its quality into bits. Divine presence, divine omnipresence is a quality, an irrepressible, infinite, unlimited and eternal quality. When we are quantity-minded, we miss the message of quality and we think that God is a totalization of things. That would be a wrong interpretation of the Upaniṣadic dictum, 'All this is Brahman' (*sarvam khalvidam brahma*). Can we have the real vision of man by adding up the parts that constitute man? Can we have the kingdom of happiness by adding up the things that make for happiness? *Real happiness is the transformation of quantity into quality which man is capable of.*

The Gita in the 4th and 5th stanzas of the 7th chapter makes out that divine omnipresence is an inescapable presence that envelops us whether we are on earth or in water, in space or in the wind. Also it is a presence that impregnates and illumines our faculties.

The earth, water, fire, air, space, the cosmic mind, the superior reason (Buddhi), the sense of the 'I': all this is my lower nature. Know then, my other nature, which is superior. The Life-light by which I sustain the world of beings. (Compare the Antaryāmin doctrine of the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* 3.7.1-23)

This declaration bears eloquent testimony to the concern of divine omnipresence to envelop man from outside and to inspire

man by illuminating his faculties from inside.

It is very fitting to say in this context that *God is a climate* that envelops man in all circumstances.

God-climate lived intensely in meditation

The omnipresence of divine is lived through in the hours of meditation. The classical instruction is to fix the divine presence symbolized as the *Iṣṭa* or Chosen Deity, in the spiritual heart visualized as a lotus. Every time the image of the *Iṣṭa* slips away, we have to bring it back and fix it again in the heart. But God-climate gives us a slightly different instruction. As He is an enveloping and answering presence in all circumstances, all that we have to do is to open ourselves to His presence and to feel assured that He is

covering us by His climate. There is no need to fix a rendezvous with God in a certain place.

In this context it is very rewarding to know a practical instruction given by Sri Ramakrishna.

One day a Vaiṣṇava lady devotee accompanied by her son of five years approached the Master and said:

'Master, I do not succeed in concentrating my mind during meditation. Kindly help me.'

Master: 'You are a worshipper of Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Meditate on your son thinking that he is Kṛṣṇa.'

Devotee: 'But then, Master, my boy never sits quiet. He runs round, throwing stones at the birds and so on. How can I fix my attention on him and concentrate on him as Kṛṣṇa?'

Master: 'It is true that your child is always running about. But your love for him envelops him wherever he is. This love does not move. Meditate on this love. God is a climate that envelops us. You have only to feel that He envelops you.'

RAMAKRISHNA MISSION'S RELIEF SERVICE : A CONSPECTUS

(Illustrated)

SWAMI ATMASTHANANDA

Ramesh Patnaik was one of the happiest persons in Rameshwarpur village belonging to Bhadrak sub-division of Balasore district, Orissa. An intelligent and hardworking man, he had adopted improved methods of farming, and now his paddy field was about to yield bumper crops. Whenever during his leisure hours he looked at his lush green land, his heart was filled with joy and deep satisfaction. However, destiny had other plans. After a hard day's labour on the 16th of October 1985 when he was fast asleep, suddenly there arose a terrific gale which battered his house and threatened his life and the lives of other members of his family. The situation became worse

when the storm was accompanied by a devastating flood of the river Vaitarani. As the water level started rising, Ramesh together with other marooned villagers rushed to a higher plot of ground and saved their lives.

This is a typical scene where the Ramakrishna Mission is called upon to operate its relief service. The scene shifts to another village near Rajahmundry in Andhra Pradesh. A freak fire in a cattle shed was fanned by strong winds and within hours reduced all the houses to smouldering hulks. Here again, the Ramakrishna Mission was swift to swing into action, and when the monks and volunteers

reached the village, they saw the villagers huddled together in open fields, gazing at the ruins in despair.

All over India wherever calamities strike, the Ramakrishna Mission is among the first to organize relief operations. Its social orientation, integrated internal administration, dedicated lay and monastic membership, and vast resource potential enable it to mobilize men and materials at short notice on a massive scale for the alleviation of human suffering. Social service of various kinds is a national commitment of the Organization as a whole and a personal creed for its individual members. This social service gospel is built upon a foundational philosophy of life developed by its founder-prophet, Swami Vivekananda.

The gospel of service

God has been worshipped in various forms since time immemorial, and the history of human civilization reveals the process of evolution of various images of God like stone idols, icons, symbolic representations and so on. Sri Ramakrishna, however, raised what has become the question of the new age of humanism: 'If God can be worshipped through an image, why shouldn't it be possible to worship Him through a living person?'¹ He further asked, 'Does God exist only when I think of Him with my eyes closed? Doesn't He exist when I look around with my eyes open?' 'Now when I look around with my eyes open', he added, 'I see that God dwells in all beings.'² It was this cosmic revelation of the great Master that led to the formulation of the Gospel of social service: 'Service to Jīva (creatures)

is worship to Śiva (God)'. Swami Vivekananda, commenting on a similar statement made by his Master in another context, exclaimed:

At, what a wonderful light have I got today from the Master's words! What a new and attractive Gospel have we received today through those words of his, wherein a synthesis has been effected of sweet devotion to the Lord with Vedantic knowledge, which is generally regarded as dry, austere and lacking in sympathy with the sufferings of others. In order to attain the non-dual knowledge, we have been told so long that one should have to renounce the world and the company of men altogether, and retire to the forest, and mercilessly uproot and throw away love, devotion and other soft and tender feelings from the heart. Formerly, when the aspirant tried to attain knowledge as prescribed in ancient works, he regarded the whole universe and each person in it as obstacles in the path of his spiritual progress—an attitude which produced in men a sort of antipathy towards society and often led them away from the true spiritual path. But from what the Master in ecstasy said today, it is gathered that the Vedanta of the forest can be brought to human habitation, and that it can be applied in practice to the work-a-day world... Thus serving the Jīva as Śiva he will have his heart purified and be convinced in a short time that he himself is also a part of God, the Bliss Absolute, the eternally pure, wakeful and free being...³

This, in a nut shell, is the philosophy behind the various humanitarian services undertaken by the Ramakrishna Mission. This concept preached by Swami Vivekananda for the welfare of the world had been put into practice by Sri Ramakrishna and Sri Sarada Devi in their own holy lives as the following anecdotes culled from their biographies reveal.

The Master's heart was filled with compassion to see the poverty and misery of the village people when going through a village near

1. M., *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, Translated by Swami Nikhilananda (Madras: Sri Ramakrishna Math. 1974) p. 659

2. Ibid p. 522

3. Swami Saradananda, *Sri Ramakrishna the Great Master*, Translated by Swami Jagadananda (Madras: Sri Ramakrishna Math, 1979) Pp. 939-40

Vaidyanath at the time of his pilgrimage to Kasi, Vrindavan and other holy places with Mathur. 'You are', said he to Mathur, 'but a manager of the Mother's estate. Give these people sufficient oil to cool their heads and a piece of cloth to each and feed them to their fill once.' At first Mathur was a little hesitant and said, 'Father, the pilgrimage will require much money, and the poor are too many. I may later be in want of money if I begin to do all that. What do you advise under these circumstances?' But the Master was not satisfied with this reply. There was an incessant flow of tears from his eyes to see the misery of the villagers and his heart was filled with an unprecedented compassion. 'You rascal, I will not go to your Kasi. I will remain here with them; I will not leave them behind and go.' Saying so, he became obstinate like a boy and went and sat down amongst the poor people. Seeing such compassion in the Master, Mathur had bundles of cloth brought from Calcutta and did as Father had asked him to do. Beside himself with joy to see the villagers happy, Father also bade goodbye to them and started gladly with Mathur on his journey to Kasi.⁴

On another occasion the Master accompanied Mathur to his zamindari estate at a place called Kalaighat, near Ranaghat. The Master was very much moved to see the extremely miserable condition of the men and women of this village. He invited them all and made Mathur give each of them oil sufficient to cool his head, a full meal and a piece of new cloth.⁵

When Sri Sarada Devi was eleven years old (1864) the country-side around her village Jayrambati was ravaged by a terrible famine. Her father had garnered some paddy and though he was by no means affluent, he was moved so much by the appalling misery around that he opened his granary and started a free canteen. The Holy Mother described it thus: 'What a dire famine raged there once and how many starving people came to our house! We had stocked the previous

year's produce. My father had the paddy husked into rice and got potfuls of *khicudi* cooked by mixing it with black lentils... On some days the number of people became so great that *khicudi* ran short. Cooking would restart at once. No sooner was the hot food served on the leaves, than I would fan it with both hands so that it might cool quickly. For, alas, the hungry stomachs could not brook delay!'⁶

Organized relief work

The first organized relief work of the Ramakrishna Mission was started at Murshidabad on the 15th of May, 1897. One of the disciples of Sri Ramakrishna, Swami Akhandananda, while wandering in North Bengal was shocked to find the utter poverty of the famine-stricken villagers. He wrote to Swami Vivekananda who was then staying at Belur Math. Swamiji promptly responded encouraging Akhandananda to go ahead with his relief programme. To get the work started Swami Vivekananda sent Rs. 150.00 along with two monastic workers—Swami Nityananda and Br. Suren (later Swami Sureswarananda). On the 15th of May, 1897, Swami Akhandananda distributed rice to 18 famine-stricken persons. Thus began the organized Relief Service of the Ramakrishna Mission. Indeed this was a historic day.

The next major Relief work conducted by the Ramakrishna Mission under the guidance of Swami Vivekananda was plague relief in Calcutta. The whole metropolis of Calcutta was reeling under the epidemic of plague from the beginning of 1899. As the number of deaths mounted, the inhabitants of Calcutta started moving out of the city helter-skelter. Moreover,

4. Ibid p. 531

5. Ibid Pp. 322-23

6. Swami Gambhirananda, *Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi* (Madras: Sri Ramakrishna Math, 1977) Pp. 22-23

owing to ignorance and wrong notions, many people were against inoculation provided by the Government. It was then when there was an utter chaos and confusion in the city that the Ramakrishna Mission plague service was initiated on Good Friday, the 31st of March, 1899, under Swamiji's instructions. He himself came to live in a poor house to inspire courage in the people and cheer up the workers. The whole management was placed in the hands of Sister Nivedita as President and Secretary, Swami Sadananda as the Officer in-chief, with Swamis Shivananda, Nityananda and Atmananda as assistants.⁷ The wonderful manner in which Sister Nivedita, Swami Sadananda and others performed these relief services has ever remained an object lesson for all the relief work conducted by the Mission afterwards.

Types of relief service

Following these pioneering efforts, the Ramakrishna Math and the Ramakrishna Mission have been for nearly ninety years engaged continually in various types of relief service in different parts of India as well as in neighbouring countries. The different types of relief service conducted by the Ramakrishna Math and the Ramakrishna Mission may be listed as follows:

1. Flood Relief
2. Cyclone Relief
3. Drought Relief
4. Famine Relief
5. Earthquake Relief
6. Fire Relief
7. Medical Relief
8. Distress Relief
9. Winter Relief
10. Communal Disturbances Relief
11. Rehabilitation.

⁷ His Eastern and Western disciples, *Life of Swami Vivekananda*. First Edition (Mayavati: Advaita Ashrama, 1915). Vol. III, p. 360

Sequence of relief operations

When the news of any major calamity in any part of the country reaches its headquarters at Belur Math, the Ramakrishna Mission endeavours to commence relief operations immediately in the worst affected areas. At the outset a preliminary survey is conducted so as to assess the nature and extent of the damage done as well as to find out the immediate need of the affected people. Usually, food materials—dry or cooked—constitute one of the primary items of distribution. In places where large numbers of people are rendered homeless by the fury of nature, kitchens are opened to serve *khicudi* (boiled rice and pulses mixed with spices and vegetables) among the distressed. In other places, dry doles such as rice, wheat flour, pulses, salt, vegetables etc. are distributed. After a few days, when the flood waters recede or the debris of the ruins are removed, our monastics and volunteers conduct a comprehensive survey, prepare a list of people needing help and organize the distribution of saris, dhotis, children's garments, adults' clothes, blankets, cooking utensils and other items of domestic use among the needy, irrespective of caste, creed or religion. Wherever necessary, teams of doctors and paramedical staff are kept engaged in treating patients and supplying necessary medicines free of charge. The aim is to enable the beneficiaries to go back to their normal livelihood in the shortest possible time. This leads us to the next phase of relief viz. economic rehabilitation.

A sudden havoc—storm, flood, fire, earthquake or whatever—may deprive farmers, craftsmen and traders of their respective sources of income and render them utterly helpless. Attempts are therefore made to help them to start their lives anew. For example, seeds and fertilizers

are supplied to the affected farmers, appropriate tools and equipments are given to artisans, merchandise is purchased for the helpless traders, and so on. The reader can have an idea of the magnitude and variety of relief goods usually distributed through our relief camps from the Table 1 given at the end of this article.

Our Primary Relief Operations, in many cases, are followed by Rehabilitation Projects. Whenever there is any major devastation and large numbers of dwelling houses, schools, temples and other structures are ruined, Ramakrishna Mission launches low-cost housing projects. Bamboo, timber, bricks or precast cement panels are used for erecting walls and, straw, country tiles, G.I. sheets, asbestos cement sheets, precast panels or reinforced cement concrete are used as roofing-material. The material and design used in a given situation are determined by various factors like local resources, meteorological condition, availability of funds etc. Our rehabilitation projects are not confined to the construction of residential quarters, community hall-cum-shelter houses, school buildings, temples etc. but also extend to sinking tube wells, constructing overhead tanks, electrification,

providing internal roads, and so on. The photographs published with this article are intended to give the reader a general idea of the relief operations which are planned and executed with meticulous care.

Participation

Obviously, to organize and conduct such massive relief operations—both primary relief and rehabilitation—large funds are required. To inform our readers about the dimensions of our relief activities, the annual primary relief expenditure incurred during the last 4 years is presented in Table 2, and the details of the rehabilitation projects undertaken during the same period are given in Table 3. Needless to say, such huge projects could not have been completed without the unstinted help and cooperation of the large-hearted public. Whenever there was a major calamity, the generous public rose to the occasion and helped us with money, materials, labour and in various other ways. Our humble efforts of service and worship of God in the suffering humanity will continue successfully as long as this loving cooperation of the people continues.

Table 1

GOODS DISTRIBUTED FROM APRIL 1981 TO MARCH 1985

<i>Item</i>	<i>Quantity</i>	<i>Item</i>	<i>Quantity</i>
Rice	5,67,051.5 Kg.	Assorted Clothings	377 pcs.
Dal	19,846.4 "	Children's Garments	81,886 "
Grain	93,001 "	Adults' Garments	11,910 "
Salt	25,154.5 "	Genji (Vest)	63,122 "
Wheat	6,651 "	Lungi	4,726 "
Atta	425 "	Long Cloth	38,773 "
Chira	1,258 "	Blouse	7,244 "
Gur	1,595.1 "	Petty Coat	404 "
Potatoes	21,000 "	Napkin	1,020 "
Mustard Oil	6,785 "	Old Clothings	49,358 "
Other Oil	48 "	Bed Sheet	1,613 "
Ghee	32 "	Quilt	25 "

Spices	632.3	Kg.	Mekhala Chaddar	426	pcs.
Rava	300	"	Woollen Chaddar	300	"
Barley	52.5	"	Woollen Blanket	12,205	"
Sago	3	"	Old Woollen Sweaters	4,228	"
Fried Gram	60	"	Carpet	8,600	"
Tea Leaf	977	"	Mat	2,223	"
Sugar	4,640	"	Medicine	3	boxes
Glucose	4.5	"	Soap Cakes	1,205	pcs.
Baby Food	65 Tins &	36	Seeds	10,042.5	Kg.
Milk Powder	790	"	Fertilizers	31,450	"
Biscuit	23.5	Tins	Spade	200	Nos.
Food Packets	41,770	Nos.	Axe	44	"
Tobacco Leaf	2	Kg.	Knife	20	"
Coal	48,824.9	"	Sewing Machines	6	"
Fire Wood	600	"	Tailoring Equipments	6	"
Utensils	1,05,067	pcs.	Washermen's Vessels	402	"
Buckets	300	Nos.	Farmers' Implements	6	sets
Plastic Glass	182	"	Carpenters' Implements	4	"
Plastic Bati	300	"	Barbers' Implements	5	"
Lantern	3,433	"	Cobblers' Implements	7	"
Kerosene Lamp	300	"	Blacksmiths' Implements	5	"
Candle Stick	6,048	pkts.	Bullock Carts	2	Nos.
Match Box	21,365	"	Cows	1,218	"
			Camels	27	"
Dhoti	1,00,868	pcs.	Diesel Engine with Pump	1	set
Sari	92,933	"	Text Books	660	Nos.
Cotton Chaddar	15,005	"	Exercise Books	768	"
Cotton Blanket	3,697	"	Tarpaulin	300	"

Table 2

RAMAKRISHNA MATH & RAMAKRISHNA MISSION

PRIMARY RELIEF EXPENDITURE

FROM APRIL 1981 TO MARCH 1985

Year	In Cash	In Kind	Total
	Rs.	Rs.	Rs.
1981-82	4,62,658.05	94,952.35	5,57,610.40
1982-83	27,12,692.19	27,30,531.68	54,43,223.87
1983-84	9,56,329.72	9,20,558.85	18,76,888.57
1984-85	27,13,150.41	8,68,561.04	35,81,711.45
TOTAL:	Rs. 68,44,830.37	46,14,603.92	1,14,59,434.29

Table 3
**REPORT ON REHABILITATION WORK
 FOR VICTIMS OF FLOOD, FIRE AND CYCLONE
 FOR THE PERIOD FROM APRIL 1981 TO MARCH 1985**

A. <i>Flood Rehabilitation:</i>	No. of Houses	No. of Schools	No. of Temples	Expenditure	
				Total Rs.	Grand Total Rs.
1. Srikakulam (Andhra Pradesh)	200 (Pucca)	1 Balwadi (Pucca)	1 Ramalaya (Pucca)	10,32,219.42	
2. Gunupur (Orissa)	246 (Semi Pucca)			14,03,941.71	
3. Bali-Dewanganj (West Bengal) (Hooghly)		1 Girls' School (Pucca) (final phase)	1 Sitala Temple (Pucca)	9,85,533.89	
4. Malda (West Bengal)	2012 (Tile roofing)	1 School reconstruction (Damodarpur) (Pucca)		27,80,622.93	
5. Singhee & Charki (W.B.) (Birbhum) (Burdwan)	108 (Thatched) and 22 repaired & 2 Tube-wells			2,47,428.22	
6. Pataghat (Meghalaya)	6 (Thatched)			3,000.00	
7. Morvi (Gujarat)	111 (Pucca)	2 Schools (Pucca)		10,41,748.81	
8. Junagadh (Gujarat)	120 (Pucca)	3 Pucca Schools with 3 Teachers' Qrts., 1 Dispensary with 1 Doctor's Qrts. and 2 Wells & 2 Tube-wells		58,23,034.35	1,33,17,529.33
B. <i>Fire Rehabilitation:</i>					
1. Shella (Meghalaya)	17 (C.I. Sheet roofing)			24,940.45	
2. Gidhuria (West Bengal)	89 (Tile roofing)			74,700.00	
3. Khatra & Bankura (W.B.)	19 (C.I. Sheet roofing)			74,562.14	1,74,202.59
C. <i>Cyclone Rehabilitation:</i>					
1. Gaighata (24-Parganas) (W.B.)	485 (C.I. Sheet roofing)	1 Girls' School reconstruction		10,60,876.83	
2. Krishnanagar (Nadia) (W.B.)	68 (Thatched) and 15 repaired			29,669.33	10,90,546.16
				Grand Total:	Rs. 1,45,82,278.08

SRI KRISHNA'S FIRST SERMON

(A Running Commentary on the 2nd Chapter of the Gita)

SWAMI SRIDHARANANDA

Introduction

In the first chapter on *Viṣāda-yoga* Arjuna, an excellent specimen of manhood of his age, so full of self-confidence and pride in his past accomplishments and in his ability to surmount any obstacle in life, is suddenly made aware of his total inadequacy to cope with the situation confronting him. This self-confident hero of many a battle comes to the end of his tether, as it were, and cries out for succour and guidance. And God, who ever awaits this awakening of the *jīvātmā* to his utter helplessness, enters his life as the Friend, Philosopher and Guide, to lift him up from the depths of despair.

Although Arjuna was extremely competent and well-versed in all branches of learning and arts which were parts of his dharma, he lacked one of the most important qualities of life—capacity for self-management. With his unerring intuition Śrī Kṛṣṇa has understood this: that though Arjuna knows all other techniques of management, he has not the knowledge of himself on which the art of self-management depends. Swami Vivekananda used to say that knowledge is equivalent to *śakti* or power. As long as man had no knowledge of the structure of the atom he could not bring out the awesome power hidden in it. But after gaining that knowledge it followed as a natural course that all the electronic and nuclear powers of the atom came to be utilized in the service of man. Therefore Śrī Kṛṣṇa begins his very first sermon by telling Arjuna that he must have true knowledge about his own nature, of which he has been unaware so

far, and only then can he make himself strong enough to handle the problem of dharma on the battlefield of Kuru.

The argument is often advanced that the general technique of education is to start the student from the kindergarten class, take him step by step through higher stages of learning till the highest form of knowledge is taught to him at the post-graduate level. Why is it, then, that here at the very beginning Sāṅkhya-yoga, the knowledge of Self-realization is being propounded to Arjuna? The answer given by the commentators is: when a man becomes ill, the treatment and medicines given to him should be proportionate to the severity of his illness. We see into what depths of ignorance, diffidence and despair Arjuna has fallen. To counteract that utter confusion of mind an equivalent measure of highest philosophy must be imparted to him, here and now. Because he displays a complete loss of sense of propriety (*dharma-saṁmūḍhatā*) as well as a complete distortion of perspective of Reality (*ajñāna*) the wisdom needed to rehabilitate him must be capable of removing the root cause of his fall. This only Self-knowledge can do.

In the second chapter Śrī Kṛṣṇa not only expounds the nature of the Atman, but also teaches how to reprogramme one's life and actions by basing them on this knowledge and concludes his sermon by showing the characteristics of a person who has succeeded in this task.

Seeing Arjuna's pitiable condition in which his emotions rather than he himself were in control of the situation Śrī Kṛṣṇa addresses him thus:

Arjuna, from where has this darkness of delusion come to you in such a perilous moment of crisis? This dejection is suitable only for a non-Aryan; it will lead you to neither felicity in heaven nor reputation in this world. (2.2)

Śrī Kṛṣṇa is contemptuous of Arjuna's want of mental and moral courage, covered though it is in a religious garb. This aspect of Arjuna's personality had remained concealed, and now that it has come out, Śrī Kṛṣṇa deals with it like a good psychologist. Arjuna is so despondent that Śrī Kṛṣṇa must look into the very depth of his being to discover his most sensitive point, the raw spot in Arjuna's heart by rubbing which he can be roused. That is why he refers to Arjuna's un-Āryan behaviour. The terms Āryan and non-Āryan in those days meant the cultured, highminded and the uncultured, lowminded, respectively. Kṛṣṇa warns Arjuna: 'If you are looking for the attainment of heaven after death, you will forfeit it by running away from battle, for cowardice in a man of the warrior caste closes the door of heaven for him. If you are looking for fame or glory in this world, that too you will lose by your cowardly act'. He continues his admonition:

O Pārtha, do not yield to unmanliness. This attitude (of weakness and cowardice) is unseemly in you. Get rid of this paltry faintness of heart and stand up, O Parantapa (scorcher of foes). (2.3)

As yet Śrī Kṛṣṇa is merely exhorting Arjuna to be brave without starting any argument. He is urging him to acquire a new perspective and will-power. To stand up does not merely mean that Arjuna should rise physically to fight, but that he should arouse himself intellectually and emotionally from the depth of despair into which he has fallen. But Arjuna is so overpowered with delusion that Kṛṣṇa's

sarcastic jabs do not rouse him up. He is unable to think of anything beyond his helplessness. So he says:

O Madhusudana, O destroyer of enemies, how can I attack Bhīṣma and Droṇa who are worthy of worship, with arrows?

It is better to beg alms for one's livelihood in this world than kill these venerable teachers. By killing them all our enjoyment of wealth and sense-objects will be stained with their blood. (2.4,5)

Arjuna is humble and sincere enough to understand that something is wanting in him. But he is also convinced of the justifiability of his thinking and is trying to reason out his case again. Since freedom of self-expression should not be curbed in anyone, Śrī Kṛṣṇa is giving him a patient hearing. Arjuna continues:

I do not know what is preferable for us (to fight or not to fight) nor do I know whether we shall conquer them or they will conquer us. [Or, of these two alternatives—either I kill them and enjoy the fruits of victory or I do not fight but renounce my rights and become a mendicant monk—I can hardly tell which is the better. That is to say, I am no longer able to think because my mind is so confused]. The sons of Dhrtarastra are standing in battle array against us, but by slaying them we would not like to live a single day in this world. (2.6)

Arjuna has by now gained enough introspection to understand that in his present psychological predicament he is unable to guide himself and that he needs the illuminating guidance of a spiritual master. Till now he had rated his own worth and abilities very highly but now he makes submission in all humility:

My inherent nature (*svabhavaḥ*) has been overpowered by the defect of commiseration (*kārpānya*) and my mind is confused as regards my duty (*dharma*). Therefore I implore you to tell me definitely what is good for me. I am your disciple, I have taken refuge in you. (2.7)

Kārpānyadoṣa literally means the fault of miserliness. A miser (*kṛpāṇa*) is one who does not know the worth of his own wealth. He hoards money and yet wears only tattered clothes; he has enough to eat but he starves. That means he has a sense of acquisition and possession but no sense of utilization of his wealth for personal comfort. Then, there are other forms of miserliness (*kārpāṇya*). He is also a miser who does not know how to make use of his spiritual wealth. Arjuna conforms to this definition of a *kṛpāṇa* because, in spite of being so well-endowed with virtues and capacities, he feels he is not in a position to make use of his talents in this predicament.

That Arjuna has raised the question of dharma is very significant. The real duty of a person is action according to the laws of his own nature: that is his *dharma*. It is the means of his liberation: by the performance of his *dharma* the veil of *karma* covering his real Self is removed and knowledge of Self regained. So when Arjuna says that his mind is confused about dharma (*dharma saṁmūḍha cetāḥ*) he is showing the attitude of a person desirous of knowledge. Psychologically, it is clear that he is now receptive to higher ideas. He is aware of his capabilities but is only confused. He is no longer desirous of that which is attractive and pleasing (*preya*) but longs for the ultimate Good (*śreya*). He also knows that he is incapable of reaching that goal without the guidance and help of a supremely wise teacher. This state of mind is expressed in his calling himself a disciple of Kṛṣṇa. The spirit of dedication and self-surrender is implied in the saying, 'I am at your feet'. And the teacher may now give the highest knowledge after this declaration.

Nothing saps the vitality of a person as indecision and mental conflicts. Arjuna

finds them more intolerable than the exertion and pain of warfare. He says:

This grief is drying up my senses and faculties. And I see that neither sovereignty over a prosperous and powerful kingdom nor control over the gods can dispel this sorrow. (2.8)

It should be noted that previously Arjuna had not made any comparison between *śreya* and *preya*. But now all of a sudden he says that he wants *śreya*—is he speaking like a tutored parrot? No. Though not completely unmindful of worldly pleasures, he knows fully well that they will not give him the peace and tranquillity of mind for which he is now craving.

Sañjaya, the narrator, now tells king Dhṛtarāstra:

Having spoken in this manner to Śrī Kṛṣṇa, Arjuna, the conqueror of sleep, and conqueror of his foes, said to Govinda again, 'I will not fight', and became silent. (2.9)

These appellations ('conqueror of sleep' etc) point to the fact that Arjuna's weakness is only a passing one, as his own nature is devoid of ignorance and the Lord himself is present to dispel his momentary confusion.

Sañjaya continues his narration:

Then O Dhṛtarāstra, seeing him so much assailed by sorrow in the midst of the two armies, Śrī Kṛṣṇa said these words to him, as if smiling (2.10)

Kṛṣṇa's smile is meant not only to put Arjuna to shame, but to indicate that there is a solution to his predicament of *dharma*, as well as an illuminating truth to put an end to his present ignorance. The blessed Lord said:

You are lamenting over things not worth lamenting, and yet talking like a learned man

(about the sin of killing kith and kin). The truly wise grieve neither for the living nor for the dead. (2.11)

Srī Kṛṣṇa is pointing out to Arjuna the schizophrenic attitude that has developed in him as well as reminding him that his sense of proportion is out of joint. His split personality is evident in his lamenting over things not worth lamenting while engaging in *prajñāvāda*, tall talk which reveals lack of understanding of the existential meaning of life and death. The question is, why should life and death be not thought about? The highest philosophy of the indestructibility of the soul is going to be propounded to Arjuna to lift him out of his despair. In the ultimate analysis, neither life nor death affects the real Self, and the amount of sanctity attached to both is false. From the *pāramārthika* view point of Vedānta,¹ the so-called life

1. Vedānta postulates four levels of existence-consciousness. There is the *alīka* or level of absolute non-existence, like the son of a barren woman, the hare's horns, the sky-lotus etc. which are just concepts without any objective reality corresponding to them. Such things have only a momentary existence in your imagination. The *Prātibhāsika sattā* is the level of illusory existence-consciousness as of a dream state or the experience of mistaking a rope for a snake in the dark. This is nothing but a reflection of accumulated waking experiences which is so vivid and real while it lasts that it even produces physical reactions like weeping, laughing, fear etc. but is contradicted by stronger and more durable waking or later experiences. The *vyāvahārika sattā* is the level of experiential objects and their consciousness in the world, which is continuous from day to day, from birth till death, though it is sometimes interrupted by the *alīka* and the *pratibhāsa*, which it contradicts. Though it appears very real, substantial, concrete, there is the fourth experience to countermand it. This is the *pāramārthika sattā*, the level of absolute unity of being and consciousness, identity of Atman-Brahman in *Samādhi*. Through total control of body, mind and senses, and one-pointed

and death are not given importance except as opportunities to strive for the highest end of Self-realization. As a result of good karmas of the past one obtains human birth. Death only means that one innings of existence is over. Further opportunities for Self-realization are provided in succeeding lives. Therefore, to the *pañḍita*, one who has attained the absolute truth of Atman, life and death, including sojourn in heaven, are passing phases not to be given importance to.

Verily, there never was a time when I did not exist or when you or these rulers of men did not exist. Nor is it a fact that all of us shall cease to exist, hereafter. (2.12)

The three orders of time—past, present, future—are being considered. In the past, i.e. before our birth, I, you and they may not have been manifest in these forms, but it does not mean that we were not, for we did exist. And, in the future, when this apparent present life ends, it will not mean that we will disappear with the disappearance of the bodily frame. We were, are and will be the true Self behind all bodies; the manifestation or non-manifestation of the physical form is immaterial. We are immortal entities, transcending the dimensions of past-present-future time.

The concepts of space-time are relative to the appearance of the subject or the embodied soul. In other words, *deśa-kālā* apply to the *pātra*: I see changes, and equate them to moments of time and points of space. So space-time exists

concentration, the veil of the phenomenal world (*vyāvahārika jagat*) created by ignorance (*ajñāna*) is pierced and the substratum of Existence-Consciousness-Bliss, (*Saccidānanda*) underlying it is realized. Then the sense of the apparent world's reality is permanently replaced by the consciousness of the sole reality of Brahman.

because I am manifest in a body ; when I am dead and gone they will not exist for me. When it is said that the whole world exists, it only means that it exists in the space-time frame conceived by each one of us. The collective concept of space-time conceived by these numberless individual selves gives a semblance of continuity or immortality. Timeless, *trikālāṭita*, Atma means that space-time is projected on the ground of *adhiṣṭhāna* of Atman. Superimposition, *adhyāsa*, of the illusory snake takes place on the rope: the snake is dependent on the rope for its existence, but the rope does not depend for its existence on the snake which is conceived on it. Similarly, *pāramārthika sattā*, Atman-Brahman, is existent beyond space-time-subject which are conceived by us and superimposed on It.

Here the meaning is that the appearance on the scene of the human body and the disappearance from the scene of the human body are merely illusory changes projected on the everlasting existence of the Self. So attention must be fixed on the immortal true Self and not on the transient body.

As childhood, youth and old age are experienced by this body but are attributed to the *jivātma*, the dweller in the body, even so this embodied soul attains another body. The man of steadfast mind does not get deluded and grieve about this. (2.13)

When I say that I have been passing through the stages of a new-born baby, a child, an adolescent, a young man in his prime and an old man, the 'I' refers to the subject residing in the body and identifying itself with each successive phase of the body. Similarly, extending the logic of this argument, after losing this body and getting into another body, the feeling of 'I-ness' and 'mine-ness' should persist with regard to that body also. The error lies in identifying yourself only with the

present physical frame, when, in fact, even in this lifetime you keep on changing this identification. It is illogical to start the identifying process at the point of this physical birth and end it at the point of this dissolution. Why not extend it both ways, before birth and after death? A stable-minded wise man who knows this does not get confused, worked up or unnecessarily shaken by death.

The philosophic discussion between the Teacher and the pupil in the Gītā is in the form of a flawless discussion, conducted according to logical rules and aiming at finding out the truth of the subject under discussion. Śrī Kṛṣṇa wishes to propound a definite philosophical doctrine and speaks very cogently. He foresees the questions arising in his listener's mind and supplies the rational clarification in the very process of defining and elaborating his ideas, so that at the end Arjuna is absolutely convinced.

Owing to his limited vision, Arjuna cannot see the truth that the continuity of the Atman and even of the *jivātman* (embodied soul) is uninterrupted by birth and death as it is by changes in the body. So far Śrī Kṛṣṇa has tried to build in him the idea that physical birth and physical death are changing phases of the body, which is different from the real Self. So these changes should not be his prime concern, otherwise he would be overpowered by pity and sorrow.

Arjuna might reply that this high philosophy is good enough for a knower of the Self or one of steadfast mind who has attained the *pāramārthika* stand-point, but I am not such a *paṇḍita*. So pleasure-pain and all the other polar experiences of life have gained additional importance in my thinking. Can I wish away life and death, slaying and repentance? He is speaking from the stand-point of *vyāvahārika*

*mithyā*² because he is living through it,

2. Samkaracarya defines the nature of *vyavahāra* or experiential existence-consciousness at the opening of the *Śārīraka Bhāṣya*: *satya-anṛte mithunīkṛtya, ahamidam mamedam iti, naisargikoyam loka-vyāvahārah*. The totally real Sat (*paramārtha*) and the totally unreal *asat* (*alīka*) can never be combined together, as day and night cannot be combined; they do not coexist. But Sat and *anṛta* can coexist and are combined in *vyavahāra*. Here *anṛta* means *mithyā* or that which appears to be real at a particular time but is not as permanent as Sat. *Mithyā* does not mean that it is unreal but that its reality does not stand the *pāramārthika* test of non-contradiction (*abādhita*) in the three orders of time. In the *vyāvahārika* experience the field of normal human consciousness in the continuum of space-time-causation is superimposed on the substratum of *pāramārthika* Sat. Its appearance of reality is merely the reflection of the eternal Reality of its ground, *adhithana*, like the moon which shines by the reflected light of the sun but has no light of its own. And this *vyāvahārika jagat* or phenomenal world does not endure either through the three orders of time or through the continuum of space-time-causation. Because of its constantly changing nature it is unreal, and the changeless consciousness, Atman, which is aware of this change, is the only Reality.

Mithyā is defined as a phenomenon which is neither as real as Absolute Existence or Atman nor as unreal as the totally non-existent or *alīka*. It is not positively stated for psychological reasons. Though it appears very positive to us today, our goal is to know the Supreme Reality beyond this conception of second-hand positivity. Lest we add another positivity to it, it is defined in a negative way (*neti mukha*) and not in a positive way (*iti mukha*). According to the Upaniṣads the only way to describe even Atman-Brahman is *neti, neti*, but that *neti* leads to an *iti* in *nirvikalpa samādhi*. The absolute which is *anūdi-ananta* (without beginning or end) cannot be explained by anything in the domain of the relative world which is *sānta*, having an ending; that which transcends space-time-causation cannot be described positively in such terms. So in this sense *pāramārthika* Sat or Atman cannot be defined. Every thing we experience or know positively has to be denied of it, 'not this, not this'. But the Atman-

while Śrī Kṛṣṇa is speaking from the stand-point of *pāramārthika satya*, as a witness only. There is an immeasurable gap of awareness between the two levels. Therefore Arjuna is justified in saying that your shoe is *not* pinching you as mine does, and I know where it pinches. Suffering has extra importance to me because of my psychological—intellectual, emotional and volitional—reactions to the happenings of this life from birth till death. This is the practical question welling up in Arjuna's mind which is understood by his Mentor, who begins a practical answer.

O son of Kunti, the contact between the senses and their objects gives rise to the feelings of cold and heat, pleasure and pain. These experiences are transient; they arise in point of time and also depart in point of time. Bear them patiently. (2.14)

Etymologically, *mātra* means that which measures objects (*mīyante ābhiḥ viṣayān*) that is, the sense organs. *Sparśa* or contact indicates that the sense-organs are the containers for the external objects which are the things contained. The senses have an endless capacity to come into spontaneous contact with their respective objects, giving rise to innumerable experiences which are generalized and classified here into four categories: heat, cold, pleasure, pain. All the other experiences of life are the permutations and combinations of these four basic sensations. Śaṅkarācārya says in his commentary that sometimes cold is pleasant, sometimes it is unpleasant; similarly warmth also is sometimes pleasant and sometimes unpleasant. What brings happiness now may bring sorrow later and vice versa. None of these experiences of life are constant but come and go. The

experience is absolutely positive, and this *mithyā jagat* is a reflection of that absolute positivity.

only way of dealing with these impermanent experiences is to practise *titikṣā*.

Titikṣā has been defined in the *Viveka-cūdāmaṇi* (24) as 'bearing all afflictions without reaction, worry or complaint'. You should pay no attention to the injustice, unfairness, or cruelty of the world, because your chosen goal of life is not to be a reformer but to know the truth of your own nature. If you are drawn towards remedial measures then you cannot profess to be a seeker of Self-knowledge, *ātmānveṣin*. For Self-realization demands the conservation of all energy and its total dedication to that quest. Therefore, neither brood over sorrow nor weep and wail over it, but absorb all suffering and allow no further ripples or reactions to arise in your mind. There is no contradiction here, as, for example, a dedicated scholar may be totally apolitical and unconcerned with political happenings. His dedication is not considered wrong, but is respected and praised. Śrī Kṛṣṇa is asking Arjuna to analyze the operation of the experience-system. We are endowed with certain involuntary functions and the world is full of objects giving rise to sensations. There are sound waves beyond the range of our ears, light rays beyond the range of our eyes, fragrances beyond the range of our olfactory organ. We move only within a limited field of stimulations. All these happenings, contacts and reactions emphasize that there is no permanence in sense-experiences which unceasingly succeed one another every moment. When man sees through the delusion of experience, and the vanities of this world, he determines to see the Reality behind all appearances. The more he identifies himself with the immutable Self, the less is he subject to the agreeable and disagreeable experiences of life. Therefore, lift yourself from the *vyāvahārika dṛṣṭi* to the *pāramārthika dṛṣṭi*, from the phenomenal stand-point to

the stand-point of Reality, by controlling through *titikṣā* the abuse and dissipation of energy.

Here Arjuna might say that this is a difficult injunction—that he should turn off his natural responses. When such an exacting demand is made on a person he must be explained the reward of this effort. The reply to this implicit question is:

O Bull among men, a person whose mind is not disturbed by these (contacts and sensations), who is neither submerged in grief nor elated with pleasure, such a wise man who is always calm and steady alone qualifies for immortality. (2.15)

Pleasurable and painful experiences are bound to come and will not stop as long as one is in the physical frame, but one who refuses to be a victim of these disturbing processes so natural to life, and remains stable and unmoved by good and evil—he for whom all opposite experiences are alike—becomes eligible for deathlessness. Perfect sameness amidst all the trials and tribulations of life arises from the complete and unceasing consciousness of one's identity with the eternal, immutable Self, and this is the attainment of fitness for immortality.

That which is unreal has no being, that which is real never ceases to be. From these two positions, the knowers of the essence of things have seen the final truth. (2.16)

Here again there is a reference to the Vedāntic conception of the four levels of existence-consciousness. Śrī Kṛṣṇa is telling Arjuna that if he is to avoid birth, death and suffering in *vyāvahāra*, he must make *paramārtha* his yardstick, the final standard of judgement. Arjuna is giving great importance to the destruction and dissolution of the body because he has not imbibed the supreme Vedāntic truth up-till now.

As there are levels of being so there are stages of consciousness to be attained.

The *ajñāni* is at the levels of *pratibhāsa* and *vyavahāra*. The stage of the *jñāni* and finally the highest consciousness of the *vijñāni* are at the level of *paramārtha*. Gauḍapāda states: 'When the *jīva* sleeping in beginningless *Māyā* awakens, then the non-dual Reality appears to him as the birthless, the dreamless, the sleepless.'³ When the non-dual Brahman is realized then it is always seen as the underlying reality of the whole world. It is like the case of the children's puzzle in which some forms are hidden by lines, but once the forms are seen, they are always seen in spite of the lines. When Sri Ramakrishna saw Bhāgavat-Līlā depicted in an exhibition, he said that the *vijñāni* was like one who knew that though the models of Rādhā, Kṛṣṇa, Gopīs etc. were seen, yet all of them were really made of wax. The *tattva-darśins* are such seers of truth who perceive the reality of both the extreme positions.

In the psychological analysis of the spiritual advancement of a *sādhaka*, *jñāna* comes lower than *vijñāna*. Totapuri, the Vedāntic guru of Sri Ramakrishna was a *jñāni*, but his *jñāna*-consciousness was confined to the knowledge of the indestructibility of his own soul and its identity with Brahman; he lacked the integral experience of Atman reflected everywhere in the universe. So when Sri Ramakrishna started chanting 'Hari Om' with the accompaniment of clapping, Totapuri became satirical. But Sri Ramakrishna retorted, 'I would not like to be so dry as you are, I would like to taste the nectar of divine bliss in all its aspects.' He explained the difference among *sādhakas* through another illustration. A person who has heard about milk, and knows the cow

or goat to be its source, is still in the domain of *jñāna* though his *jñāna* may be fortified by one or all of his five senses; i.e. he may have heard, seen, smelled, touched and tasted milk. But it benefits him only when he drinks, assimilates and is nourished by milk and becomes strong. The nourishing oneself with the knowledge of Atman-Brahman is *vijñāna*.

From the Upaniṣadic stand-point another set of distinctions is made: *brahmavid*, *brahmavidvaraḥ* and *brahmavidvariṣṭha*. This is the distinction of the good, better and best. One may be a *brahmavid*, that is, may have a direct experience of Brahman. But having attained the *jñāna*, there remains something yet to be done: his attitude, conduct and character are to be remoulded in the light of the *jñāna*. There is no distinction as far as the content of the *jñāna* is concerned. There are no parts or degrees in Atman-Brahman, and *jñāna* is necessarily cent per cent. Either one is or one is not a *brahmajñāni*, there is no half-way house. But the nourishment his soul takes from that knowledge gives it a degree. One who remains self-centred after that knowledge, not concerned about the sorrow and suffering in the world, is a mere *jñāni* or *brahmavid*. Another is compassionate because of the unity of the Self he sees all around; his utterances, and behaviour are for the good of others—he is *brahmavidvaraḥ*. The third and highest stage of *brahmavidvariṣṭha* is that of an Avatāra—the whole world is the field of his service.

Know for certain that to be the Imperishable One by which this universe is pervaded. No one is able to cause the destruction of that Immutable. (2.17)

3. अनादिमायया सुप्तो यदा जीव प्रबुध्यते ।

अजमनिद्रमस्वप्नमद्वैतं बुध्यते तदा ॥

Māṇḍūkya-kārika, 1.16

Here 'that' means that the *tat-padārtha*, which was earlier referred to as 'Sat', is not destructible because it is unchanging and all pervading. When you think you

are killing Bhīṣma or Droṇa you are not killing the Self, for neither you nor anyone else under the sun can do so. The emphasis is that Arjuna's equating the soul with the body is erroneous; he should know that there is something transcending this body—the Reality permeating the universe as the witness Self. What he will be doing at the call of duty will be to cause the disintegration of particular combinations of material elements forming these bodies but not the destruction of the omnipresent Atman.

All these bodies pertaining to the eternal, the indestructible, the immeasurable One, this Self residing within the body, are said to be perishable. Therefore, Arjuna, you must fight. (2.18)

First Śrī Kṛṣṇa taught the *pāramārthika sat* and its indestructibility, then he comes to the *vyāvahārika* level where that Sat appears as the indweller of the body. This concept of the *jīvātman* is just a compromise to make the pursuit of the Atman possible. Since we start with our experience of awareness of our own existence or ego, to make it understandable it is given the name of *jīvātman*, for the time being. If we were to start with the concept of the *paramātman* it would give us no experiential base. But we know what is *jīvātmā* and we start with it, still this concept is merely an interim one. Though it has pragmatic value, it has no ontological status, that is to say, it is practically useful but, philosophically speaking, it has no existence of its own in any ultimate sense. Gradually the adjuncts of *jīvatva*, individual selfhood, are weaned away till only the Atman remains. In the continuum of ego-consciousness from birth till death everything changes but the 'I' does not. The adjectives, 'eternal', 'imperishable' and 'indefinable', apply to the pure Atman alone, and not to the 'I'. It is indefinable as it cannot be delimited: all the objects

of the world are definable as they exist within the field of space-time-causation and are comprehended by the sense organs. Definition has to be within certain parameters and Atman has none. In the state of *jīvahood* this infinite and illimitable Atman is associated with finite and limited bodies which are bound to perish.

Since Arjuna's reluctance to fight is caused by his ignorance of the true nature of the Self, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, while trying to clear this misunderstanding, urges him repeatedly to discharge his duty as a warrior.

He who thinks that this (indwelling Atman) is capable of being a slayer, and he who takes it to be the slain—both are ignorant, for, verily, the Atman neither kills nor does it get killed. (2.19)

Arjuna has argued that by killing the Kauravas the sin of destruction will accrue to him. Śrī Kṛṣṇa rejoins that the eternal Atman is involved neither as the slayer in the killer nor as the slain in the person killed. So are you really killing anyone or is anybody killed by you, Arjuna? All that is happening is in the *vyāvahārika jagat*, and the only guide here is your conscience, be it enlightened or unenlightened. That is why *viveka*, discriminative knowledge of right and wrong, good and bad, is very important in the moral life of man. As long as one is in the phenomenal world he must be honest to himself and be guided in conduct by principles of morality and duty. Only beyond that is the awareness of the infinite, indivisible, imperishable Self. Like this verse the next one (2.20) is also a reproduction, with minor changes from the *Kaṭha upaniṣad* (1.2.19-20).

This Self is ever unborn nor does it ever die. What is being denied of It is that not having been, it comes into being in point of time, or that having been, it again ceases to be in point of time. It does not crop up from nothingness and does not

disappear into nothingness. What is birth on analysis? Something which was not there comes into being and subsists for a while, or that which was non-existent becomes existent. And what is the concept of death? That something which has been subsisting disappears or the existent becomes the non-existent. So birth and death are to be understood in terms of becoming, being, and non-being of the body. But the Self is birthless, perpetual, eternal and ancient. The term 'ancient' (*purāṇa*) does not refer to a point of time, but only means that the Self is beyond the temporal comprehension of the mind. While all forms of matter are subject to the six-fold modification of birth, existence, growth, change, decay and death, the Spirit is not modifiable in any way. Thus though the body may be slain the Self is not slain.

O Pārtha, a person who knows this Self as indestructible, changeless, unborn, undiminishing, how can that man kill anyone or how can he instigate a killer? (2.21)

There are two ways of doing: *karoti* and *kārayati*. Either one may act oneself or may not act oneself but incite others to act. Here Arjuna is being told: 'You cannot kill the Self, and, being the commander-in-chief of the army, if you order others to kill, you cannot be blamed for causing them to kill. Or it may mean that neither are you the slayer of the Self nor can I be called the cause of slaughter of the Self for urging you to fight, as you are blaming me. Any equation of human relations and actions interwoven in this world does not apply to the birthless, deathless, immutable Self.

(To be continued)

SRI RAMAKRISHNA'S VISIT TO EAST BENGAL

(Illustrated)

SWAMI PRABHANANDA

On pages 280-81 of *Sri Ramakrishna, the Great Master* (4th combined edition) we come across a reference to an incident in Sri Ramakrishna's life about which not much is known. It reads as follows:

It was during this period that Mathur, accompanied by the Master, went to his zemindari estate and to the house of his Guru... There the Master saw the extremely miserable condition of the men and women in a village and was very much moved. He invited them all and made Mathur give each of them oil sufficient to cool their heads, a full meal and a piece of new cloth. Hriday said that this event happened at a place called Kalaighata, near Ranaghat, when Mathur accompanied by him and the Master, was on a boat trip in the Churni canal.

Hriday told us that Mathur had his own home in the village called Sonabere, near Satkhira. The villages round it were then included in Mathur's estate, to which he took the Master. The home of Mathur's guru was not far from this place... The village was called Talamagro. On their way Mathur made the Master and Hriday ride on his elephant and himself went in a palanquin. Pleased with the loving service of the sons of Mathur's preceptor, the Master spent a few weeks there before he returned to Dakshineswar.

A critical investigation into this anecdote has revealed several hitherto unknown or unnoticed facts regarding Sri Ramakrishna's eastward travel.

(a) Among Sri Ramakrishna's biogra-

phers who were the contemporaries of Sri Ramakrishna, Swami Saradananda, Akshay Kumar Sen, Sashibhūsan Ghosh, and Gurudas Burman have mentioned Sri Ramakrishna's visit to the village Kalaighata on the bank of Churni river in the district of Nadia (in West Bengal). However, Swami Saradananda and Akshay Kumar Sen perhaps mixed up this event with Sri Ramakrishna's visit to Sonabere and Talamagro, both now in Bangladesh. This happened owing to the proximity in time of their occurrences and also because the two places were seemingly close to each other. Both the visits were sponsored by Mathuranath Biswas, and Hriday Mukherjee, Sri Ramakrishna's nephew, accompanied him on both the occasions.

(b) It is learnt that Sri Ramakrishna travelled from Calcutta to Kalaighata by boat while he travelled to Sonabere and Talamagro in a horsedrawn carriage and palanquin along Jessore Road, Basirhat Taki Road, and thereafter crossed the Ichhamati, the river demarcating the borders of Bangladesh and the Indian Union.

(c) According to the *Great Master*, Mathuranath's Guru's family lived in the village Talamagro. But Tala and Magura or Magro are two different villages on either side of the river Kapotaksha. This Magura or Magro is not the sub-divisional town in the district of Jessore but a village in Satkshira sub-division in the district of Khulna. Mathuranath's Guru's family lived at Tala.

(d) Based on the report of Hriday, the author of the *Great Master* has written that Mathuranath had his own home in the village called Sonabere, near Satkshira. But our enquiries have conclusively proved that Mathuranath's native home was in the village of Bithari or Bithiri. He was born there. Next to Sonabere is the village Madra, followed by Chanda, and then by Padmabil lying on the bank of

Sonai. Across the river Sonai is Bithari, a village under the Swarupnagar police station, in the Basirhat sub-division of the district 24-Parganas (West Bengal in India). On the opposite bank of the Sonai lies Bangladesh.

(e) The *Great Master* mentions that Sri Ramakrishna 'spent a few weeks' at Tala. But considering all relevant facts, we can safely presume that the entire travel took Sri Ramakrishna three weeks approximately.

Strange to say, sincere and dependable biographers like Ramachandra Dutta, Mahendranath Gupta, Devendranath Basu and Suresh Chandra Dutta did not mention this travel presumably because their accounts were too brief to make room for this rather unimportant event. Besides, most of them met Sri Ramakrishna in 1879 and afterwards, and during this period Sri Ramakrishna did not mention this travel in the course of his talks with the devotees for the simple reason that this travel had not perhaps impressed him. Also, Hridayram, who had to leave Dakshineswar temple on June 12, 1881, was not readily available to furnish the travel report.

It may be presumed that Sri Ramakrishna was not keen about making this trip or the trip to Kalaighata. His mind was, however, free from calculation, premeditation or planning. He moved about naturally, in childlike obedience to the urge of his inner spirit. So when Mathuranath urged Sri Ramakrishna to join him in both the journeys, the Master must have agreed. Analysis of contemporary events indicate that the trip had something to do with Akshay's premature death. Akshay, the son of Ramkumar, Sri Ramakrishna's eldest brother, had grown up into a handsome and pious youth. He had succeeded Haladhari as priest at the Visnu Temple in Dakshineswar in 1865 but

died few months after his marriage in 1869. Being an astrologer, Ramkumar had foreseen this inevitable future and had always avoided showing Akshay affection. On the other hand, Akshay had become a favourite of Sri Ramakrishna since his early childhood. Recalling his personal experience, Sri Ramakrishna narrated later on:

Akshay died. I felt nothing at the time. I was standing and was witnessing how men die. I saw there was, as it were, a sword in a sheath and the sword was brought out of it. The sword was not at all affected. It remained as it was and the sheath lay there. I felt great joy to see it. I laughed and sang and danced. They then burnt the body and returned. The next day I was standing there (pointing to the verandah to the east of his room and near the courtyard of the Kāli Temple), and do you know what I felt? I felt as if my heart was being wrung in the way a wet towel is wrung. My heart was feeling for Akshay like that. I thought, 'Mother, this (his body) has no relation with even the cloth it wears; ah, how great was then the relation with the nephew! When it is so even here (with himself), how agonizing the pain must be to the householders! Thou art showing that, aren't you?'¹

To assuage his grief and divert his mind Mathuranath persuaded the Master to accompany him in the two travels—one to his estate at Kalaighata in Ranaghat (West Bengal, India) for collecting the payment of dues, and the other to his estate at Sonabere and also to Tala, areas now in Bangladesh.

To clear the reader's mind of the probable confusion created by the juxtaposition of two distinct and different travels, mentioned in the beginning, we may recall an important and famous event during Sri Ramakrishna's travel to Kalaighata near Ranaghat.

Our account of the event is drawn from Gurudas Burman's description of it.

Sri Ramakrishna in the company of Mathuranath went by boat to Mathuranath's newly acquired² estate at Kalaighata near Ranaghat. A crowd of almost naked, emaciated, hungry people thronged the riverside to see the gentry. A terrible drought was ravaging the land. The villages had been for many months in the grip of famine. Naturally, the wretched condition of the famished people moved Sri Ramakrishna to bitter tears. Inquired by Mathuranath, the compassionate Master said, 'I can't stand this suffering of the people. I have never seen such extreme human suffering. You are a steward of Mother's estate. Give these people a piece of cloth and good meal each, and some oil for their heads.' Mathuranath found himself in awkward predicament. He had come to supervise the collection of taxes. No doubt, the crops had failed for two years running and the tenants had been reduced to extreme misery. Still, he had expected to extract some money from his tenants. Guessing the entire situation, Sri Ramakrishna pleaded with Mathuranath to remit their dues. A typical feudal lord that Mathuranath was, he tried to prevail upon Sri Ramakrishna but the latter was inexorable. Sri Ramakrishna said, 'Well, do you think you are the owner of this estate? No, you are only a steward of the Divine Mother. These people are the Mother's tenants. You must spend the Mother's money for them. When they are suffering, how can you refuse to help them as much as you can. This is Mother's command.' A reluctant Mathuranath finally gave in. He had cloth brought from Calcutta, and gave each person one

1. *Sri Ramakrishna, the Great Master*, 4th combined edition (Madras: Ramakrishna Math, 1970) p. 340

2. Sashibhusan Ghosh, *Śrī Rāmakṛṣṇa Deva* (Bengali) (Calcutta: Udbodhan, B.Y. 1332) p. 324

piece of cloth ; sumptuously fed the people for seven days ; gave some oil for their heads ; and also gave on the last day a quarter-rupee each. Sri Ramakrishna was very happy to see seven hundred hungry people eating together for seven days. Pleased to see his Master happy, Mathuranath returned to Dakshineswar.³

In this context it is necessary to discern the relationship between Mathuranath and Sri Ramakrishna. Sometimes, Mathuranath would treat Sri Ramakrishna as his revered spiritual father, and sometimes as an innocent young boy entirely depending on him. Explaining Mathuranath's attitude towards the Master, Swami Saradananda writes :

It is very clear that by virtue of the motiveless grace of the Master, Mathur's love was so intensified that 'father' became his very life. Besides that, it was his behaviour like that of a boy, which attracted Mathur in no small measure... Is it, therefore, strange that there naturally arose in the powerful, vigorous and intelligent Mathur an effort to protect him in all circumstances. Therefore, just as on the one hand, he depended on the Master's divine power, so, on the other hand, he always kept himself ready to protect 'father' whom he knew to be like an inexperienced boy.⁴

That is why Sri Ramakrishna readily yielded to Mathur's views and suggestions and agreed to accompany Mathuranath in his two travels.

According to the *Great Master*, the Master undertook these two journeys sometime after the death of Akshay which happened in 1869. Mathuranath himself passed away on 16 July 1871. So in all probability Sri Ramakrishna visited Kalaighata (in West Bengal) during the summer of 1870 and East Bengal in the

latter part of 1870 soon after the Durga Puja. The rest of the present article deals with the second travel. To help the reader understand the location etc. a political map of the districts of Jessore and Khulna is given below.

The travel of Mathuranath and party to East Bengal (now Bangladesh) was arranged on a royal style, at a huge expense. The entourage comprised Mathuranath, Sri Ramakrishna, Hridayram and a hundred other people besides elephants, horses, horse-drawn carriages and palanquins. The party set out early morning on an auspicious day. A pink sun still hung low over the horizon. In spite of elaborate arrangements made and necessary precautions taken, the travel was not quite without accident, however. On the way at Deganga⁵ the palanquin carrying Sri Ramakrishna gave way ; the palanquin bearers dropped their burden. But Sri Ramakrishna escaped unhurt. Mathuranath took Sri Ramakrishna in his own palanquin and proceeded. And as soon as the damage to the palanquin was repaired, Hridayram got into it and hurried to catch up with the advancing party.⁶

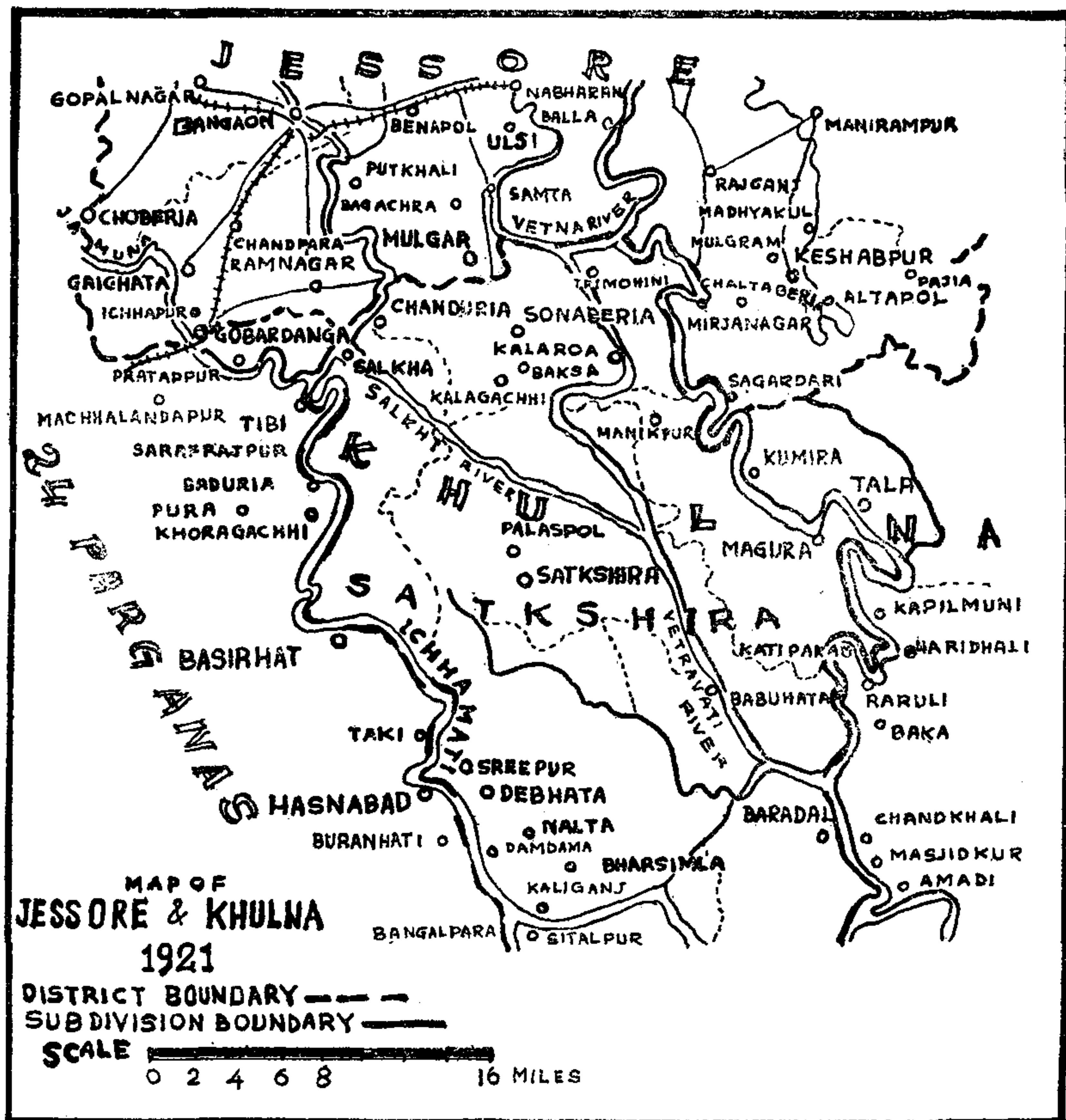
Though details of the route followed by Sri Ramakrishna and his party are not readily available, a thorough search, analysis of hearsay, interviews with old local people, study of road maps, notes in M's diary etc. yielded fairly dependable facts and figures. The party first came to Barasat along Jessore Road and turning aside proceeded along Basirhat Taki Road in the eastern direction. Ten miles off

3. Gurudas Burman, *Śrī Śrī Rāmakṛṣṇa Carit* (Bengali), (Calcutta: Udbodhan, B.Y. 1333) Vol. I, pp. 139-42

4. *The Great Master*, pp. 458-59

5. Deganga, otherwise known as Diganga, included in ancient Jessore kingdom, now lies by the side of Barasat-Hasnabad railway. This was well known as Gangarejia or Gangabandhan (Vide Satish Chandra Mitra, *Jessore-Khulnar Itihās* (Bengali) Part-I, 3rd Edn. Pp. 181-82).

6. From Hridayram's reminiscences narrated at Baranagore Math, Exercise Book, p. 159.



Barasat lay Deganga on this road. From there the party moved to Basirhat. From Basirhat there branched off two paths in those days, one via Itinda to Satkshira, another via Taki and Sankchura to Satkshira, a sub-divisional town in the district of Khulna.

In the second route one has to cross the Ichhamati river beyond Taki. The river is wide and turbulent at this point. Crossing the river one reaches Ghalghali and then Sankra. Therefrom stretches a canal, about 23 miles long, up to Satkshira which is profitably used by traders to carry goods, but it is rather inconvenient for a caravan

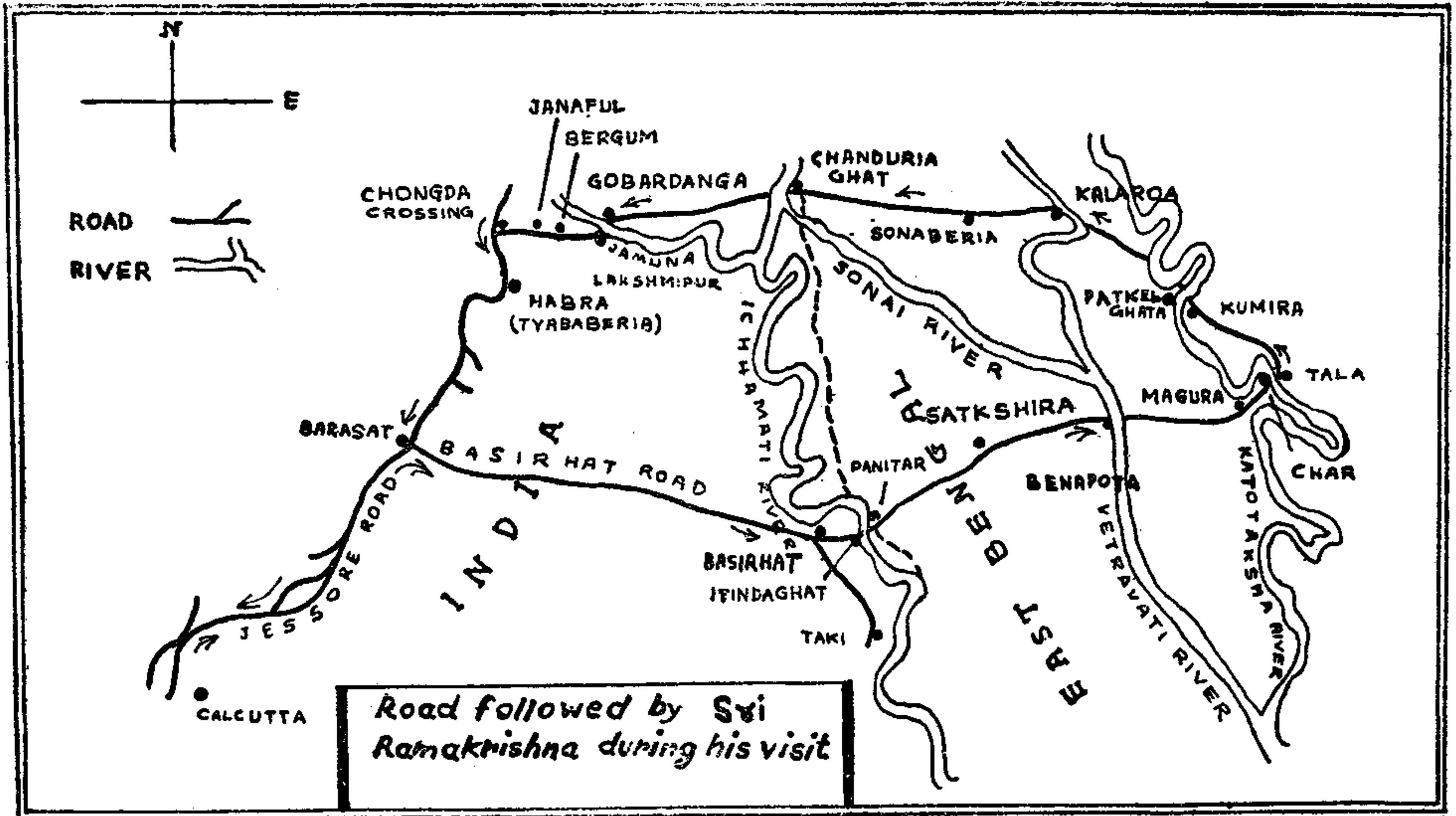
of elephants, horses, palanquins to cross the Ichhamati at this point.

On the other hand, on the first route one can conveniently cross Ichhamati at Itinda. On the opposite bank of the river lies Panitar from where an eastward eleven mile road goes up to Satkshira. From Satkshira there stretches a northward road leading to Patkelghata. On this stretch one has to cross the Vetravati river or Budhater gāng, on the bank of which stands Vinipota, a big market place. Even in those days there were good arrangements for ferrying carriages, elephants and horses.⁷ Crossing the river at Vinipota,

travellers move on to Patkelghata, a town on the bank of Kapotaksha river. On the other bank lies Kumirāgrām a fairly large and prosperous village. Evidently, Mathuranath's team followed this route.

We presume Sri Ramakrishna, childlike as he was, now and then peeped through the door of his palanquin, to have a

or Māgro, Baruipārā and Char, and then crossing the river Kapotaksha at Char one arrives at the village of Tala. Legends popular in the region, supported by evidences supplied by old people, lend credence to the claim that Mathuranath's party followed the second route and not the first one.



glimpse of the exquisite tapestry of Nature woven with yellow and green fields, blue sky and village scenes. At times his spirit would wander away. At other times perceiving the glory of God all round, he would be seized with ecstasy.

From Patkelghātā to Tala there are two equidistant roads 14 miles long. The first one, starting from Kumiragram stretches eastward to Tala passing through Islamkathi, Nangla and Gopalpur. Taking the second road, however, one has not to cross the Kapotaksha at Patkelghātā; one has to move through the riverside villages of Patkelghātā, Achimtalā, Chandkāthi, Māgura

Tala was inhabited by several well-to-do Hindu families. Of them the family of Ramchandra Basu was perhaps the richest and most powerful. In his house Durga Puja was celebrated on a grand scale every year. Mathuranath's Guru's family lived in this village. Among the inhabitants there were also some affluent Muslim families.

It is learnt that Mathuranath's Guru's family had migrated from Burdwan. One distinguished member of this family Bharatchandra Bhattacharya was a great Sanskrit scholar. Being a liberal man, Bharatchandra initiated members of Mathuranath's ancestors, belonging to Mahisya caste, ignoring caste restrictions.

7. Subsequently, a bridge was constructed here.

Bharatchandra had to suffer much for this action of his. But as a mark of respect Mathuranath donated 360 bighas of land to his Guru and also erected a big brick-built house for the family. The south-facing *caṇḍimandap* with wings containing a few rooms on either side, and overlooking a pond with concrete banks, was an impressive structure. In front of the *caṇḍimandap* stood a Bel (*vilva*) tree on which Bodhan-pūjā of Goddess Durga used to be performed. By its side stood a platform, sitting on which Sri Ramakrishna is said to have watched the daily worship of Mother Caṇḍi held in the *caṇḍimandap*. Another place, associated with Sri Ramakrishna, is *kālitalā* lying at a short distance to the west of the house of Mathuranath's Guru's family. As in all other *kālitalās*, there stood a jeul (Odina wadier) tree. Village legend claims that Sri Ramakrishna sat under the tree and lost himself in ecstasy.⁸

A *vijñāni* (a fully illumined soul) that Sri Ramakrishna was, he behaved like a boy of five. About two miles before reaching the destination of Tala Sri Ramakrishna was seized with the idea of riding the elephant which Mathur was riding. He repeatedly insisted, 'I want to ride the elephant'. Aware of his boyish nature, Mathuranath dissuaded him from this for the road was rather rough.⁹ Hriday later testified that reaching the destination (Tala), however, Mathuranath satisfied Sri Ramakrishna's wish by having him seated on the elephant.

The immediate purpose of Mathuranath's visit was to settle a long-standing dispute among the members of his Guru's family.

8. Gathered from the travel records of Swami Paradevananda, head of Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, Bagerhat, Bangladesh.

9. There is another version. Swami Brahmananda heard from Sri Ramakrishna that the latter had travelled to Tala on an elephant.

Sri Ramakrishna, being Mathuranath's Guru, received a red carpet reception. Indeed his presence created a sensation. According to the local custom, the honourable guests were served with heads of big fishes. Seeing such a big fish head on his plate, Sri Ramakrishna recoiled and said, 'I feel disgusted. It looks like a cow's head.' Mathuranath intervened and stopped the serving of such heads of fish to him afterwards.¹⁰

Sri Ramakrishna stayed happily at Tala for about a week perhaps. And it can be safely presumed that Mathuranath succeeded in amicably settling the family dispute.

Next, Mathuranath's party moved towards Sonabere, about eighteen miles from Tala. The road from Tala to Patkelghātā passes through Kumira. Twelve miles north-west of Patkelghātā is Kalāroa, a police station under Satkshira sub-division, on the bank of Vetrabati river. From Kalāroa going along a southward road for some distance one has to move five miles westward to reach Sonabere. Following this route the party arrived at Rani Rasmani's *kacheri* at Sonabere.

The village scenery was enchanting and, as was his wont, Sri Ramakrishna lost himself in the joy of divine revelation through nature.

Under the police station of Kalāroa, Sonabere has four roads diverging from it to Navaran 16 miles in the north, Satkshira 15 miles in the south, Kalāroi 5 miles in the east and Chanduria 6 miles in the west. The Sonai river flows east-west across Sonabere. At the moment, it primarily serves as a canal for drainage. The Chowdhurys had once been the Zamindars of the village. Dhananjay Chowdhury had established this estate.

10. Hridayram's reminiscences, p. 160.

The family deity of the Chowdhury family was Śyāmsundar. As the Chowdhury family's financial condition deteriorated, Rani Rasmani purchased the estate. The *Great Master* records: 'The villages round it (Sonabere) were then included in Mathur's estate, to which he took the Master.' The two-storeyed, L-shaped, brick-built *kacheri* which the Rani had purchased from the Sannyals had on each floor three rooms with a wide verandah in front of them. The driveway connecting the *kacheri* with the main road was shaded by Bakul and Bel trees. Passing through a tall gateway, flanked on either side by high walls, Sri Ramakrishna's palanquin moved to the house. The estate people who were waiting for the party, approached and greeted him with humble cordiality. Sri Ramakrishna and Mathuranath lived in this house. 150 yards west of this house lies a large pool with cement landing. This was the residence of the Nayeb (steward) of the estate. Even now one can see lying idle on the ground floor a large palanquin (which needed 16 bearers) once used by the Nayeb of this estate.

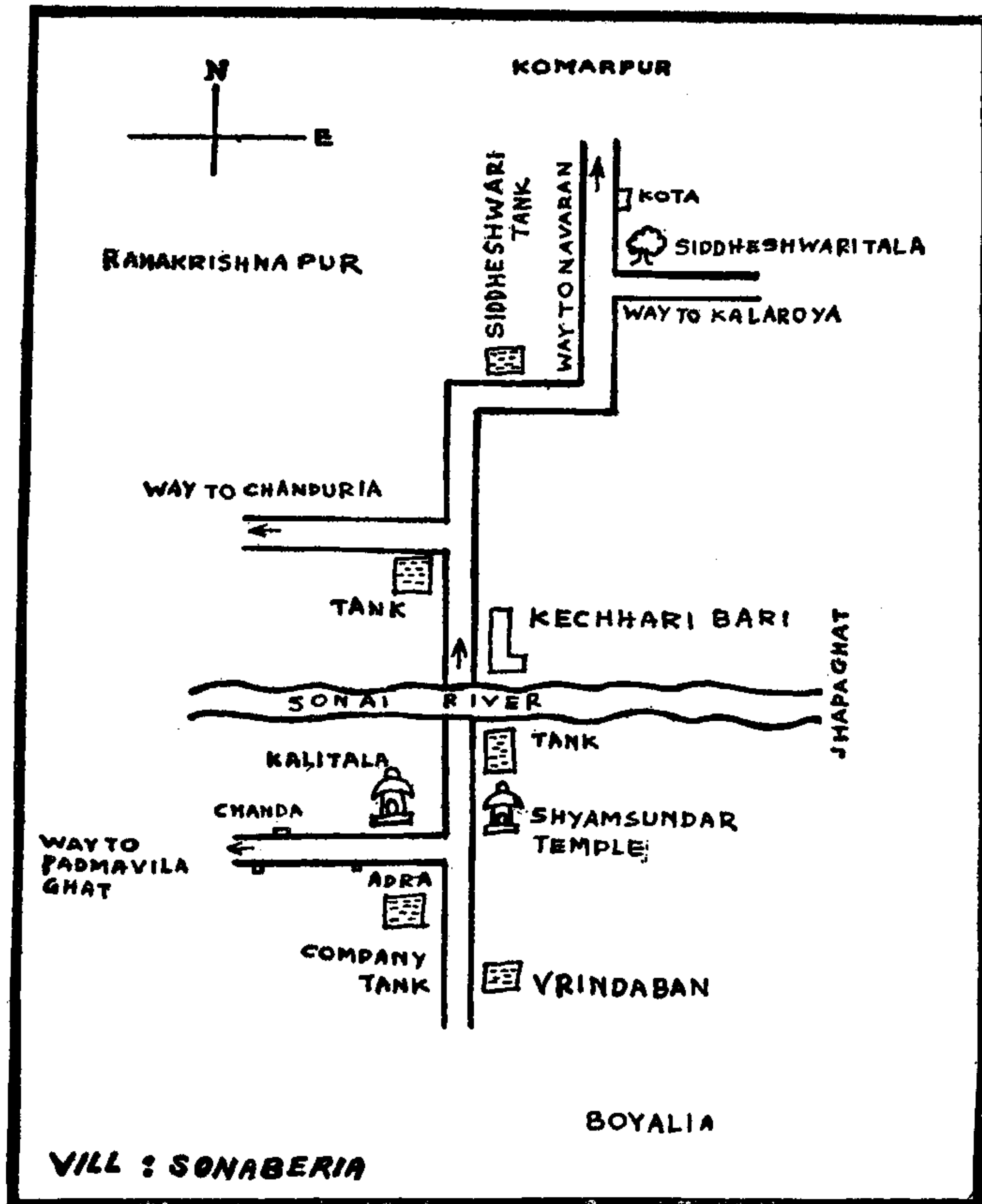
In the village Sonabere there were four holy places: (a) *Mathbāri*, (b) *Kālitālā*, (c) *Vṛndāban* and (d) *Siddheśvaritalā*. Of them *Mathbāri* is a beautiful temple with nine turrets in the pattern of Bhavatārini temple of Dakshineswar. On the first floor is the *garbha mandira*, and the deity is Śyāmsundara. The temple was built by Hariram Das in 1767. In the west, close to the temple lay a two-storeyed house, called *bhogaghar*. In front of Śyāmsundar temple stood two temples, one of Būdo Śiva and another of Sadā Śiva, and in between them stood a small *jorbāngla* (a two-roomed shrine). On the eastern side of the main temple stood a Śiva temple having four rooms with a Śiva-Linga in each of them. Every year on Nilpuja day, in February-March, a big fair used to

draw, as it still does, thousands of people.

Kālitālā is a raised terrace, on which the worship of Mother Kālī is performed at different times of the year. *Vṛndāban* is the temple of *Vṛndābanbehāri* (Śrī Kṛṣṇa) worshipped by a Mahisya family with the title of Kapat. At *Siddheśvaritalā*, a sacred seat of God, there stood a pair of Vilva (Bel) trees with a platform around them. Surrounded by a compound wall, the courtyard has an entrance on the southern side and a room with veranda on the northern side. Close by, lies the Siddheśvari pond. *Carak* held in the month of Caitra is a popular festival here. Local people claim that *pūjā* performed at *Siddheśvaritalā* has always been blessed by the fall of one or two Bel leaves on the platform, as a sign of the Divine Mother's grace. Even the European residents of the silk *kuthi* at Sonabere and Budan¹¹ had witnessed it. Legendary tradition asserts that during the days of Rani Rasmani and Mathuranath on the occasion of *Carak* every year these fallen Bel leaves used to be collected and without delay carried by a horseman to the Janbazar residence of Rani Rasmani at Calcutta. Anyone visiting Sonabere now is certain to hear of the village legend that Sri Ramakrishna sitting below the Bel tree sang several soul-enthralling songs and went into samadhi.

Old people of Sonabere assert that they heard from their forefathers that Sri Ramakrishna and Mathuranath had come there from Kalāroa in a palanquin and on an elephant respectively. Many people crowded at the *kacheri* to have a glimpse of Sri Ramakrishna. Some came out of

¹¹. These Europeans used to trade in silk and cotton products. The East India Company maintained two *kuthis* (business offices), one at Sonabere and the other at Budan near Satkshira. (See, *Jessore-Khulnar Itihās* Vol. II, 2nd edn., p. 699)



curiosity, others to question and learn ; but after a few moments in his presence even a sceptical was forced to admit that behind the Paramahansa's veil of simplicity and childlike humility, the light of knowledge was shining. His presence caused quite a stir in the village. It brought in the village an air of festivity. Mathuranath had come on a tour of inspection. He had some duties to attend to. But Sri Ramakrishna, free from encumbrances, moved about like a child of the Divine Mother, as he used to do at Dakshineswar.

During Sri Ramakrishna's stay at

Sonabere something funny happened. At a short distance was the village of Kota, where lived a number of Brahmin families who had originally hailed from U. P. and Bihar. Among them, Bamacharan, famed for his scholarship, used to visit Sri Ramakrishna daily. He was deeply impressed by Sri Ramakrishna. One day he approached Mathuranath with an amusing proposal. He pleaded, 'I beg for Paramahansa. Please make a present of him to us. I would like to show him before the congregation of scholars.' An annoyed Mathuranath replied, 'How can I make a present of him ? Besides, what

do you mean, is he really under my thumb ?' Sri Ramakrishna who was sitting near by remarked, 'Please don't utter such a thing again.'¹²

After this sojourn at Sonabere, Mathuranath prepared for the return journey. Leaving behind a host of sweet memories for the local people, Sri Ramakrishna left Sonabere for Calcutta, but took a different route. Mathuranath's arrangements were elaborate as usual. A six-mile drive through the villages of Ramakrishnapur, Srirampur, Chandanpur led the party to Chanduria, an old market place, on the bank of the Ichhamati. Crossing Ichhamati there, the visiting team passed through Garjana, Chalundi, Panchpota, Sutha and Khantura to reach Gobardanga.¹³ Next, going across the rivulet Jamuna, the party reached Lakshmipur. Therefrom the party moved through Bergum, Janakul etc. to reach Tababeria (Habra). Lakshmipur and Tababeria stand six miles apart, the old roadside trees at Janakul-Payaragachi indicating the oldness of the road. This road meets the Jessore road one and a half miles before Habra.

12. M's diary, p. 146.

13. There is yet another route of about seven miles from Gobardanga to Tababeria via Ichapur and Gaighata. The party did not follow this route.

When the party reached Tababeria there cropped up some problems. Mathuranath's apprehensions proved true. The horses being tired and annoyed began to neigh. And the party was forced to halt there for the night.¹⁴ The muddy road had caused hardship to the horses. It seems there was rain on the way. It also seems that Sri Ramakrishna and Mathuranath were travelling in hackney carriages, which had been waiting for them at Chanduria ghat. The travelling party at last reached Calcutta without further difficulty the next day.

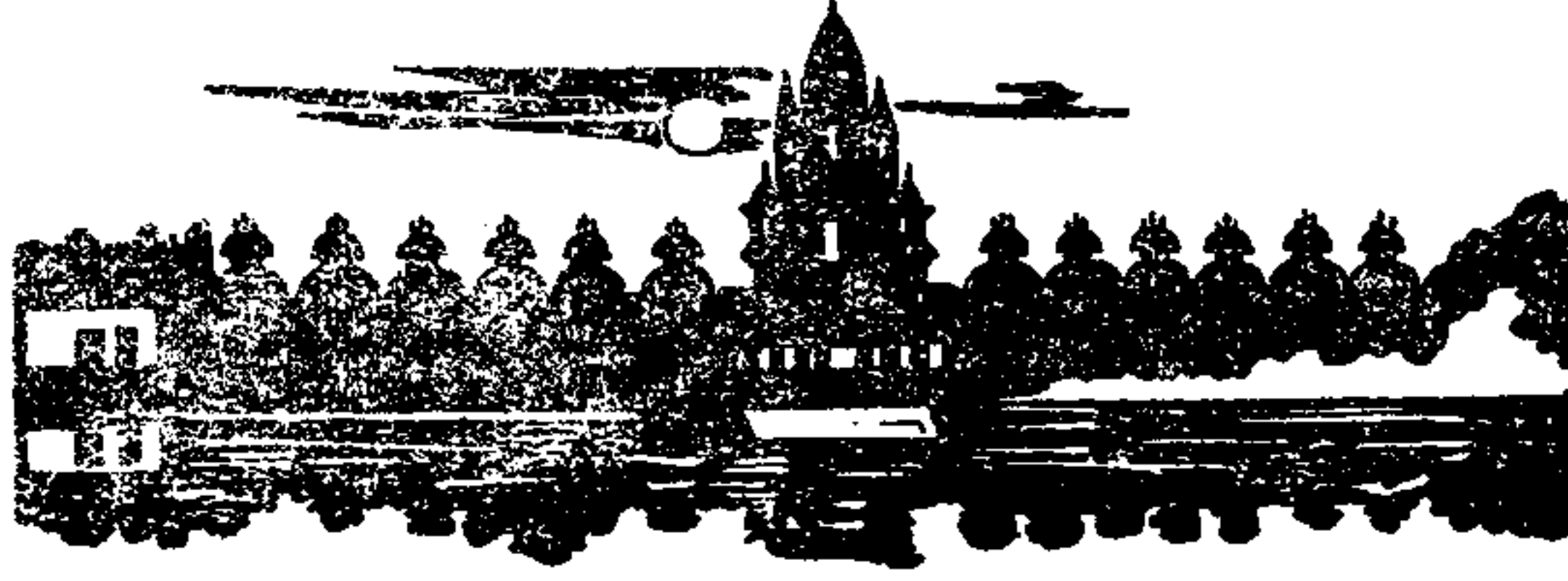
Around 1881 Khulna and Bagerhat from the District of Jessore and Satkshira subdivision from 24-Parganas were brought together under the newly created district of Khulna. So, in terms of the present political geography, we may state that Sri Ramakrishna visited certain parts of the two districts of Khulna and Jessore now in Bangladesh.*

14. M's diary, p. 146.

* The author wishes to acknowledge here the help he received from Sri Nandadulal Chakravarty of Lokashiksha Parishad, Ramakrishna Mission, Narendrapur, in collecting the details of the route followed by Mathuranath and party. The author is indebted to Swami Paradevananda, head of the Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, Bagerhat, Bangladesh, for the photographs published with this article.

All the powers in the universe are already ours. It is we who have put our hands before our eyes, and cry that it is dark. Know that there is no darkness around us. Take the hands away and there is the light which was from the beginning.

—Swami Vivekananda



SRI RAMAKRISHNA AND FRANCIS OF ASSISI AS LOVERS OF GOD

DR. MARTIN KAMPCHEN

[Though six centuries separated them, St. Francis of Assisi (1182-1226) and Sri Ramakrishna (1836-1886) had several traits in common. Differences between them, however, were quite as many. The wave of religious fervour and renunciation started by St. Francis helped to stem the tide of degradation that was sweeping Europe in the 12th century but, owing to the rigidity of the Church, it remained encapsulated in the monastic Order that he founded. On the other hand, the wave of spiritual fervour that Sri Ramakrishna started has, after sparking off the spiritual renaissance in India, has now spread out into an all-embracing religious movement with great possibilities. Comparisons between these two religious leaders had previously been made, but what Dr. Martin Kampchen has attempted is the most systematic one known to us. He has already published in German selections from the *Kathāmṛta* directly translated from the original Bengali. What follows is an excerpt from his doctoral thesis submitted to Visvabharati university.—Ed., P.B.]

Love of God in Hinduism and Christianity

In occidental thought the word 'love' comprises several distinct, though interrelated, strands of meaning. The word *sexus* relates to the physical love between man and woman; *eros* is psychic love; *agape* characterizes the love relationship between God and man, and between man and fellow-man. To this may be added *philia*, the love between friends or love of things, as 'love of wisdom' (*philosophia*). This set of Greek terms is supplemented by the Latin terms *amor* and *caritas*. Christian theology has drawn from this available vocabulary and given its distinct connotations. When Jesus Christ's disciple John says, 'God is love' (1 John 4,8.16), the word originally used is *agape*. *Agape* is God's

love for men (for his creation), and the love of men for God, as well as men's love for all fellow-men insofar as this love is a participation in God's love for all men. As God loves men, and they in response are able to love God with that same love, so man must love his fellow-man with that same self-giving and absolute love. In truth, *agape* is one, but it expresses itself in different relationships. Such love is called a 'supernatural virtue', which means that man is capable of it only by God's grace, or, using the language of the New Testament, by the *pneuma*, the infusion of God's Spirit in man. The saint distinguishes himself by being in the state of the perfection in love, i.e. in the state of *agape* of God and all fellow-men.

In order to understand the similarity and

the contrast between *agape* and *bhakti*, the following four features of *agape* must be specifically mentioned: 1. Love of God and love of fellow-man is *one* love. 2. *Agape* does not exclude, but it includes *sexus* and *eros*, the so-called 'natural' forms of human love. *Agape* does not neutralize or sublimate them, but 'liberates' them from their egocentricity. *Agape* then allows itself to be expressed through forms of natural love, or vice versa; natural love is a preparation for *agape*.¹ 3. *Agape* is not projected and controlled by the emotions (though they are not absent), but rather by the will to be in the state of the perfection in love as the means to be united with God. 4. *Agape* and action are unified; *agape* is not merely a contemplative event, but expresses itself in action.

In the Indian philosophical context, *bhakti* does not have this unassailably central place as *agape* does in Christian theology. It is a means of liberation, yet only *one* possible means which is not accepted by all schools. It is generally *jñāna* which is regarded as the direct means to liberation; *bhakti*, being an indirect, preparatory means, merges into *jñāna* when matured. Even the schools of theology which have systematized the Vaiṣṇava expression of *bhakti*, are divided as to whether it is *jñāna* or *bhakti* which directly leads to liberation. While Dvaita Vedānta contends that *bhakti* is transformed into *jñāna* which, in turn, leads directly to God's grace bestowing liberation, the Viśiṣṭādvaita school of Rāmānuja holds that matured *jñāna* is transformed into *bhakti* as the direct means to liberation and, as its highest form (*paramā-bhakti*), is in fact the very content of liberation; the human soul continues to love God in the state of liberation.

Bhakti, then, is but one of several possible modes of relating oneself to God, of receiving His grace and of fulfilling one's spiritual yearning. The term *bhakti* is normally not used to describe the mutually loving relationship between man (the *bhakta*) and God. While it is theologically important for the Christian to stress that God loved man first (hence he created man and sent his son, Jesus Christ, to redeem man), and our love is a response to that initial love, the *bhakta*, theologically, initiates the love-relationship and loves with the yearning for God's response, his grace, or his vision (*darśana*). The highest form of *bhakti* is to love without motive whatever, not even with the motive to receive liberation, but to remain totally surrendered to God accepting whatever God does with him.

Christianity being an eschatological religion, the yearning for redemption cannot be excluded even from the highest form of *agape*. Man's entire external and internal history is moving to the final event of Judgement of men and the taking up into heaven of the saved ones. Love of Christ entails the desire to be among the saved ones who can eternally be with Christ.

Bhakti finds expression either as love for Kṛṣṇa or as love for Śiva. While Vaiṣṇava *bhakti* depends on mythological anecdotes and emotional attitudes, *Saiva bhakti* is more philosophical, using little mythological lore and leaning towards *jñāna* as being superior to *bhakti*. Śiva does not incarnate himself in human form; his presence in the world is by means of his invisible *śakti*. Hence, there is little emotional identification with the heroism of Śiva. In fact, Śiva tends to be depersonalized to a principle (*tattva*), as in Kashmir Śaivism, or to a symbol (*liṅga*), as in Vīraśaivism.

By contrasting *bhakti* with *agape*, we

1. cf. V. Warnach in: *Handbuch Theologischer Grundbegriffe*. Vol. 3, p. 73

stress the following points: 1. As mentioned, *bhakti* is but one direct means of liberation and not the most important one, while *agape* is the only means to relate to God and finally receive redemption. 2. *Bhakti* is basically reserved for the human worshipper's relationship with God. It does not include his relationship with other men which is not a relationship of *bhakti*,² nor does it include God's relationship with men which is more a relationship of grace than of *bhakti*. It goes without saying that *sexus* does not come into the purview of *bhakti*, but, from a particular perspective, *eros* does. In the Vaiṣṇava tradition, some forms of *bhakti* (between man and God) which are associated with the model of love between Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa use erotic imagery. This is, of course, a sublimated 'spiritual eros' experienced and acted out through controlled fantasy. 3. *Bhakti* is the devotee's emotional relationship with God. In the course of his *sādhanā* and faith-life, he strives to attain to certain defined emotional attitudes towards God called *bhāvas*. It is the attainment of *bhāvas* and the perseverance in them, which is the essence of a *bhakta's* spiritual practice. He may either cultivate one *bhāva* which especially suits his temperament, or take up several *bhāvas* one after another. This is to be seen in contrast with the Christian practice of *agape* which is not dominated by emotions but by the will to have perfection in love. 4. Action among men is not typically a part of *bhakti*, although the practices of *bhakti* are karmic activity. *Karma-yoga* proper takes care of the interaction between men. Hence *bhakti* does not necessarily lead to action, as *agape* does.

2. Except the relationship of disciple and *guru*; the disciple, worshipping God in his *guru*, reveres him in the attitude of a *bhakta*.

Sri Ramakrishna and Francis of Assisi

In comparing Sri Ramakrishna's and Francis's attitudes and practice of spiritual love, what strikes one is that their approaches were very similar. Both the saints cultivated a predominantly emotional love of God. Sri Ramakrishna stressed the emotional aspects of love like singing, dancing, *kīrtans* praising God, conversing about God and listening to stories about God. As fruits of pure *bhakti*, Ramakrishna mentioned 'tears' and spiritual excitement to the point of horripilations. These acts require spontaneity and the capacity to rouse oneself emotionally. Once he emphatically said: 'But those fellows who cannot become mad singing Harinām and dance, will never reach God.'³

The same spontaneity of love has become a part of Franciscan spirituality and has been termed 'seraphic' love. The areas of life in which this spontaneous love becomes active are partly alike or similar with the areas of Ramakrishna's love, and partly different.

We discuss here two areas in which Franciscan and Ramakrishna-ite love converge, namely *love of creation*, and *love of one's disciples*. It should be kept in mind in this context that the term *bhakti* does not generally encompass these areas of love, and Ramakrishna, too, does not use the word *bhakti* when he speaks about them. Love of creation is part of *dayā* and *bhālobāsā* (*dayā māne sarbabhūte bhālo bāsā*).⁴ Here 'All living beings' (*sarbabhūte*) may be taken to comprise nature as well, as she is endowed with a soul and hence 'living'. Sri Ramakrishna takes a positive view of love of creation

3. *Śrī Śrī Rāmakṛṣṇa Kathāmṛta* By Sri M. (Calcutta: 1387) Vol. II, p. 12

4. *Kathāmṛta* Vol. I, p. 96

as long as it is all-encompassing, giving an equal share of love to each living being; he contrasts it with *māyā* which is a particularized and, hence self-seeing love (for one's family, neighbours, friends etc.).

Love of creation

Francis's love of creation is described in Celano's Second Life of the Saint:

He (Francis) rejoiced in all the works of the hands of the Lord and saw behind things pleasant to behold their life-giving reason and cause. In beautiful things he saw Beauty itself; all things were to him good. 'He who made us is the best', they cried out to him. Through his footprints impressed upon things he followed the Beloved everywhere; he made for himself from all things a ladder by which to come even to his throne.

He embraced all things with rapture of unheard of devotion, speaking to them of the Lord and admonishing them to praise him. He spared lights, lamps, and candles, not wishing to extinguish their brightness with his hand, for he regarded them as a symbol of Eternal Light. He walked reverently upon stones, because of him who was called the Rock.⁵ (...)

He forbade the brothers to cut down the whole tree when they cut wood, so that it might have hope of sprouting again (...) He commanded that a little place be set aside in the garden for sweet-smelling and flowering plants, so that they would bring those who look upon them to the memory of the Eternal Sweetness.⁶

Much of what has been described in this quotation could almost literally be drawn from a biography of Sri Ramakrishna. Both saints, quite contrary to much of their own spiritual traditions, chose to look at creation in a positive way. To both,

creation was not a hindrance to finding God, if viewed and treated with discretion, but as 'a ladder by which to come even to his throne'. Ramakrishna's affirmation that *māyā* is not to be negated and overcome, as *jñāna-yogi* hopes to do, but to be embraced as divine (which was a lesson he forcefully taught to Tota Puri and which he reiterated again and again to his disciples), is his most strongly creation-affirming utterance.

Francis possibly had to overcome a greater religio-cultural gulf to arrive at his love of beauty because Christian asceticism is less inclined to attribute to beauty of creation a positive value and see in it a help in spiritual life. Only about a century earlier, another great Christian monk, Bernard of Clairvaux, closed his eyes at the enchanting beauty of the Swiss countryside, fearing that this sight might take him away from the contemplation of God. In Ramakrishna's Hindu tradition, the God of Beauty, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, takes a central place, and his divine pursuit, too, is the attainment of beauty incarnated in the *gopīs*. Even Mother Kālī, whose iconography often shows her, in Bengal at least, as frightening and terrible, was described by Ramakrishna as a beautiful young woman, a 'merry-girl'.⁷ His Tāntric *sādhanā* even included the worship of the Mother Goddess in a 'beautiful woman in the prime of her youth'.⁸ The list of examples of how Ramakrishna worshipped God in beauty could be expanded. It was natural for him to see Beauty in all things beautiful.

(Continued on page 135)

5. Peter, the direct disciple of Jesus.

6. Thomas of Celano: 'Second Life of St. Francis'. In: *St. Francis of Assisi. Writings and Early Biographies. English Omnibus of the Sources for the Life of St. Francis.* Edited by Marion A. Habig. (London, 1973) p. 494f

7. Christopher Isherwood, *Ramakrishna and His Disciples.* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1969) p. 66

8. Swami Saradananda, *Sri Ramakrishna the Great Master.* (Madras: Ramakrishna Math 1952) p. 195



SIR PATRICK GEDDES

SWAMI EKATMANANDA

The name of Prof. Patrick Geddes must be familiar to all who have read the life of Sister Nivedita. This distinguished Scottish professor, one of the most versatile and creative men of his time, played a brief but vital part in Nivedita's life. She met him for the first time in March 1900 in New York. She had followed Swami Vivekananda to America during Swamiji's second visit to the West. Her purpose in going there was to enlist the support of Americans for the school she had planned to start in Calcutta for the education of Indian girls. Prof. Geddes was then in America on a lecture tour.

Nivedita heard the professor lecture on 'Sociological Method in History'. The many and varied lines of thought opened up by this social scientist deeply interested Nivedita. His doctrine of the influence of geographical locality on human culture struck her as very original. Prof. Geddes on his part found Nivedita's ability to grasp the significance of his ideas remarkable. As he said, 'I found no one who so rapidly and ardently seized upon the principle and delighted in every application of it as Sister Nivedita.'

Meanwhile Josephine MacLeod, another staunch follower of Swami Vivekananda,

had heard of Prof. Geddes and introduced him to her sister Mrs. Betty Leggett, wife of a wealthy New York grocer, Francis H. Leggett who himself was an ardent admirer of Swami Vivekananda. The professor enjoyed the hospitality of the Leggetts at their mansion for some time. This was how he was drawn into the circle of Swami Vivekananda's influence.

Swamiji who had been invited to attend the Congress of the History of Religions at Paris set sail from New York on 26 July 1900. Nivedita had left New York earlier, on June 28, because she had promised to work with Prof. Geddes who was the organizer of the various sessions of the International Association at the Paris Congress. In Paris Nivedita lived for some time as the guest of the Leggetts in their luxurious residence, but soon found their lavish entertainments a distraction. So she moved to the flat of Prof. and Mrs. Geddes and lived there in the bare garret above.

Sister Nivedita was eager to prepare herself for the great work that awaited her in India. She spent week after week trying to assimilate Prof. Geddes's philosophy and to learn his method of interpreting social life. She followed him on his visits

to the Exposition and the city, listening to every word of his, taking down notes and rewriting them afterwards in her garret. For a time they attempted to collaborate on a book that would express her idealism and his science, but this attempt did not succeed. According to Josephine MacLeod, Geddes was too elusive for Sister Nivedita to grasp; 'his mind darted here and there and everywhere like a flame, always just out of reach.'

The creative thinker and writer that Nivedita herself was, she found the job of assisting in cataloguing, indexing and reporting on lectures very tedious. She found it difficult to voice another person's thoughts unless she made them her own. And Prof. Geddes gave her no freedom. She confessed: 'I feel torn to pieces. He wants a voice that will utter his thought as he would have done. I try then to make a mosaic in which the bright bits are his words, and I provide only grey cement of mere grammatical context.'

Her otherwise cordial friendship with Prof. Geddes suffered on account of this conflict which was emerging to the surface. Finally unable to bear the strain of the work, she gave it up since it affected both her health and mental vigour. She wrote to Mrs. Ole Bull who invited her to spend some time with her in the village Perros Guirec, near Lannion in Brittany. Nivedita accepted her invitation and forthwith left Paris.

Curiously, there is little reference to her work with Prof. Geddes in Nivedita's letters of this period. But it is clear that there was no bitterness in her parting company with him, and she retained her admiration for him till the end of her life. In the introduction to her book *The Web of Indian Life* she wrote: 'In sending this book out into the world, I desire to record my thanks.... to Prof. Patrick Geddes who, by teaching me to understand a little of

Europe, indirectly gave me a method by which to read my Indian experiences.'

On his part Prof. Geddes remembered with warmth of feeling Nivedita's work with him. He said:

Eager to master these evolutionary methods, and to apply them to her own studies, to Indian problems therefore above all, she settled above our home into an attic cell, which suited at once her love of wide and lofty outlooks and her ascetic care of material simplicity; and there she worked, for strenuous weeks For my part, I must no less recognize how her keener vision and more sympathetic and spiritual insight carried her discernment of the rich and varied embroidery of the Indian web far beyond that simple texture of the underlying canvas, of the material conditions of life, which it was my privilege at the outset of our many conversations to help her to lay hold upon.¹

Though after the Paris Congress Prof. Geddes faded away from the horizon of the Ramakrishna movement, he was an outstanding thinker and scholar and a great lover of India. As such his life merits our study in its own right.

Born in Ballater, Scotland, on the 2nd October 1854, Patrick Geddes spent his childhood and youth in a hillside cottage. Formal schooling did not begin until he was eight because of frail health, but he graduated at sixteen and won many prizes and developed wide interests.²

After 18 months of successful apprenticeship in a local Bank to satisfy his soldier-father who had retired in 1857 as Captain, Patrick was allowed to begin studies of chemistry, geology and biology at home, along with periods in art school and a cabinet-maker's shop. Voracious

1. Quoted by Pravrajika Atmaprana, *Sister Nivedita* (Calcutta: Sister Nivedita Girls' School, 1967) p. 112.

2. The material for the biographical part of this profile has been drawn chiefly from Philip Boardman's book *Patrick Geddes: Maker of the Future*.

reading was a pastime, with Carlyle, Ruskin and Huxley his favourites. At 20, however, he found his real scientific goal: Zoology under T H. Huxley in London. The years 1874-79 gave him laboratory training with the great evolutionist, an introduction to Comte by London Positivists, and an inspiring introduction to France in the marine biology of Lacaze-Duthiers and the regional geography and occupational economics of Frederic Le Play.

With a grant from the British Association for the Advancement of Science, he then made a one-man inter-disciplinary expedition to Mexico to collect fossils, stones, reptiles and flora. There, a crisis of temporary blindness turned him from an 'eye-minded' extrovert into a philosophical classifier of sciences and inventor of graphic 'thinking-machines' from folded sheets of paper. Thus arose his combination of Comte's sociology with Le Play's *lieu-travaille-famille* into his own double-action formula of Place-Work-Folk.

Returning to Scotland in April 1880 with weakened eyes, which thereafter kept him away from the microscope, Patrick nevertheless became an inspiring lecturer in botany at Edinburgh University and carried on a life of incredibly varied intellectual and practical activity. He wrote a large number of papers and articles and specialized monographs on different subjects.

In 1886, he married Anna Morton, a gifted musician, and together they continued a civic crusade, begun in 1885 by founding the Edinburgh Social Union. Accepting a part-time professorship in botany at University College, Dundee, in 1888 (held until 1919), Geddes used his spare time to organize the first summer schools in Europe at Edinburgh (1887-98) and to found the Outlook Tower in 1892 as 'the world's first sociological laboratory'.

In 1899 and 1900 he made lecture tours of the United States, at the same time organizing the American Section of the International School at the Paris Exposition of 1900, the British and French Sections of which he had already started.

Prof. Patrick Geddes later made the epoch-making survey of Dunfermline in 1903-04 for the Scottish trustees of Andrew Carnegie's \$ 2,500,000 gift to his birthplace. Rejected by them, but published at Geddes's own expense, the resulting *Study in City Development* is today a classic of Geddesian thought and planning methods. Then came the metamorphosis of 'P.G.', as he was soon to be widely known, from botany teacher into a town planning expert. Other highpoints of the years 1904-14 were: founding the Sociological Society in London (1904) with his social science colleague, Victor Branford, initiating student residences in Chelsea; influencing the British Town and Country Planning Bill of 1910 through his friendship with statesman John Burns; creating an itinerant Cities Exhibition from civic-and-regional survey material in the Outlook Tower which, after a successful debut in London, toured the main cities of England, Scotland and Ireland.

Next P.G. wrote and produced the 'Masque of Leaning', a brilliant dramatization of world cultural history in Edinburgh, 1912, and London, 1913, for thousands of spectators. As a climax, his Cities Exhibition took the first prize at the 1913 International Exposition in Ghent and went to Dublin in 1914 as a part of planning projects for Ireland which only the outbreak of war prevented from being carried out.

The decade 1914-24 took Geddes to India and Palestine. He made diagnosis-and-treatment surveys, under both British and local auspices of some 50 Indian urban areas.

Geddes suffered two cruel losses in 1917; his elder son and coming disciple, Alasdair, was killed at the front in France, while his wife Anna died of dysentery in India. After weeks of shock, he turned again to planning, working inhumanly long hours. 'Work is the only anodyne', he wrote repeatedly to his surviving son Arthur and daughter Norah.

In 1919 he gave his Farewell Address at Dundee, 'A Botanist looks at the World', then accepted the Chair of Sociology and Civics at the University of Bombay. Returning to India via Jerusalem where he designed a university for the Zionists which, had they built it, would have given the world a model of inter-disciplinary and inter-faith higher education that might well have provided solutions to age-old Arab-Jewish-Christian conflicts. Other gems of reconstructive wisdom likewise went unheeded in the critical years 1917-21.

In 1923 he lectured in America, mainly in New York. The year 1923-24 was Geddes's last year in Bombay, serious illness forcing him to return to Europe. A complete invalid on reaching southern France in April 1924, he made a remarkable recovery and, by October, was building a small-scale Outlook Tower and University Hall on a barren heath near Montpellier!

Such official honours as came to him also testify to his versatility, for around 1911 a 'town-planning' knighthood was offered but politely turned down 'for democratic reasons'. Another knighthood was offered in 1932, this time for his services to education, and this time he accepted it—but only shortly before his death in April that same year.

In 1925 he opened his final project, the Scots College. The New Year's Honours of 1932 listed Geddes as Sir Patrick for his services to education. But the winter

sojourn in London further undermined his failing health, and he died in Montpellier on 17 April 1932.

Always a Scot and firmly rooted in his boyhood Perthshire, P.G. was at the same time a fervid internationalist. Of the many other lands he knew and worked in, France and India were his favourites. In India, especially, the Geddes family served long and faithfully. First P.G. and Alasdair in towns of the Madras Presidency; later the husband-and-wife team in north-east India where Anna arranged the Darjeeling Summer Meeting just before her untimely death. Then Patrick struggled alone in Indore and other places for five lonely years until his surviving son Arthur joined him in Patiala and Bombay, with much time spent with Tagore at Santiniketan.

Besides the Indore Report, his best writings in India are the biography of Sir J. C. Bose and a little pamphlet: *The Temple Cities—A Town Planning Lecture*. This booklet contains some of his deepest tributes to the civilization of India and ought to be reprinted and widely circulated as evidence of how well this Scottish European, over a half-century ago could understand and express what most visitors, not to speak of British administrators, never saw or appreciated in India. Here is an excerpt:

These daily inflowing and upswelling of emotions cosmic and human, not separate but interacting, seek expression; and they find it in a simple natural symbol—cosmic eternity in the enduring mystery of the stone—human life and love, and their passing, in the transient perfections of the flower. In time, these all become vividly and vividly imaged anew, as in the breaths of Brahman, in the dance of Shiva, in Kali, cataclysmic and destructive yet mother of life anew.

Religious emotions and aspirations, ideas and doctrines, thus ever develop: they find expression in new imagery, in fresh symbolism; and

thus at length in temples, to house and synthesise them, each and all.

Here then is this rhythm of ideation and imagination in their dealings with emotional experience, which has been for so many ages pulsing in the soul of India, is the origin and explanation of her varied temples and their styles, each the stage and scene-work for some new canto of the unending epic of her religious evolution. In all lands religions have grown and lived; but commonly also died; here beyond all other lands, religion is ever rising anew, in fresh metapsychoses, recurrent avatars³

According to Prof. Geddes,

Education is not merely neotechnic, though this is important for workers and specialists, nor is it only geotechnic, though this is as important especially for organizers and statesmen. Education is above all 'eu-psychic' or religious; or to be more precise, re-religious. Only in the measure of our sympathy with nature and its powers as well as with our fellowmen, in their present sufferings as well as their hopes and aspirations, can we have a real understanding of science, philosophy or statesmanship. Our renewed university and school curricula must thus again become like the most ancient ones, though upon our modern spiral they must be at once re-religious in spirit and re-constructive in effort. Only thus will they become truly and effectively scientific.

His view of the goal of college education given below should be of interest to present-day educationists:

The programme of the University must be to spiritualize and moralize, that is, to civicize: to intellectualize, that is, to synthesize, and to specialize; not in dis-specialisms, but as co-specialism, towards application in life. The life of youth will thus be turned and led on its reconstructive march by a different music from that of the turning of wheels, the scratching of pens, the chinking of coins and rustling of papers, of our passing order of life, and education: for it needs and responds to love of neighbourhood and home, of country and city, yet of widening humanity as well. With this growing desire of help and ambition of service, youth will learn to

be of more real use to themselves and the world in three months than most of those conventionally mis-trained in twice as many years.

The man who was responsible for securing Geddes's services as Professor of Civics and Sociology in the University of Bombay was that acute judge of men and promoter of things intellectual and integral, Sir Chimanlal Setalwad, the then Vice-Chancellor, who was convinced, above all, that Geddes was the right man to infuse the spirit of research and originality into students, a spirit that was much needed in the country. Some years later Sir Chimanlal wrote about Geddes, paying highly, glowing tributes to the professor. Two outstanding Indians, the well-known sociologist Radhakamal Mukherjee and the great poet Rabindranath Tagore, were greatly influenced by Geddes who helped the latter in planning the University at Santiniketan.

Contributing the foreword to Amelia Defrie's *The Interpreter Geddes: The Man and His Gospel* (London, 1927), Rabindranath Tagore says, among other things:

What so strongly attracted me in Patrick Geddes when I came to know him in India was, not his scientific achievements, but, on the contrary, the rare fact of the fullness of his personality rising far above his science. Whatever subjects he has studied and mastered have become vitally one with his humanity. He has the precision of the scientist and the vision of the prophet, and at the same time, the power of the artist to make his ideas visible through the language of symbols. His love of Man has given him the insight to see the truth of Man, and his imagination to realise in the world the infinite mystery of life and not merely its mechanical aspect.

Geddes held that everywhere people were suffering from incompleteness, or, in other words, from their betrayal of themselves.

There is a barren atheist, who blindly shuns the spiritual world, trying to ignore the fact that

3. *The Modern Review* (Calcutta) April 1919.

without religion there is neither health nor happiness in humanity. There is a bilious scholar who has made books his prison cell instead of one path to well-balanced growth. There is a dreamer who cannot perfect his dreams into works of art because he has lost the way to achievement. And there are the hosts of would-be practical men who, in mad scramble for material gain, have never won the grace of inner unity. All of them are in desperate need of re-education, and their only hope of salvation is to discover and use the neglected chambers of their lives.

Of the several roles Geddes assumed with high success, his role as a town-planner won the greatest attention, and to many in both the East and West it is a town-planner that he is known best. Well indeed has Geddes been described as the most enlightened town-planner of the twentieth century and as a historic figure who transformed town-planning and gave it a new vital impulse.

Patrick Geddes spent ten years in India from 1914 to 1924. Impelled by the urge to do something about the slum problem, Geddes directed his attention from sociology in general to town-planning in particular. His was a high-powered mind capable of an astonishing variety of creative work. It is always interesting to see some one who combines vision with the desire to put it into use so as to benefit mankind and enhance its sense of values. Geddes was one such. Two of his basic ideas were crystallized in the words 'synthesis' and 'synergy', the former signifying the unification of thought and the latter the unification of thought and action.

When one considers the course of a river, one perceives that at its source it consists of hills and mountains, lower down it is flanked by fertile plains and finally it opens out into the sea. In accordance with these variations of place there is a variation of occupations, from miners, woodsmen, hunters and shepherds to farmers and then to fishermen. This

unity in variety should influence all planning, according to Geddes. His work in town-planning was outstanding. He believed in an organic development based on the historic past of the city and was opposed to the pretentious plans of the engineers, of ruthless destruction of neighbourhood centres in order to achieve a geometrical symmetry of streets. He also wanted to integrate educational centres in his plan. His plans for Indore and Jerusalem are monuments to this vision. His essay on 'Temple' is of great interest to India. He shows how the temple is an effective monument of human aspiration, and how the city grows around it.

Curiously enough, Patrick³ Geddes's first direct contact with the Hindu view of life came via the New World; when in Chicago he met Swami Vivekananda, apostle of the philosophy of Vedanta. The eastern discipline of body and mind made such an impression on both Anna and Patrick that they later handed on to their young children the simple Raja Yoga exercises for 'control of the inner nature', as a valuable part of childhood experience.⁴

Swami Vivekananda and the Scottish scientist met again in Paris, a meeting which further deepened the latter's interest in the land and the soul of India. They visited the Exposition together several times. Ten years later P.G. wrote the preface to a French edition of the Swami's *Philosophy of Raja Yoga*, and four years after that he himself embarked on a mission to India that was to occupy nearly a decade of his life. What Geddes once wrote about Sister Nivedita's influence over children seems to have been true of Vivekananda's influence upon him. He said of her, 'She would

4. Philip Boardman, *Patrick Geddes: Maker of the Future* p. 221.

sit with them upon the floor in the firelight and tell them her "Cradle Tales of Hinduism", with a power and charm even excelling her written version of them, and thus touch this or that ardent young soul to dream of following her to the utmost East'.

In 1914, a Reverend MacLean wrote in the *Edinburgh Scotsman* (December 19) of an unforgettable encounter with Geddes at a gathering where several clerics were discussing the horrors of war. 'One phrase of his', said MacLean, 'lit up for me the days of darkness. "We see the alchemy of Providence at work all around us", Prof. Geddes exclaimed, pushing his hair until it stood all up on end. "Why should we rail at death?... Death has been the saviour of humanityDeath is the weapon which forges greatness of the soul. Death cannot destroy what death has created. That could happen only in an insensate world. What is it—death—but

just this: the slave of immortality?"'⁵

One afternoon on the terrace in front of the College Des Ecosais, Geddes stated categorically: 'Religious education is emotional education; it is the awakening of the great realities of life. And without religion there is no health nor happiness nor even efficiency in life.' On another occasion, P.G. said, 'You know that while Philosophy is in thought and in synthesis of thought, wisdom is action. Philosophers grow to Initiates, but Sages grow to Adepts.' He emphasized the great value of ending the day's work and thought with a spiritual resolve for the morrow, as practised by all the religions.⁶

Though it is difficult to estimate the extent of Swami Vivekananda's influence on Prof. Patrick Geddes, these declamations bear the unmistakable impress of the thought of Swamiji.

5. *Ibid.*, Pp. 469-70.

6. *Ibid.*, p. 470.

(Continued from page 128)

In the early years of Ramakrishna's *sādhana*, it was the worship of Kālī as mother which induced him to love the whole of creation. Swami Saradananda, in his biography, writes: 'At that time he (Ramakrishna) saw the actual manifestation of the divine Mother in all creatures, sentient and insentient, in the universe, specially in all female forms.'⁹

Instances of being reminded of things divine at the sight of seemingly trivial things abound in Ramakrishna's life.¹⁰ In

his Vaiṣṇava *sādhana*, the circumstances of every-day-life were arranged in such a way that they reminded Ramakrishna in every detail of, and imitated, the mythological setting of Kṛṣṇa's and Rādhā's *līlā*. This was particularly noticeable when Ramakrishna, absorbed in the mood of womanhood, practised *madhura bhāva*: he wore woman's clothes, moved and acted like a woman, associated with 'other' women as if he were one of them. This he did solely in his overwhelming desire to impersonate Rādhā in order to love Kṛṣṇa, as Rādhā had loved him.

9. Saradananda, op. cit., p. 232

10. Ramakrishna's first spiritual experience, his first trance, was prompted by the sight of white cranes flying in front of dark thunder-clouds.

(To be concluded)

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA AT CAMP PERCY

(Illustrated)

KATHARINE WHITMARSH

Camp Percy, where Swami Vivekananda spent ten days in June, 1895, before going to Thousand Island Park, still exists today in the White Mountains of northern New Hampshire. As a child I spent many happy summers there. With its clear, serene lake and its heavily forested fountains, it is, in my opinion, one of the most beautiful natural settings to be seen anywhere in the world.

Swami Vivekananda went to Camp Percy with my uncle, Francis H. Leggett; Mrs. Betty Sturges, who later became Mrs. Leggett; and her sister, Josephine MacLeod (Lantine), referred to as Joe Joe in Swamiji's letters. To get to the camp they left New York by train in the evening, arriving the next morning in Portland, Maine, where the station had a wonderful restaurant serving good New England food. From there they travelled another four hours by train to the village of Percy on the Grand Trunk Railway which ran all the way to Canada.

At the time of Swamiji's visit the village of Percy, named for Lord Percy of the American Revolution, was a busy mill town with a population of about 300, mostly mill hands and lumberjacks, according to R. M. Kauffmann in his book, *Reminiscences of the Upper Ammonoosuc Valley*. The mills ceased operating in 1909, so that by the time I became acquainted with the village, the population had dwindled to perhaps 60 and the only commercial enterprise was a General Store that stocked virtually every necessity for that part of the world except cigarettes, to which the owner was unalterably opposed.

Notwithstanding such changes in its economy, Percy, fed faithfully by water

from Lake Christine, functioned throughout as a water-stop for the trains travelling between Portland and Montreal.

From the train-stop one could go by horse and wagon, or on foot, up a steep and rocky path to the lake, a journey requiring about 20 minutes. I still remember the steepness and length of that path! But it was well worth the climb when one saw suddenly, through the woods, Lake Christine sparkling invitingly. The lake is a mile and a half long and, at its widest point, three fourths of a mile across. It is exceptionally clear and beautiful, nestling among the mountains whose slopes, covered with pines, white birch and other trees, come right down to the shore, where no dead foliage or shore debris is visible. The contrast of the dark pines and the white birches is especially striking.

The 'camps' or lodges were located at one end of the lake overlooking a small bay, and visitors were rowed to their destinations. Francis Leggett's camp, where Swamiji stayed, was called White Birch Lodge, and was one of only three or four existing at that time.

These camps were originally intended as simple quarters for the men when they came up to the lake for trout-fishing during the spring. But, as time went by, their families, joining them at first for short periods, fell in love with the beauty of the place and eventually it became established as summer vacation quarters for everyone, especially wonderful for children.

A superintendent acted as general caretaker for the camps, ordering and delivering our food and other necessities, picking up the supplies at the station, hauling them up the hill and then rowing them across the

lake. He was regarded as a man of some importance in the community.

Francis Leggett left the lodge to my father when he died, and we went there every summer until the first world war. The property is still in the family.

Describing Swamiji's visit to Camp Percy, Josephine MacLeod (Tantine) said :

In June of that year [1895] Swami went up to Camp Percy, Christine Lake, N.H., to be the guest of Mr. Leggett at his fishing camp. We also went. There my sister's engagement to Mr. Leggett was announced, and Swami was invited to go abroad and be the witness at the wedding. While he was at the camp, Swami would go out under those beautiful white birch trees and meditate for hours. Without telling us anything about it he made two beautiful white birch bark books, written in Sanskrit and English, which he gave to my sister and me.¹

Mary Louise Burke has described Swami Vivekananda going into Nirvikalpa samadhi at Camp Percy :

... on one of these days Swamiji was discovered by a gardener on the shore of the lake—to all appearances dead. Rushing to the scene, Mr. Leggett and the two women [Betty Sturges and Josephine MacLeod] did everything in their power to rouse their beloved friend and teacher. Failing, they were about to accept the incredible fact of his death when signs of life appeared in his body and he returned gradually to normal consciousness. Swamiji had been in nirvikalpa samadhi.²

Of Camp Percy Swamiji himself wrote [From Percy, N. H., 7th June 1895] :

Dear Mrs. Bull,

I am here at last with Mr. Leggett. This is one of the most beautiful spots I have ever seen. Imagine a lake, surrounded with hills covered with a huge forest, with nobody but

ourselves. So lovely, so quiet, so restful ! And you may imagine how glad I am to be here after the bustle of cities.

It gives me a new lease of life to be here. I go into the forest alone and read my Gita and am quite happy....³

[From Percy, N. H., 17th June 1895] :

Dear Sister [Mary Hale],

... This is the bark [of the white birch trees] in which all holy writings are written in India. So I write Sanskrit: May the husband of Uma (Shiva) protect you always.⁴

[From Thousand Island Park, July 1895] :

Dear Mother [Betty Sturges, later Mrs. Leggett],

I will always look back upon the delightful time I had at Percy, and always thank Mr. Leggett for that treat....

[From New York, 8th July 1895]

Dear Alberta [Alberta Sturges, Mr. Leggett's Stepdaughter],

We had such a jolly good time up there at Percy with Mr. Leggett—isn't he a saint? ...

We had a good deal of rowing at Percy and I learnt a point or two in rowing. Aunt Joe Joe had to pay for her sweetness, for the flies and mosquitoes would not leave her for a moment. They rather gave me a wide berth, I think, because they were very orthodox sabbatarian flies and would not touch a heathen. Again, I think, I used to sing a good deal at Percy, and that must have frightened them away. We had such fine birch trees. I got up an idea of making books out of the bark, as was used to be done in ancient times in our country, and wrote Sanskrit verses for your mother and aunt.⁵

[The photographs published with this article were taken around 1912 and show Lake Christine and the setting for Francis Leggett's camp virtually the same as when Swamiji was there.]

1. His Eastern and Western Admirers, *Reminiscences of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1961) p. 237

2. Mary Louise Burke, *Swami Vivekananda in America: New Discoveries* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1958). p. 617

3. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1978) Vol. 6, p. 309

4. C.W. Vol. 8, p. 339

5. C.W. Vol. 6, pp. 313-14

RECOLLECTIONS OF TAGORE

DR. KURT F. LEIDECKER

In speaking about Rabindranath Tagore we cannot speak but in humbleness and with profound admiration. For even though it is not many years that separate him from the contemporary scene, his greatness was such that it can be perceived clearly and directly without the mellowing effect of history.

If this is exaggeration, let me say that I have known Tagore and was intimately associated with him for a short space of time when he was in the United States on his last visit in 1930. It was a glorious experience for me, as it was for many others who had a chance to hear and see him, and a few who were near him and had conversations with him. It was a somewhat sad period, for America was in the grip of a terrible depression, while India was in the throes of the movement for independence which had its repercussions even in the United States where many were sympathetic but others were highly critical and even condemnatory of India. And in this unhappy climate the Poet held his head high with the vision of triumphant India, graciously acknowledging the heartfelt wishes of those who sat at his feet or pressed his tender hand with western robustness. But proudly and coldly he taunted those who refused to share his vision because of political preconceptions. It was the man Tagore whom I had the privilege of knowing, apart from Tagore, the idol of millions, and he did not fall short of the image that sentiment, devotion, admiration and adulation have painted since.

There was but one weakness I discovered in this somewhat frail but imposing personage; it was the weakness for beauty to which he succumbed utterly, whether in the shape of the evanescent sound of a voice or the fleeting presence of a beautiful form. I

had read about poets, about their sensitiveness—here I experienced it in its rarest expression. It was as if in the face of beauty you could see the poem flashing across the Poet's mind and leaping from his sparkling eyes.

I should have said the Poet had two weaknesses, the other being his love of the simplicity and sincerity of children with whom he felt in complete rapport. I never saw him so blissful with abandon as when, at the end of the benefit performance at the Broadway Theatre in New York City, he, after much coaxing and prompting consented to come to the centre of the stage to sit in a huge arm-chair and, without warning, was surrounded by many happy children who placed a huge garland around him and over the back of the chair. Never since have I seen anyone so enveloped in sheer delight and repose in the spontaneous gestures of children who were as innocently absorbed in their task of managing the trailing garland.

The occasion was a benefit for Tagore's school, Santiniketan, to which place I was to make a pilgrimage two decades later to learn the real India and commune with the spirit of her greatest poet who by then had joined the immortals. Ruth St. Denis performed superbly, as she always did, and others made their contributions to the grand and noble cause which the Poet espoused. Somewhere in the programme Rabindranath was to come to the stage to say a few words, perhaps read his poetry, but he refused with that determination which made him the unpredictable and hard-to-manage person that he was. The audience waited patiently. At long last it was announced that the Poet had agreed to read his poetry—the *piece de resistance* of the entire evening, longed for and hoped for and eagerly awaited by all

who crowded the theatre. The stage had been set for him, but the delay was over the fact that he had steadfastly refused to be so literally and glaringly in the limelight. When the suggestion was made that he might talk from the balcony, he gave in, not knowing that this was an even greater and more glorified presence there.

What happened next turned out to be easily one of the greatest moments of my own life. The theatre, glistening in the overladen splendour of a period now gone, was darkened and the spotlight played upon a box to the right as seen from the audience. There, amid the golden reflections of the ornate box upon which the brilliant light was focussed, the Poet stood in purple robe, his parted hair and flowing beard pure white, his form erect, self-composed. It was a picture which could not have been composed better by any stage or cinema manager. The audience fell silent after their breaths of astonishment and surprise had died down, and the Poet began to recite. I do not now remember whether he recited first in English or in Bengali, but it was what later became the anthem of independent India :

Jana-gaṇa-mana-adhināyaka, jaya he, Bhārata-bhāgya vidhātā

It was some 19 years before that the song had first been sung at the Indian National Congress at Calcutta, in 1911 to be exact, but I doubt that it could have been more effective than at that recital which held the audience absolutely entranced. Of course, only a poet can read the poetry he writes because his soul is in it. But even those who did not understand Bengali—and few there were in the audience who did—could not escape the notion that the Poet's native tongue was beautiful beyond compare. His words rang out in English in his inimitable diction and a realization dawned upon those present that here was patriotism of

the noblest sort, a song in praise of the land—the hills of the Vindhya and Himalayas, the music of the Ganges and the Jamuna, the waves of the Indian sea, the song of the birds and the morning breeze as night vanishes—a song remembering all the multitudes of peoples and races and religions that are India's, all to be woven in a garland of love. Little did those tense listeners get the full import of the tremendous message which spread throughout India and far beyond and has not even now been fully grasped or made come true. It was a brand of patriotism which Tagore wanted the America of the beginning thirties to share with him. It was his very own dream for which he had stood all his life and which was criticized by those who conceived of patriotism merely as a call to arms or a political challenge, perchance by nonviolent means, but a challenge nonetheless. America was as yet somewhat innocent in its knowledge of the East and of India, but those who were more perceptive saw that the song was a clarion call for freedom, not freedom crudely understood as the throwing off of a yoke, that of foreign domination, but freedom that is woven of love of land, a union of peoples and races in diversity, and a higher synthesis that joins all men of whatever creed and persuasion. Years before India became free he had written: 'Freedom in the mere sense of independence has no content, and therefore no meaning. Perfect freedom lies in the perfect harmony of relationship which we realize in this world—not through our response to it in *knowing*, but in *being*'.

How much like the ideal of Thomas Jefferson and the signers of the American Declaration of Independence! Though the Constitution is prose, it too, sounds melodious to the ear of Americans. The same forthright statement of unity, the same appeal through democracy to peoples beyond political bounds: 'We

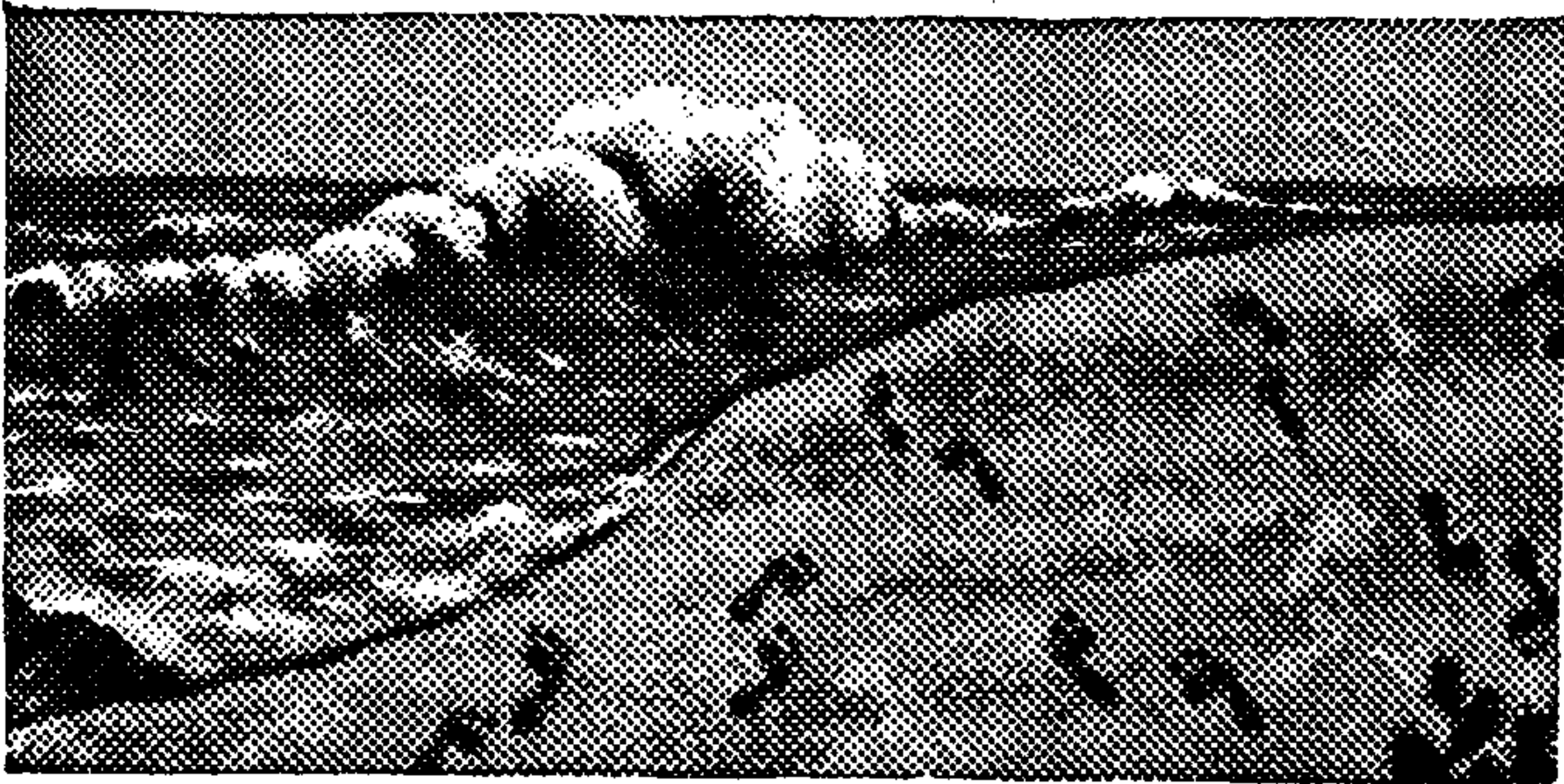
the People of the United States, in order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility,' and so forth. The difference is that Tagore credits *Bhārata-bhāgya-vidhātā*, as the Poet translates himself so superbly, 'the Dispenser of India's Destiny' with bringing 'the hearts of all peoples into the harmony of one life'.

Somewhere Tagore said that we in the West always state things positively, urging, for instance, the doing of good, while Eastern man uses the negative approach, endeavouring to refrain from evil. Yet here, under the promptings of a deeper patriotism, even a Tagore has a positive vision of Hindus, Buddhists, Sikhs, Jains, Parsees, Moslems and Christians gathering round the throne of the Dispenser of India's Destiny, while our Constitution somewhat negatively prohibits in the Amendments the making of laws respecting the establishment of a religion or curtailing the free exercise thereof.

I dare say that Tagore, when on that day toward the end of 1930 he recited this poem in the Broadway Theatre, had an inspiration and was trying to convey a message in his own subtle way in which were amalgamated India and America in an ultimate identity of purpose, thus making an appeal to understand the deeper and basically human issues animating the Indian soul even at the time of political crisis. The audience sensed that here spoke Man, not merely a man, a citizen of Bengal in far away India, for in truly Platonic fashion he had conjured up the oneness of truth, beauty and goodness, and distilled them in a realization of a universal unity beyond strife and politics. By sheer poetic beauty he accomplished what political oratory, however brilliant, could not have brought about.

Patriots of the type of Tagore are rare, indeed. Tagore will remain an inspiration so long as Indians will believe in the Eternal Charioteer who 'drives man's history along the road rugged with rises and falls of Nations', who is *Bhārata's* but also the world's *Vidhātā*, Creator. In this one phrase alone Rabindranath Tagore joined the message of a great simile in Upaniṣads and Bhagavad Gītā, the ancient heritage of India, with a western conception of history, thus demonstrating, as he did so often, his cosmopolitanism despite the unmistakable Indianness of his soul.

With the patriots of the American Revolution, such as George Washington and Thomas Jefferson, with whose memory my university and college are intimately linked, he shared a deep-seated optimism which even in the darkest days does not lose faith in the transcendent splendour of the coming day. When, in 1919, Tagore translated his Bengali poem into English, he called it the Morning Song of India. Now, all great things are born in anguish and turmoil. No country leaped into self-existence skittishly. The lines 'When the long dreary night was dense with gloom and the country lay still in a stupor' precede in Tagore's poem the sun's rising in the East, and Francis Scott Key over a hundred years before experienced the anxiety of the night to sing: 'O say! can you see, by the dawn's early light, what so proudly we hailed at the twilight's last gleaming?' Similarly, Katherine Lee Bates breaks forth impetuously into 'O beautiful for spacious skies, for amber waves of grain ...' But Tagore, more gentle, romantic, mystic, has *Bhārata* awakened *karuṇārūṇarāge, tava carāṇe nata māthā*, touched by God's love to bow at his feet. The triumph makes India humble—will India follow in Tagore's path?



HUMAN TRENDS

RELIGIOUS SITUATION IN AMERICA TODAY

SWAMI SARVESHANANDA and PROF. WILLIAM BUCHANAN

When our editors suggested the above field for report, it seemed a formidable task. This vast country, long the home of expansiveness and the all-time pioneer (outside of Asia) in a generous toleration for any religion, seems really approaching Vivekananda's ideal of 'one sect per person.' But fortunately we found that Swami Yogeshananda had outlined 'People of the New Age' in these columns four years ago; and this indeed appreciably reduced our task, while giving a base-line by which to estimate 'trends', if and when. He mentioned a 'forty-year cycle' of 'lost generations' in the U.S.A., the latest being the 1920's and 1960's—both associated with acute reactions to unpopular wars abroad, disillusionment and distrust in all national ideals etc. And the latter (1960's) seems more devastating inasmuch as the explosion of communication media brought these reactions home to all (not just city-folk like us). And, as throughout history, each such 'reaction' led to resurgence of spiritual or religious seeking. In fact, whether or not the cycle approximated '40 years', any surface-view of religious history seems to run in cycles of (A) depth of disaster and despair—deeper religious seeking and/or social radicalism; and (B) waves of 'success' and comforts, religious shallowness and conservatism.

We have not, of course, reached the '1960's' cycle; but one phenomenon may be noted, viz. although much of the present generation is confused and frustrated by today's waste, violence, and soullessness, it finds no major target for its radicals to focus on—*one* national failure. Thus the pacifist groups are strenuously trying to reform their objectives. By the same token, the 'Religious Right' has continued to mushroom, most notably among the young people. A major review in *Time* magazine (2-9-85)¹ outlines the spectacular growth, not only of the vociferous and angry 'Fundies' (slang for 'Fundamentalists') but also the more hospitable 'Evangelicals'. Both these terms came into usage during the 1920's: first the doctrinaire Fundamentalists, reacting to the post-war disillusionment with liberalism; and then after such stress on the 'infallibility of the Bible' had led to ridicule (as in the Scopes Trial, attacking the teaching of Evolution in schools), many turned to the more moderate orthodoxy of the Evangelicals. Both groups stressed the

1. We have used *Time* and the *Christian Science Monitor* (a daily) as main sources of data, aside from facts and feelings gleaned from knowledgeable friends. There is consensus among most of us that journals are reliable.

strict infallibility of the Bible, but the Evangelicals, including world famous Billy Graham, work happily with less rigid theologians, and especially the large and expanding sort of Pentecostals. These latter, known for 'speaking in tongues' (as at the New Testament phenomenon of 'Pentecost') as well as faith-healing and prophesying by devotees, number at least seven million in the U.S.A. Their leader is head of a cable TV network reaching 30 million homes. In addition there are millions of other related 'charismatics' from among major Protestant sects, but practising the Pentecostal disciplines. The Fundies dissociate themselves from such practices; but the Evangelicals welcome them, and all are lumped into the 'Religious Right', whose beliefs and aims are shared by many members of 'Conservative' churches, including Roman Catholics, Eastern Orthodox, Episcopalians, Jews, and Mormons.

But, as above, it is the Fundies who make the most uproar, and the most reactionary social proposals. In the setting we have outlined (acute unrest among the new generation, yet lack of any simple 'cause'—whether national folly or positive socialist dream) the last ten years have seen drastic shifts among our youths from social radicalism, pacifism, etc. 'back to Christ ... to the Bible ...' The *Time* article quotes impressive figures: the Rev. Jerry Falwell most spectacular among the leaders of the current Religious Right—a strict Fundamentalist, preaching infallibility of the Bible, yet aggressively ready to mix with friendly liberals—raises and spends \$100 million yearly, through nationwide radio and TV sessions (392 stations currently), his Liberty University, with 6,500 zealous students, and last but not least, his 'Moral Majority'. This last one is a 'lobbying and political action group', opposing many of the liberal 'reform' movements among most churches, but waging political war on immorality. Claiming 6,500,000 members, this

explosive group (begun only six years ago) campaigns urgently against abortions, homosexuality, pornography, drug addiction, and for the sanctity of marriage, building more church-supported schools and including prayers in public schools (presently banned as unconstitutional).

The less noisy and more constructive Evangelicals, many of whom often cooperate with Falwell *et al*, actually far outnumber the current 10 million strict Fundamentalists (who worship in separate churches). These include the followers of the world famous Billy Graham as well as the above-mentioned Pentecostals. Numerically largest of all, the Southern Baptist Convention, with 14.4 million members, actually seems tending back to Fundamentalist doctrines. Meanwhile, mainline Protestants are suffering statistically: *Time* notes that in total they have declined by 4.6 millions since 1965; simultaneously the Southern Baptist Convention alone gained 3.4 million.

Still, such massive swing to the Right in religious terms ('back to the Bible etc') is not rare in history, especially in the form of 'revivalism' and 'camp meetings' in the U.S.A. from early eighteenth century on. But as *Time* well notes, it is *new* for Fundamentalists to enter politics: generally their fiery denunciations of 'the world' have advised retreat from 'it'. But our present inrush of mass media, plus auto, train and plane, have left scant room to rouse the silent majority of God-fearing citizens to 'wage war on immorality' much as the liberals were 'marching for civil rights'. In this process, Falwell soon became a valued friend of President Reagan, setting his Moral Majority behind both his electoral campaigns; and many say that, in turn, Reagan's support is the single major factor in Falwell's rise.

Naturally, few of us Vedantists can be happy about all this. Why should religious 'Right'—i.e. conservative—so often mean also conservative in social problems—i.e. for

the establishment for the rich? At least Falwell obliges us by carrying it to logical extremes. Recently visiting South Africa, he raised a storm even among his own followers by openly supporting the white ruling class in South Africa and urging 're-investment in South Africa by U.S. Devotees. Falwell has rarely, if ever, done anything for the cause of the Blacks, and until recently was classified as a segregationist. Closely related is the anti-communism which he shares with all Fundies—many of them extending this to anti-humanism of all kinds. And inevitably therefrom follows enthusiasm for endless nuclear weapon 'defense' against the Red menace. And, of course, backing of any and all sorts of 'anti-communist' countries. When doubts arise, there are, ever ready, Biblical prophecies about a second Coming of Christ; e.g. currently, the establishment of the Israeli government is viewed as a precursor to that, thus justifying multitude of aggressive involvements. Of course, these are excluded from salvation along with all who do not accept Christ as Saviour; but Fundies glibly explain, 'When Christ comes back, the Jews will flock to Him too.'

Still, there is no denying the value of any 'back-to-Bible-and-Christ' movement. We are sure that any who really get back to Him will become a blessing to all. But most of our friends who have mixed with such folk say that the 'born again' conversions are rather superficial—some say even 'a cheap thrill'—much like those of former waves of 'camp-meetings', 'Revivals' etc. from Billy Sunday back through Moody and Sankey, all the way to Jonathan Edwards (mid-18th century). But they lack one thing essential to most of those former waves, viz. graphic visualizations of hell-fire awaiting all sinners! 'Modern' science and enlightened Reason have nearly finished such threats, save for those who choose the long hard road of all saints and mystics, viz. discrimination, renunciation, with yearn-

ing for the Highest, showing the World itself to be that raging fire.

Even so, along the way one must note an apparent beginning of a reversal of the appalling rise of drug and alcohol addictions, family break-up and profligacy, etc, the main targets of the 'uplift' side of the Moral Majority. But again, much credit must equally go to the Religious 'Left'—the less noisy but equally devotional truth-seekers who can find the unifying thread through all Scriptures. Not that this always leads out to social action; but the tendency is strong. From the present Pope, John Paul II, down to the newly 'saved' recruit for Alcoholics Anonymous, come examples of strict 'Evangelical' devotion to scripture, yet hearty help for liberals or 'radicals'. The obvious example currently is 'Liberation Theology', stemming from distinguished Catholic priests and monks in South America (first Peru, then Brazil etc.) from 1968 on. But it rapidly attracted many from other faiths. To quote a noted Quaker (John Punshon), 'This is ... on all fours with the way Quakers have always regarded religion ... the outward forms of religion and piety have always been corrupted by the political establishment. Our forerunners knew this ... in seventeenth century England they stepped outside ... theological conventions by arguing that they were in the same case as the first Christians ... They practised liberation theology. They projected their own struggle backwards to that of Jesus with the Pharisees ... and beyond to the prophets ... denouncing the sacrificial system. And they made the stupendous assertion that they were an integral part of this biblical revelation ...'

We readily find similar expositions of this Liberation Theology from widely varying denominations. And Father Gutierrez of Peru, its proponent, has masterfully defended it against angry denunciations from the oligarchy of South America and the world, both secular and sacred. Papal

councils and aids have ended simply with *warnings* of possible linkages with Marxism (assuming, e.g. inevitable 'class-struggle' even within the One Church!), yet tacitly granting that the Theology 'rooted in a belief in a God who sides with the poor and ... God's followers working to replace unjust social structures' is valid.

And this 'working' often leads into violent situations, and here our Youth are especially involved. Several Catholic activist groups—the oldest and firmest being the 'Catholic Worker' founded by the late Dorothy Day—have found wide help from liberal Protestants, Ecumenical and non-religious groups, in sending volunteers to Central American countries whose bloody conflicts are often aided—rightly or wrongly—by U.S. arms and propaganda. These volunteers work peacefully among the terrorized masses, trying to interpose themselves between the combatants, along the lines of Gandhi and Martin Luther King; while at home, much help is given through Sanctuaries for refugees from the distressed areas, legally or not.

We have noted, of course, that doctrinal liberalism need not always lead out into social action; indeed, all the groups mentioned above, starting from the Catholic leaders, constantly warn against neglecting inner seeking, worship, prayer, etc. In fact it is the monastics, men and women alike, who tend most strongly both ways: many of the activist leaders, starting from the Franciscan, Leonardo Boff of Brazil, are monks, yet many more remain contemplatives. And many lament that there should be such a gap at all—especially we who have Vivekananda's wonderful synthesis, 'For one's liberation and for the welfare of the world', for guidance.

One pertinent observation of some friends is that the spell of the wave of the Religious Right (including ISKON and other proselytizing Hindu groups) seems most acute among the young. Most if not all

reactions of change among dissatisfied seekers have been towards the 'left', and most among the upcoming generation. But this time the 'Fundies' have drawn surprisingly from the highschool-college groups, while the liberal-pacifist-social actionists come mostly from twenty-to-forty year olds. As noted at the start, the youngsters find no one obvious national (outer) failure to focus on; nor any simple solution for the multiform outer threats; hence the appeal of some sort of inner 'solution'. Their elders, having lived through the Vietnam period as its 'lost generation' have perhaps a better grasp of history and certainly a working acquaintance with the eternal values of God's power in altering history.

So far, we have gone into some detail about the largest detectable trends; but in this land of religious freedom, countless others are concurrent; and God alone knows which may soon eclipse the rest. Well has it been said that the 1893 Parliament of Religions could hardly have occurred anywhere but in the U.S.A.; and to date, nobody has ventured another. The overflowing began in the 60's of many of the Oriental faiths, especially Hinduism and Buddhism, remains essentially unchanged; but we may note the increasing phenomenon of Indian emigres here grouping into cooperative, helpful organizations, and in a way serving as quiet 'missionaries of Vedanta' among us. For at least half a century our Swamis have been increasingly approached: 'Please tell us about our own religion: our neighbours want to know more ...' Indian music, dance, drama etc. continue to be vital 'missionary' aids. Their timeless artistic values are so intermixed with specifically Indian ideals and customs that they inevitably arouse interest in these latter.

Meanwhile the other great oriental religions continue to be active. Judaism is still second only to Christianity in visible strength; certain dangers from the Fundies

are, as noted above, coupled with overseas support for Israel. And the Jewish Hassidim, who are comparable to fundamentalists in their intense devotion to Scriptures, are notable for their deep mystical strain, transcending 'Left' or 'Right'. Arising early in the 18th century, but with strong roots back almost to the time of Christ, they are a small but respected minority (about 250,000, mostly in the U.S.A. now) of World Judaism. Their most noted modern exponent was Martin Buber, although Gershom Scholem seems to be closer to their true insights. A recent detailed survey of their history and message in the prestigious *New Yorker* magazine (Sept. 16-30) is noteworthy.

Islam seems to continue as a growing influence—again, with no missionaries save the contagious lives and talks of devotees. Of course, demagogues still do arise among the 'Black Muslims' (who include most of the U.S.A. Muslims); but the present leader of the American Muslim Movement (derived from 'Nation of Islam'), Marith Deen Muhammad, recently disbanded that group, to integrate it into world wide Islamic religion. This will minimize the 'Black racism': hitherto notable, and recently taken up by the fanatical Louis Farrakhan and his revived 'Nation of Islam', which especially attacks the Jews, even to the extent of joining with some Ku Klux Klanners. So far as we and our friends can see, the latter is a passing phenomenon. Meanwhile, liberal, ecumenical Muslims are more and more to be seen, and the influences of the wondrous band of Sufis.

The Parsis (Zoroastrians) continue as a small closely-knit but cooperative element (fewer than 120,000 remain in the whole world) and especially friendly to us Vedantists. They are building Temples in several cities despite the expense of importing sandalwood for the sacred Fire; and are risking criticism from the orthodox at home (west coast of India) by allowing occasional mixed marriages and even, rarely,

a convert. Their age-long adherence to 'racial purity' is based on highest principles; but unless this is a bit relaxed, the group seems destined to extinction. Some of them say, 'Why not? It may well be that the Lord's dispensation was only for a few thousand years!'

There are vital groups striving to stay close to Christ but often ruled out by 'Councils of Churches': e.g. the Mormons, the Quakers (and several related pacifist groups, such as the Mennonites) and Christian Scientists. All seem flourishing, quietly and steadily. The Quakers and their friends are notably concerned with Liberation Theology and practice, whereas the other two gravitate towards the Right. In our Vedanta groups we are especially fond of the Quaker 'Inner Light', the nearest approach to India's 'meditation' to have appeared spontaneously in the West; among them we have many 'friends' but rarely 'devotees'. For, why should they change? With Christian Science also we have much in common; and, as it happens, many of our devotees seem to come from Christian Science backgrounds.

But we have saved the best for the last. So far we have considered 'trends' which readily are seen to be waves, rising only to fall again. But in America's unique ocean of religions, we think we feel the groundswell of two waves which never before had arisen in historical times: (1) the religions of Native Americans (Indians); (2) those of Africans, brought as slaves, but only now really free to rise. There is not much evidence to suppose that Swami Vivekananda heard of the glory of either; at least he never was recorded as saying anything about them save for (1) semi-humorous remarks about Indians'² lack of 'progress', etc.; (2) friendly sympathy for the underprivileged blacks. And, to our knowledge,

2. Throughout, the word 'Indians' refers to our American Indian (Native Americans).

none of his great successors had heard or said much about either group till the last two or three decades, except perhaps at our Los Angeles and Oregon centres. Just browsing through the growing flood of histories and sympathetic studies of these two phenomena shows why this was so. With our Indians arose a wondrous miasma of half-truths labelled 'savagism' (by the few who grasped it at all); Webster defines it as 'the state of rude uncivilized men ... in their native wildness and rudeness'. Further, as to the 'savage': 'one who is untaught, uncivilized or without cultivation of mind or manners', and as illustration describes 'the savages of America.'³ Needless to add, whenever we use the word 'savage' it connotes cruelty, treachery etc. We, like 99.9% of the 'conquering race' never stopped, before, to analyze this term; nor ever noted that it had always referred chiefly to our Indian brothers. Even the Africans have somehow escaped, little as the West knows of such.

Strangely, most of the noted Indian-sympathizers, up till the present century, were completely at the mercy of this subconscious attitude: not 'how the natives ... described themselves but ... how the white conquerors and missionaries and travellers described them.'⁴ Naturally, history is always written by the victors; still this special concoction—a series of baseless logical steps ending with 'therefore they are doomed to extinction' (a corollary of Manifest Destiny)—remarkably clouded the Western mind from the start of the 17th century. Especially in the 19th century all the notable 'friends of Indians'—Francis Parkman, James Fenimore Cooper, Washington Irving, and even Thoreau, our best Vedantist of his time, and most sympathetic

of all towards the Indians—were under its sway. Thoreau, in fact, was so sadly convinced of their inevitable 'extinction', plus their Stoic resignation to it, that he never publicly fought against it, whereas he took the most radical stand against black slavery, of which he knew very little first-hand.

But now we know they were wrong. Despite persistent, self-assured pressure on them by government, by land-hungry, gold-digging 'pioneers', by missionaries, educators etc, reducing them to a bare 200,000 by 1920, they have survived extinction and are now widely reviving. And here comes our 'New Wave'. Their religions have always been essential, daily parts of their lives; and it is to their religions that they have constantly turned for support and hope against seemingly hopeless odds. For the first century or more of contact with the whites, there was a sort of 'hush-hush' period, like that described by Van der Post in Africa,⁵ with spontaneous respect—sometimes reverence—from the 'aborigines' for the masterful strangers and their evidently great God and Christ. Then, inexorably, the heart-breaking rebuffs, betrayals, 'purchases' of land for a few pennies, etc, interrupted now and then by alliances with one or another of the quarrelling nations of invaders till the great new Democracy—for all except Reds and Blacks—began systematizing the great Shove westward. To our Indians, these Whites whom they had welcomed as gods, had evolved into business-like Asuras, who, despite agonizing prayers and worship, sacrifices and heroic struggles, would seem to have dethroned gods and ancestors alike.⁶ Yet our Native Ameri-

5. Laurens Van der Post: *The Dark Eye in Africa* (New York: William Morrow and Co, 1955) pp. 55ff.

6. It is said that history is written by the victors; and till lately, masses of facts about this unprecedented expansionism under the flag of Manifest Destiny and the wondrous miasma of 'savagism', had lain carefully buried. But

3. Cf. Rober F. Sayre: *Thoreau and the American Indians*, Princeton University Press, 1977, pp. 3-6 (quoting on several details, Roy Harvey Pearce's work on 'Savagism...')

4. Sayre, *op. cit.*, p. 4

cans' faith in the Realities which had sustained them for 300 centuries shone on, unshaken, eternal.

The reader will note many similarities between the above and the revival here of the religions of Africa among our Black people, despite some real differences; e.g. the Africans have evolved further along social and economic lines, with much more priestcraft, sacrifices etc; and we Whites are separated by thousands of miles from their homelands. These and other factors make it harder for *us* to understand and appreciate, but here also the literature is rapidly growing, Black art-forms are branching out, and especially in music have already permeated ours, both sacred and secular in a manner which few of us yet grasp. Thus it seems we have come upon a 'Double wave', wholly new in recorded history: the rise from oblivion of the Red Man's and the Black Man's religions, in one great country which, for the first time, is compelled to look back on and learn from its historic mistakes. And why? Only because it is great in tolerance and sympathy could this have happened.

Since we are on the Indians' home-ground and thus, as with Thoreau, able to somewhat grasp their traditions first-hand, we will write mostly of them, for now. One of the many things in common with the

lately has come a flood of light; dozens of careful studies, with book-length stenographic records of history as recounted (to sincere seekers only) by Indian heroes and sages. To date the most reliable and revealing books we have seen are: (1) Joseph Epes Brown's *The Spiritual Legacy of the American Indian* (a major section of it having been first printed by the Quaker Publishing house at Pendle Hill, Pa.) currently published by Crossroad Publ. Co., New York, 1982; and (2) Jamake Highwater's *Ritual of the Wind* (New York: Viking Press, 1977). This latter was referred to us by Swami Buddhananda of the Vedanta Society of Southern California, who has been very helpful throughout.

Blacks is the phenomenal strength and depth of their religious beliefs. All students stress their inextricable mixture of sacred with secular.⁷ Our friends praise it; the critics call it 'animism', 'pantheism', etc; but by whatever name they make our feeble attempts to 'practise the presence of God' or do Japa constantly, etc, seem superficial and artificial. By means of ritual (dependent wholly on oral tradition, carefully memorized, yet flexible according circumstances), music and dance (the latter practically suppressed in Judaism and Christendom until lately, and thus now all the more attractive to Westerners), by sacred words and chants, by arts and crafts—every moment of the day can readily be lifted toward the holy. This sounds a bit starry-eyed and dreamy *until* one gets to talk with a few of them. Not so easy it is: one of the epithets of 'savagism' was 'solitary', 'tradition-bound ... superstitious ... not susceptible to improvement ...'; and indeed, like a good Hindu brahmin, they have been reticent to talk—what to speak or write or lecture—about their faith to the wondrous Whites who befooled them for four centuries. Fortunately, we at Ganges monastery (Fennville, Michigan) are in an area where the Pottawatomie nation early found an honourable compromise with the outrushing Democracy, and held onto their land, thus having one of the oldest, friendliest communities in the country. So, many of them have become a bit Westernized; *but* scratch the surface, and the old ideals and reverences come out. 'You call these arts and crafts? Just see: is this...and this... anything but sacred art? Whether you buy

7. Striking parallels are obvious here as elsewhere with our Hindu sages; cf. the peroration of Sister Nivedita's introduction to *Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*: 'No distinction henceforth between sacred and secular. To labour is to pray. To conquer is to renounce. Life is itself religion...'

and sell it or not, we *made* it for the sake of the Great Spirit...'⁸

Again, our 'Red' and 'Black' religions—lumped with the 'pagan' 'polytheists' by our Christian friends—repeatedly stress the One Great Spirit, manifesting through many lesser deities. The comparison with Vedanta is obvious; but these 'underdeveloped' folk often say, 'all the religions were much the same in the beginning'. They need no text on 'Perennial Philosophy', nor on harmony of religions! In fact, like the Parsis, they tend to discourage conversions; but unlike them, welcome sincere seekers to many if not all their sacred rites, and to hear and copy their verbal 'Bibles'. Again like those of the Hindus, many of our Indian deities represent forces of Nature: the sun, wind, rain etc; but further, to include animals, plants ... all living things have a deity, which, again, parallels a 'spiritual body' in every human. But—wonderful—they often regard the animals and/or their deities as higher than, holier than, man! Thus their worship, their daily ritual, has unlimited scope: every tree or buffalo may be a deity; certain ones *must* be. So a ritual or a prayer must be offered before cutting a tree or killing an animal for food; many Indians say, the animal-deity shows them how to kill that animal rightly. Even the U.S.

8. Most heartening of all, ample evidence appears that Indian youth are beginning to listen more to the wisdom of their elders. Still trying to dig out from under the burdens of the four centuries of repression and disillusion, they have the highest suicide rate (as well as unemployment) and the lowest incomes, education levels and life-expectancy of any ethnic group in U.S.A. today. Yet recently a major *Time* (21.10.85) article reviewed a series of suicides (young men) on one Reservation, for which the elders, in despair, invoked an ancient healing ritual. Very complex and long-lasting, it had not been resorted to since the influenza epidemic of 1918! But *Time* indicates that further suicides have been averted. This is but one of many straws in the wind.

Government formally confessed unintentional injustice, by being till now (1978)⁹ unaware that Indian religion needed 'access to ... certain sites ... a hill, a lake or a forest glade', from which our Parks system had barred them. It is becoming clear that here are the original 'nature mystics' to replace our Wordsworths, Thoreaus and Whitmans, who seem to have almost dropped from view in this frenzied age. Vivekananda said that most great religions began from either ancestor worship or nature-worship; and our Indians have kept both strands carefully preserved through at least 3,000 years on these two continents, to adorn our poetry and stimulate our lagging devotion, when translated, watchfully and lovingly.

As regards ancestor-worship, this is closely tied up with the above-noted firm belief in the 'spiritual bodies' of men and animals—which can roam in dreams, and at death go on to other bodies, so that those of ancestors can be invoked by suitable rituals or austerities. And most of these involve group activities, with resulting closely knit families and nations. If the main purpose of life is serving, loving, propitiating the Spirits, gaining powers, purifying minds towards the Great Spirit what room for quarrels or sectarian rivalries? Or for warfare (cruelty was the hallmark of the savagist myth)? Before we Whites came, it seems to have been rare and minimal; they rarely seem to hanker after more land than the Great Spirit or Mother Nature had allotted them. Even now, after being driven back into a tiny fraction of what they had before 1492, their desires and demands seem rational, balanced, even humorous at times. But with their faith in the great Reality un-

9. We quote from the official Senate Report (included in Joint House-cum-Senate Resolution, soon enacted into Law) dated March 21, 1978. The document is remarkably appealing throughout.

dimmed, and strength returning as the white overlords begin to face the grim facts, they seem now destined for a national revival, much like that of India following the Parliament of Religions of 1893, rousing a faith in themselves and their Sanatana Dharma.

THE TRIBALS OF TRIPURA : THEIR CULTURE AND RELIGION

(Illustrated)

PROF. RANJIT KUMAR ACHARJEE

Tripura is a tiny state of the Indian Union lying in the extreme south-west of Assam, almost completely surrounded by Bangladesh on three sides with a tenuous link with the rest of the country through the Karimganj district of Assam. It is a fascinating land inhabited by equally fascinating people belonging to numerous races, castes, creeds and religious beliefs. The scenic beauty, the flora and fauna, the picturesque hills and green valleys criss-crossed by rivulets make the State of Tripura an attractive place especially for those who are bored by the metal and concrete landscapes of cities and want to get away from the tension, hurry, noise and complexities of modern mechanized life. It is a land with a hoary past mostly shrouded in mystery and romance.

Name of Tripura

The origin of the name of Tripura is uncertain and several views are current in this matter. The popular belief that the land is named after its presiding deity Tripurasundarī seems to be untenable for the simple reason that the installation of the deity and the construction of the temple at Udaipur in South Tripura took place in the first half of the sixteenth century during the reign of Mahārājā Dhanya Mānikya but this hilly place had

been known as Tripura even much before that. As regards the theory that the name owes its origin to the mythological king Tripurāsura, Dr. D. C. Sarkar, an eminent historian states: 'The attempt to prove the antiquity of the Tripura state from epic and Purānic references to a locality called Tripura or Tripuri is absolutely unwarranted. The ancient Tripuri is modern Tewar near Jabalpur in Madhyapradesh.' Kailash Chandra Sinha, a renowned scholar and author of the *Rājamālā* (Chronicles of Tripura Kings) advocated a different view on the basis of an etymological analysis of the term 'Tripura'. He is of the opinion that 'Tripura' had been coined from two Tripuri terms—*tui* (=water) and *prā* (=near). According to him, the land was originally known as *Tuiprā*, meaning a land adjoining the waters. Historical documents attest to the fact that, in days of yore, the boundaries of Tripura extended up to the Bay of Bangal and the Arakan hill ranges in the south. Evidently it was a land adjacent to water (Bay of Bengal) and the Kirātās, the original inhabitants of the land, called it *Tuiprā* in their language. The modern name 'Tripura' is a Sanskritized form or a linguistic variation of the tribal name 'Tuiprā' or *Tiprā*. It needs to be mentioned that even today the tribal people of the area call their land *Tiprā*, and not Tripura.

The tribals of Tripura

In the *Viṣṇupurāṇa* and other mythological and semi-historical documents, Tripura is referred to as the land of the Kirātas. The Kirātas were an aboriginal people residing in the whole of north-eastern India including Brahmaputra valley, north Bengal and north Bihar. In the *Mahābhārata* the Kirātas are described as flat-nosed people having a golden complexion. Assuredly, these people were non-Āryans and belonged to the Mongoloid stock. Anthropologists group them as Tibeto-Burmese which includes the Himalayan tribes, the Bodos, the Nāgās, the Kukis, the Ahoms, the Indian Tibetans, the Khāsīs and some other tribes who have been absorbed in the plains population of northern and north-eastern India in course of time. According to social anthropologists, the aboriginal people who inhabited Tripura in bygone days most probably belonged to the Shan clan of Burma, of which Ahoms and Cacharis along with Tiprās are important sub-clans.

The Tiprās, according to the *Rājamālā* authored by Kailash Chandra Sinha, are divided into four principal sub-tribes. (1) Tiprā (2) Jāmātiā (3) Noātiā and (4) Reāng. Each of these tribes is further divided into a fairly large number of clans. The proclamation of the President of India issued in 1956 mentioned about nineteen tribal communities living in the hills and forests of Tripura: Lushāi, Mogh, Kuki, Chākmā, Gāro, Chāimal, Hālām, Khāsia, Bhutiā, Mundā, Orāng, Lepchā, Santhāl, Bhīl, Tripuri or Tripurā (Tiprā), Jāmātiā, Noātiā, Reāng and Uchāi. The number of tribal people according to the 1971 census is 3,60,700 which accounts for 31.53 per cent of the total population in the State. Incidentally, at present Bengalis, comprising both Hindus and Muslims, form the bulk of the total population of Tripura. The

birth of East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) and the turmoils that accompanied it forced a large number of Bengalis from the adjoining districts of Sylhet, Comilla, Noakhali and Chittagong in Bangladesh to migrate to Tripura and settle there permanently.

A brief survey of certain traits of the principal tribes of Tripura may help us to have a fair conception of their religious-cultural outlook. The ethnic origin of the Tiprās or Tripurās, who constitute a large segment of the tribal population, can be traced back to the Kirātas. They are mostly medium-statured, well-built, comparatively fair-complexioned, flat-nosed, beardless people. They are gentle and cheerful by temperament, freedom-loving and happy-go-lucky, not so aggressive as the Kukis are. Like most of the tribal people, they are simple, kind and easily moved by the distress and sufferings of other people. Unfortunately, modern urban culture has taken away most of these qualities and has made them business-like. The Tiprās had assimilated and absorbed the Hindu ways of life and beliefs much earlier than other tribes without sacrificing their identity. In recent years the Tiprās have come closer to the Bengalis and unhesitatingly imitate the latter's ways of life, manners, customs, dress and ornaments.

The Jāmātiās were originally a martial race, and the largest number of the Royal Army of Tripura was drawn from them. Their freedom-loving temperament forced them to rise in revolt in 1863 A.D. against the Tripura King. Long ago they adopted Hinduism and started worshipping Hindu gods. As a result a significant metamorphosis in their ways of life, beliefs and social customs has already swept them. In recent years some discontent has been noticed especially amongst the youths who are tending to align themselves with disruptionist forces.

The Noātiās (the word means 'new') are in all probability a mixed people who came into existence through marriage between the Mogh and the Tiprā, but their customs are very similar to those of the Jāmātiās. The Noātiās are generally peaceful and are a loyal tribe.

It is said that in old days, the Reāngs lived on the Lushāi Hills (Mizoram) bordering the Arakans of Burma and migrated to Tripura where their language, culture and customs got intermixed with those of the Tiprās. During the reign of Dhanya Māṇikya, they established themselves as a militant tribe. Rāi Kāchār and Rāi Kāchāg both belonging to the Reāng community were two resourceful generals in Dhanya Māṇikya's army. On several occasions, the Reāngs rose in revolt against the autocracy of the rulers, the latest revolt being in 1942-43.

The Lushāis belonging to Kuki-chin tribes occupy the villages on the ridge of the Jampai and Sākhān Hills in North Tripura. It is said that they first came to Tripura in 1912 after the terrible famine in Mizo district in that year. In their physical constitution, the Lushāis are very strong, stout and hard working. Dārlongs presumably belong to the same racial stock as the Lushāis. They came from Eastern Burma more than three centuries back via Mizo Hills. At present, the Dārlongs are found mostly in the North district of Tripura.

The past history of the Hālām, another very resourceful tribe, is to a great extent uncertain. It can however be said with a degree of certainty that they belong to Indo-Mongolian racial family which includes Kukis also. It is believed that the Maharaja of Tripura conferred the title 'Hālām' when they moved into Tripura and settled here permanently. As per the 1931 Census Report, there are as many as 18 classes of Hālāms of which the most

important are the Koloī, Kāiperng, Charai, Mursum and Rupinis. The Rupinis, a sub-class of the Hālāms, claim that it was one of them who founded the present Māṇikya dynasty of Tripura.

It is widely believed that the Chākmās had been living for a long time in the central parts of the Chittagong hill tracts, though it is really difficult to find out the original home of the Chākmās. The Chākmās are a people with their own culture, folk-lore and historical traditions. Mr. Lewin's theory that the Chākmās were originally Mughls does not appear to be quite plausible at present. The Mughls appear to have originated from the Arakan hills. They were driven out of the Arakans by the Burmese invaders in 1783-84. According to the 1961 Census Report, the total population of the Chākmās and the Mughls in this region was 33,000. The Mughls are an intelligent, hard-working and resourceful tribe having very little difference with the Chākmās in customs relating to marriage, inheritance, disposal of the dead and mode of living.

Santhāls, Mundās and Orāngs are in fact not the native tribals of Tripura but came to this land from the tea gardens of Sylhet, an adjacent district now in Bangladesh, where they worked as labourers for a few generations.

Tribal ways of life

Despite some local variations, there exists a good deal of identity in the life-pattern of the tribals of Tripura. They show a preference to live mostly in interior villages located in inaccessible hill areas far away from urban civilization, and the serene natural environment has greatly influenced their character and shaped their outlook. Generally speaking, these people are uninhibited, frank and simple but hard-working. Their hospitality to visitors

is really commendable. By temperament, they are cheerful and freedom-loving. On the hilltops they construct thatched huts locally known as *tong* houses, raised some 5 or 6 feet above the ground and made with bamboos, canes and sungrass which are found in abundance in close proximity. Though not permanent constructions, these *tong* or *māchan*-type houses are artistically made each with two or three rooms in which the entire family is accommodated. Almost all the families have kitchen gardens as well as small poultry farms and piggeries, both of which are generally accommodated in the space beneath the floor. Most of the tribes of Tripura have been living on *jhum* or shifting cultivation by the slash-and-burn method. They first select an extensive hill-slope for each household sometime during the winter. Then the members of the family, both male and female, set to work by cutting down the entire vegetation of the plot. Thereafter the dried up jungles are set on fire in early March. The ashes serve as natural fertilizers. No ploughing is done. On an auspicious day, sowing is done in the shallow holes dug with the stroke of a chopper. A variety of seeds such as paddy, cotton, jute, brinjal (egg plant), bean, cucumber, pumpkin etc. are sown in the same hole. The same plot is used not more than two or three times, and is then left fallow for several years. At present attempts are being made to persuade them to give up this uneconomic mode of production and to adopt a more meaningful livelihood and a settled way of life. As a matter of fact, the Rupinis, Chākmās, Mughis and a few other tribes have discarded the *tong* type of house construction and *jhum*, and have started living in permanent homesteads on the ground like the Bengalis, and have adopted conventional modes of ploughing just like other cultivators of the plains. The village pattern is the same as that of

the other tribes of north-eastern India. Both males and females are hard-working, simple and honest; they loathe begging. Apart from assisting the men-folk in their day-to-day activities in the fields and forests, the women of most of the tribes weave and dye their own clothes. As their needs are few, they endeavour to be self-supporting. After days of hard labour, both men and women seek to utilize the leisure in some recreational activities such as singing and dancing, drinking and feasting.

The tribal communities are patriarchal. In respect of marriage system, the disposal of the dead and laws of inheritance, some notable differences can be discerned from tribe to tribe. Almost all the tribes have their own marriage systems and allied ceremonies and their matrimonial relations are generally restricted within their tribe, though instances of marriage outside the tribe are not rare. A well-decorated house is built according to the custom before a marriage is celebrated. Tripura tribals are mostly monogamous. Widow marriage, and early marriages are not rare. Divorce and remarriage are permissible; divorce is obtained through mutual agreement. Village elders may order dissolution of the marriage with the consent of either of the two partners.

A birth in a tribal family is preceded and followed by religious ceremonies, and certain rituals are performed after a death which include offerings to the spirits; in both the cases, drinking of wine is a common phenomenon. Interestingly enough, some tribes believe that the spirits of the dead inhabit the other world and are capable of revisiting the dear and near ones in disembodied forms. Barring the people professing Christianity, others generally dispose of dead bodies by cremation after performing customary rites which however differ from tribe to tribe. On the whole, belief in the immortality of

the soul and its reincarnation is very strong.

The conventional dress of the hill people is very simple. The working dress of an adult male consists of two pieces of cloth, an upper one and a lower one. The woman usually puts on something like a blouse and a skirt. The Lushāi and Dārlong males, and those who have become educated and are employed in white-collar jobs, wear modern western dress. The Lushāi and Dārlong girls are more colourfully dressed and have a penchant for the western hair-do. They wear little or no ornaments, but women belonging to almost all other communities have a special liking for ornaments of all kinds, like necklaces, bracelets, earrings, etc. They use expensive silver coins as necklaces and also profusely decorate their necks with a large number strings of banana seeds, beads, etc. They also like flowers which they not only adorn their hair with but also stuff them into their ears and noses. Use of ornaments, especially earrings, is very much in vogue among the males even now.

The most remarkable feature of the tribal life is its elaborate administrative structure which is basically democratic. In every tribal village, there is a small but effective council of elders elected informally by a consensus of opinion. The council of elders enjoys temporal authority over the people of the tribe in their social affairs such as settlement of disputes, administration of justice, assisting the poor families in distress, and making arrangements for community festivals and pūjās. The chief of the elders is assisted by a few other individuals with specific functions allotted to each of them. The chief of the elders of the Reāng community is called 'Rāy'; in some other communities he is called 'Choudhuri', and the head of a Chākmā village is known as 'Kārbāri'

The tribal village council anticipates the basic concept of Panchayati Raj. Recently, the Sixth Schedule of the Indian Constitution has been extended to the tribal areas of Tripura State, and election to village councils has already been held. Evidently, this will bring about significant changes in the socio-economic life of the tribals and will usher in a new era of development and prosperity.

Language and literature

Tripura is a multi-lingual State. Most of the principal tribes such as Tripuri, Reāng, Chākmā, Lushāi, Kuki and Khāsiā and their sub-sections have their own dialects. Linguistically these tribes belong to two principal families of language, namely, Sino-Tibetan and Tibeto-Burmese. It is significant to note that there are some tribes who do not seem to have any dialect of their own, and as such they pick up and use in their daily life the dialect of another tribal group. When so many tribes with separate dialects live together for a considerable length of time, it seems quite natural that a composite language would develop. Kak-Barak is a common language of Tripura tribals which has been recognized by the Government as the State language, along with Bengali which is spoken by about 80 per cent of the population in the State. Those tribals who have been living in close proximity to the Bengali inhabited plains for many decades can follow and speak Bengali. The Manipuris, who constitute a sizable section of the population, speak in two different dialects, Bishnupiryā-Manipuri and Methai-Manipuri.

The tribals of Tripura are very proud of their own rich and multi-faceted cultural heritage. For long the royal family and the royal palace have remained the principal centre for all the literary and cultural

activities of the State. Most of the members of the royal family were great patrons of art and literature. Dharma Mānikya (1431-62 A.D.) was a patron of learning in Bengali and Sanskrit, though his own mother tongue was a Bodo dialect. The *Rājamālā*, a verse chronicle of the royal house, was compiled under his supervision and patronage. He also patronized the translation of some Sanskrit works into Bengali. The modern period in the literary history of Tripura began with Maharaja Birchandra Manikya (1862-96 A.D.). He composed hundreds of songs and verses in Brajabuli and Bengali. His son Maharaja Radhakishore Manikya (1887-1909 A.D.) was a close friend of the great poet Rabindranath Tagore, who visited Tripura several times on the invitation of the Maharaja. Rabindranath himself spoke eloquently of the qualities of head and heart of the Maharajas of Tripura. Radhakishore's son Birchandra was succeeded by Bir Bikram Kishore Manikya who took great interest in upholding the tradition of literary patronage in the State. Bir Bikram wrote a historical drama *Jayabati*, which was staged at Agartala, and composed many songs.

Music and dance

With royal patronage, sophisticated classical music was cultivated by the singers of Tripura. The Maharajas used to organize musical concerts as a part of the celebration of Holi, Jhūlan, Rās and spring festival. The cultivation of music and song received great patronage during Birchandra's time. Sachin Deb Barman, a musician of all-India fame, hailed from the royal family of Tripura.

The tribals' love for dance and music is well known. Each tribe has its own songs, though a good deal of uniformity in the theme of tribals' songs and tunes is easily

noticeable. Their songs are mostly related to their work, beliefs and aspirations. Different varieties of songs are sung on different occasions; Tripura tribals have festival songs, marriage songs and songs associated with other rituals. These are sung to the accompaniment of their own improvised musical instruments, such as Sarinda, Chongpreng and Samu (flute). The songs of the Lushāis extol the beauty of the hills they occupy and tell tales of the joy and happiness of bygone days. In recent years the Lushāis have developed a fascination for western music and use Spanish guitar and harmonium. Dārlong songs are of three types—Lamkhojoy (ceremonial songs), Saluzai (celebrating victory in war) and Hlalem (love songs). The Rupinis and Reāngs are fond of singing and dancing. Their songs are very musical and convey profound philosophic thoughts. In this respect, the most significant exception is provided by the Mughs who have not shown any inclination to singing and dancing notwithstanding their deep-seated love and appreciation for poetical compositions.

Dancing accompanied by music, has always been an inseparable aspect of the culture of the people of Tripura, irrespective of community. Dancing is intimately linked with tribal life in Tripura, as it is with the entire tribal population of north-eastern India. The most striking feature is that they dance and sing not only in joy but also in sorrow, in connection with births and deaths, in various social and religious ceremonies and festivals. The dances of the Rupinis are vigorous and lively with group singing. The Gariā dance is very popular among the Tripuris, Reāngs and the Jāmātiās. The Reāngs dance at post-funeral rituals. The Hālām community's love for dance and song is well known. The popular dance among the Lushāis is *cherolam*, or Bamboo Dance.

In this bamboo poles in pairs are spread on the ground and young girls, to the accompaniment of song and music, dance rhythmically as the poles are sounded against each other. They also have flower dance and welcome dance. The 'Basanta Rāsa' dance of the Manipuri community in traditional gorgeous costumes has become a very common aspect of the cultural life of Tripura.

Tribal religion and religious customs

Religious beliefs and practices of Tripura tribals have all the characteristics of tribal religion like the belief in mana, taboos, animism, totemism and fetishism. Their religion consists essentially of a body of customs sanctioned by the authority of the tribal tradition. Most of their religious customs are closely related to their biological needs, such as food-gathering, marriage, birth, sickness, death, protection from beasts and from the inclement weather. They believe that the whole world is thickly peopled by hosts of spirits wielding mysterious powers, and these spirits must be propitiated by performing various rites and rituals. The hill people of Tripura generally make offerings and sacrifices to ward off evil spirits or demons (called 'Huai' by the Lushāis) and other natural calamities. Whenever somebody falls ill or is visited by misfortune, sacrifices are offered to appease the ire of the evil spirits. These offerings along with collateral rituals are performed by the priest or sorcerer called 'ojhai'.

However, they all believe in the existence of the Supreme Being, though they have no definite idea about Him. The Lushāis call the Supreme Spirit 'Pathian', who is believed to be the creator of everything and a benevolent being. The Reāngs address Him as 'Achu Sibrai'. Among other gods, the Hālāms devotedly worship

Saadaroy-Bakundaroy who is symbolized by a bamboo planted on the ground. Though the Tiprās along with many other local tribes have accepted Hinduism and have adjusted their culture and myths with those of the Hindus, yet they have retained some of their traditional beliefs and practices.

Thus the religion now followed by Tripura tribals is not pure Hinduism, but an assortment of Hindu and traditional tribal beliefs and practices. For ages the Caturdaśa Devatā or 'Fourteen Gods and Goddesses' have been the ruling deity of Tripura. It is not quite certain as to when and by whom the worship of Caturdaśa Devatā was first introduced. According to a legendary account recorded in the *Rājamālā*, it was Trilocana, the son of Tripur who introduced the worship of Caturdaśa Devatā. Any way, Caturdaśa Devatās have been worshipped for long by the royal family and by the common people. Of the fourteen gods and goddesses, Matai Katar is the principal deity, the Supreme God. (In Tiprā language, *matai* means 'God' and *katar* means 'great or supreme'). He was later identified with Mahādeva. According to Purāṇic description, Mahādeva is the supreme lord of the Kirātas, a non-Āryan tribe of ancient India. In the process of the Āryanization of non-Āryan deities, Mahādeva was absorbed into the Hindu pantheon. The tribal names of the 14 gods are: Matai Katar, Lāmprā, (twin deities depicting the sun and the sea worshipped on every auspicious occasion), Sāngamā (the Himalaya mountain), Tuimā (the Ganges), Mailumā (the goddess of the production of paddy, now identified with Lakṣmi), Khulumā (the goddess of the cotton plant), Burchāchā (the god of medicine), his two sons, Banirao and Tanirao, the seven Budirak sisters, of whom six are married and the seventh is unmarried who finds pleasure in playing with men and

granting them favours according to her sweet will. The last two in the pantheon are two brothers, Goraiyā (the Fair One) and the Kālāiyā (the Dark One).

Out of these 14 gods, only Lāmprā and Sāngramā are worshipped every day, while the others remain asleep throughout the year only to wake up in the Bengali month of Āṣāḍha (July). It is however interesting to note that these 14 gods, who were originally non-Āryan, were Āryanized in course of time. They assumed the following Hindu names: Hara (Śaṁkara), Umā, Hari (Viṣṇu), Mā (Lakṣmi), Bāṇi, Kumār (Kārtikeya), Gaṇapa (Gaṇeśa), Bidhi (Brahmā), Khā (Bhūmi or Earth), Kāma, Himādri. The idols of these deities are made of an alloy of eight metals. The non-Āryan character of the 14 gods is evidenced by the fact that these are all deformed images (only the heads) and the ancient Hindu tradition discourages worship of any deformed images. Moreover, the chief priest of Caturdaśa Devatā, known locally as 'Chantāi', is not a Brahmin by caste. As a matter of fact, he comes from a hill tribe. The Chantāi is assisted by a few subordinate priests known as 'Gālim'. Priesthood is not hereditary. Any member of the community proficient in mantras enjoys the right to become a Gālim, and the chief Gālim is elevated to the position of a Chantāi.

From semi-historical accounts like the *Rājamālā* and historical documents, it seems almost certain that Śaivism flourished in Tripura in ancient days and got synthesized with the aboriginal religion. The other two prominent sects of Hinduism, namely the Śākta and the Vaiṣṇava also have followers both among the rulers and the ruled. Of these three sects, Śaiva and Śākta sects gained dominance several centuries ago. The advent of Vaiṣṇavism in Tripura is a later development which can be traced two centuries backward to

the reign of Rajdhar Manikya (1785-1804) who embraced Vaiṣṇavism in his old age being duly initiated by the Navadvīp Goswāmins. 'Vṛndābancandra', an idol of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, was the only object of his love and worship in the last days of his life. Thereafter Vaiṣṇavism gradually made its way into Tripura and some of the tribes felt emotionally inclined to it. Nevertheless, Śaiva and Śākta sects held their sway over the majority of the tribal population and the Maharajas of Tripura, and the latter built many temples of Śiva and Umā throughout the State. The influence of the Śākta cult on the religio-cultural life of this land is borne out by the fact that the goddess Tripurasundarī is revered as the presiding deity of Tripura. Mātābāri, the temple (*bāri*) of the Mother (*mātā*) Tripurasundarī, a magnificent piece of architecture near Udaipur (South Tripura), was built by Maharaja Dhanya Māṇikya about four and half centuries ago. The temple is one of the 51 *Śakti-pīthas* recorded in the Hindu Purāṇas. It is said that the right leg of Sati had dropped at Udaipur. There are some other old Śākta temples located at Udaipur. The most important of these are the Guṇavati temple (1668 A.D.), Bhubaneśvarī temple (17th century) and the Kasba Kālībāri situated by the side of the lake Kamala Sagar. However the existence of Hari temple and Jagannath temple, both built in the latter half of the 17th century at Udaipur, and some other Viṣṇu temples built by the members of the royal family bear clear evidence to the tremendous influence exerted by Vaiṣṇavism upon the people of Tripura.

Though a good number of the hill tribes embraced Hinduism and Hindu ways of life long ago, they have not abjured most of their traditional beliefs and religious festivals. As a result, they practise at present a religion which is a happy amalgam of old animistic faiths and Hindu beliefs

and practices. By and large, the Tiprās, Hālāms, Rupinis, Reāngs, Jāmātiās and some other tribes have embraced Hinduism and claim themselves to be Hindus though in a marginal sense. Among the aforesaid tribes, the Rupinis and the Jāmātiās in particular have become the devotees of Viṣṇu. They shun fish, meat and liquor, and most of their social customs generally conform to the basic principles of Vaisnavism. At present every village has a Visnu temple where the deity is worshipped by a Vaiṣṇava priest with the active participation and involvement of the villagers. Though the Reāngs call themselves Hindus of the Śākta cult, of late, a good number of Kṛṣṇa temples have come up in the areas mainly inhabited by the non-Christian Reāngs. They have already taken to *kīrtan* (community singing of devotional songs) after the example of their Bengali neighbours. Besides, they also perform Lakṣmi Pūjā, Ker Pūjā, Mātāṅgini Pūjā, Tripurasundarī Pūjā and Caitragupta Pūjā every year, in addition to the worship of the rivers of the locality. The Jāmātiās and the Rupinis visit Varanasi and Vrindaban every year on pilgrimage. In respect of social customs and religious beliefs, the Noātiās are not dissimilar to the Jāmātiās. The influence of Vaisnavism on the Manipuris is tremendous; almost all of them are Vaiṣṇavas who generally follow Vaisnava ways of life and devotedly observe the religious festivals connected with Kṛṣṇa-cult.

Traditional festivals

A brief account of some of the traditional festivals will enable us to have a clearer picture of the Tribal religion of Tripura. Kharchi Pūjā, Ker Pūjā and Gariā Pūjā are three important tribal festivals which deserve special attention.

The worship of Caturdaśa Devatā,

popularly known here as Kharchi Pūjā, is celebrated with great enthusiasm at Old Agartala temple in the first week of July every year. Sacrifice of a large number of goats, buffalos, cocks, pigeons etc, at the altar of the gods is a special feature of this worship which indicates the original non-Vaiṣṇava inclination of the hill people. A week-long celebration, accompanied by a religious fair, is held in the temple premises in which people of tribal and non-tribal communities coming from every nook and corner of Tripura participate in large numbers. The festival serves as a bright example of communal harmony and acts as a cementing force in the way of national integration.

The Ker Pūjā, another traditional tribal festival, observed both by the royal family in the capital (State-level Pūjā) and tribal communities (village-level Pūjā) starts generally fifteen days after the Kharchi Pūjā on a Saturday or Tuesday. It needs to be noted that Ker Pūjā is not a continuation of Kharchi Pūjā. The Ker Pūjā is held within a boundary specifically marked for this purpose. The Pūjā continues for two and a half days and, during the pendency of the Pūjā, nobody is allowed to enter or come out of this specified area. A birth or death during this period and within the area is considered inauspicious. The deity worshipped is called 'Nākri' who is a symbolic form of Kālī. In the State-level Pūjā, the chief priest is Chantāi, who enjoys supreme authority during the Pūjā. He can even punish the King for any violation of Pūjā-injunctions. The village-level Pūjā is performed by the priest called Āchāi. A close study of the mantras chanted in honour of the deity and of the rituals performed and offerings and sacrifices made on this occasion makes it evident that it is a mixed form of traditional tribal religion and Tāntric cult of Hinduism.

Gariā Pūjā is another remarkable tribal

festival observed on the seventh day of the month of Baisāka (April), the first month of Bengali year. Four or five villages join together to perform the Pūjā by collecting subscriptions from each of the tribal family for meeting the expenses of the Pūjā. Gariā is a deity of the village folks and is believed to be the symbol of joy and valour, happiness and prosperity. This Pūjā is essentially tribal in character. Gariā is more enthusiastically worshipped by the Tiprā, Jāmātiā, Reāng, Noātiā, Koloī, Rupini and Kaipeng communities. Gariā is variously named by the tribals. Tiprās, Jāmātiās and Noātiās call the deity Gariā; the Koloī and Reāng address it as 'Gārai and Kālai' (the twin deities); it is called 'Sukundarai and Makundarai' (twin deities) by the Hālāms. The deity is made of bamboo approximately ten feet in height, with its head made of gold. Its entire body is covered with pieces of cloth of various colours. To perform the Pūjā, a temple-like construction with bamboo is built just on the middle of a river or in some other suitable location. The Āchāi, after observing all the paraphernalia and chanting of mantras, offers wine and water in two bamboo vessels along with the sacrifice of animals. It is the firm conviction of the devotees that this Pūjā ensures their happiness and prosperity for the whole year. It is virtually a community festival in which both men and women actively participate. After the Pūjā is over, the jubilant participants take to dancing and singing. The songs are not all devotional. The festival continues for seven days, and the immersion of the idol takes place after a congregational procession to different villages.

Buddhism in Tripura

The *Rājamālā*, the chronicles of the Tripura Kings avoids any reference to

Buddhism and this gives a wrong impression that Tripura has all along been a Hindu kingdom. But on the basis of recent researches, it seems quite certain that Buddhism was widely prevalent in some areas of the State, and some of the old kings were even devout Buddhists. A number of Buddhist antiquities have been recovered from Madhya Pilak of Belonia sub-division of South Tripura. There are remains of Bodhisattva and Buddha images. A number of terracotta temple plaques and seals depicting the stūpa and the Buddhist creed have also been collected from Pilak Pather. Other Buddhist images have been found near Bishalgarh of Dharmanagar. It is now believed that these Buddhist relics belong to the 8th-10th centuries. A systematic assessment of the extent of Buddhist influence on the history of this land is yet to be made.

The Tripura tribal communities professing Buddhism are the Chākmās and Mugh. These communities belong to the Therāvāda Buddhism, the orthodox tradition prevailing in Ceylon and South-East Asia. The majority of the Tripura Buddhists are Marmas, but there are also some Baruas (Bengali Buddhists) and Chākmās. Buddhist activities in modern times started when the then Maharaja of Tripura established the Veṇuvana-Vihāra at Agartala in 1946. Besides the Chākmās, the Mugh are also Buddhists in religious faith. In areas where the Mugh reside in substantial numbers, we find a temple almost in every village. In the temple a few brass images of Lord Buddha are kept in front of which they burn candles regularly. Though Buddhists, the Mugh do not practise the cult of non-violence at least in respect of daily meals. They take fish and meat of various birds and animals. They do not abstain from taking fish and meat even during a mourning period as the Chākmās do.

Other religious influences

Though Hinduism was made the State religion of Tripura in ancient days by the kings of Māṇikyā dynasty, Christian missionaries, as a part of their strategy of large-scale conversion, infiltrated into Tripura during the early part of this century and managed to convert a section of the simple and docile tribals by communicating with them through their own dialects and promising them some special privileges. As a result, there are at present fifteen thousand Christians in Tripura, hailing mainly from the Lushāi, Dārlong and Reāng communities. Almost all the Lushāis are Christians owing allegiance to the Newzealand Baptist church, while a small group belongs to the independent church set up by L.H. Thanga as a revolt against the influence of foreign missionaries.

It is interesting to note that Islam could not make its presence felt among the tribals, though after each Muslim invasion of Tripura, some Muslims accompanying the invading forces settled here permanently, mostly in South Tripura. In subsequent years, Muslims from former East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) crossed the border and settled on the plains of North Tripura.

The present situation

The foregoing brief survey bears clear testimony to the multi-religious character of the culture of Tripura and to the catholicity and religious tolerance of the people. When we take a fresh look at the socio-cultural scene of tribal life in Tripura at present, we clearly perceive some significant changes there resulting from the process of modernization inaugurated since independence. The modernization process and improved means of communication

have ended to some extent their age-old isolation from the modern society. The resulting socio-economic changes are having a great impact on the people as a result of which their age-old customs, rituals and beliefs are fast changing. Some social scientists are strongly stressing the need to preserve the traditional socio-cultural milieu of the tribals. But what seems to be more relevant and pragmatic is the acceptance and assimilation of all the progressive and constructive aspects of modern culture, on the one hand, and the preservation and revitalization of all that is best in the traditional culture, on the other. In the context of the socio-political situation obtaining now in the north-eastern region, what is urgently needed is an emotional integration, through an effective process of Indianization, of the tribal people of this beautiful and strategically important area.*

* The author derived much help from the following works in the preparation of this article.

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2. Omesh Saigal, *Tripura, the Land and its People* (Delhi: Concept Publishing Co., 1978).
3. Kailas Chandra Sinha and Kaliprasanna Sen, *The Rājamāla*.
4. Phani Bhushan Acharjya, *Tripura* (New Delhi: Publication Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India).
5. *Tripura, A Government of Tripura Publication*.
6. Dr. Heing Bechert, *Contemporary Buddhism in Bengal & Tripura* (Published in Educational Miscellany, 1968) Vol. 4, Nos. 3 and 4.
7. Sri J. N. Sarkar (Ed.), *The History of Bengal*
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REVIEWS AND NOTICES

HOW TO BUILD CHARACTER By SWAMI BUDHANANDA. Published by Ramakrishna Mission, Ramakrishna Ashrama Marg, New Delhi 110 055. 1983. Pp. 49. Rs. 3

The author, the late Swami Budhananda, has laid us under a deep debt of gratitude by writing this small but incisive and inspiring booklet. Almost all the problems of human life can be traced to one major cause—man's negligence of himself, of his character. Before attempting to conquer the external world man must dive deep into himself and struggle intensely to develop his character, the bedrock of his existence. In a simple but convincing manner the author analyses the connection between human achievements and character with the help of maxims and exhortations culled from the teachings of ancient seers, prophets and from authentic scriptural texts. The subject discussed deals with the following main questions:

1. What happens to a man with or without character?
2. What are the qualities of a man of good character?
3. How to inculcate these good qualities?
4. What is perfection in character?

The author does not hesitate to warn us that 'A person without character can never become a yogi'. Conversely, he reiterates Swami Vivekananda's words 'What we want is character, strengthening of the will... It is character that can cleave through adamant walls of difficulties.' The art of character-building should not be confined to any group of society or individuals, but must extend to all as a doctrine of Sarvodaya or simultaneous advancement of all. Even those who consider themselves morally low should not be excluded from gaining access to it. Very liberally the author says: 'Most of us may not have been born with divine treasure (*daivi sampad*). Even then this can be acquired. How? Through the methods prescribed in the Gita, Yoga Sutras etc. and from the life and message of the prophets who have translated these precepts into action. The goal is perfection of character as defined by Confucius: "To find the central clue of our moral being which unites us to the moral order, that indeed is the highest attainment."'

The book is intended to serve as a primer in moral education. The author entreats us:

'All thoughtful parents, teachers and students are welcome to join this august adventure to build the greatest edifice of life—CHARACTER.' We hope a large number of people will respond to this call by buying, reading and popularizing this beautifully printed booklet. It should be in the pockets of all young people.

SWAMI JITATMANANDA
Ramakrishna Math
Hyderabad

POEMS: BY SWAMI RAMDAS. Published by Anandashram, P.O. Anandashram, Dist. Cannanore, Kerala (North) 670 531. 1984. Pp. 374 + xxviii. Rs. 15

Poetry exists today in a predominantly secular temper. Its implicit critical criteria as tension, paradox, irony etc. are so pervasive that poetry unable to evidence these is dismissed as no poetry at all. This is especially the case with religious poetry which is declared, in most instances, as missing both the correlatives: it is neither religious nor is it poetry.

But, as Professor Ramaswami puts it, in his extremely illuminating 'tribute' to Swami Ramdas's poetry, there is also 'the poetry of direct and authentic experience of the Godhead.' In effect, it is 'the authentic means of a communication, in some limited but intelligible terms, of a spiritual experience which transcends human criteria of assessment.'

Such has been the poetry, for instance, of Swami Vivekananda and Sri Aurobindo. It is to this category that the present volume obviously belongs. And Swami Ramdas—the sage of Anandashram hardly needs any introduction—himself pointed out that his 'experiences have reached such a stage that he can hardly give expression to them' except in the poems.

Divided into three sections—Realization, Ecstasy, Exhortations—all the poems are sparks from 'the most intimate perceptions of Godhead.' The basic centre is one of totalizing consciousness perceiving Godhead everywhere:

I looked at myself and found God
Then, wherever I gaze, there am I.
Now I know I am the form universal.
Separation is false, I or He alone exists
I see friend and foe both as myself.
One eternal, colourless existence
Has taken shapes and forms.

(*'He Alone Exists'*)

From this experience stems the myriad moods of the poems, but their central, controlling rhythm is love:

My heart overflows with love incessantly ;
I lay it at the altar of humanity.
Humanity is my God, as also all creation.
I reject nothing. I love all, for all is my God.
(‘I Love All’)

It is only natural that the very soul of religion is found in this love and not in rites or creeds:

Religion is not rites and rituals,
Religion is life lived in tune with God.

and, therefore,

Love in endless streams spontaneous
Floods all the worlds—thyself revealed !
(‘The Destined Aim of Life’)

In effect, this is mystical poetry of great significance and some of the poems (‘From the Rosary’, ‘Cosmic Rhythm’, ‘One Light’, etc. for instance) are extremely suggestive in their contemplative centrality of vision. As such these poems are not so much triumphs of technique as theophanies charging *sabda* and *artha* with revelatory impact.

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TRUE RELIGION ALWAYS HELPS By SWAMI BUDHANANDA. Published by Ramakrishna Mission, Ramakrishna Ashrama Marg, New Delhi 110 055. 1983. P. 62. Price. Rs. 2.25

This is the third booklet in the Sadhana Series planned by the late Swami Budhanandaji. True Religion is man’s truest friend. It is always better to get acquainted with this friend on the earliest possible occasion.

The author has pointed out in this booklet the true meaning of ‘fun in life’, of the so-called ‘progress of mankind’ and what exactly ‘our business should be’. A biblical anecdote of boy Jesus talking about the business of his Father is given here to show that even the lowliest or the busiest form of work can turn out to be ‘Father’s business’ when the spirit of the work links it with the ultimate purpose of life.

If we do not close ourselves to the influence of religion, then religion will help us always and everywhere.

The author has further pointed out the significance of *samskaras* or sacraments, how from ‘womb to tomb’ man is exposed to them, and how they help in moulding our spiritual life. But, for the gaining of the highest knowledge, concentration, discrimination, sustained applica-

tion and memory are needed. Contenance helps in developing these powers and, therefore, it was held high in the ancient educational system in India.

Through the practice of ‘True Religion’ human beings are transformed and become abiding blessings to fellow human beings.

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COSMIC ECUMENISM VIA HINDU-BUDDHIST CATHOLICISM (*An Autobiography of an Indian Dominican Monk*) BY ANTHONY ELENJIMITTAM. Published by Aquinas Publications, Bandra, Bombay 400 050. 1983. Pp. 488 (Price not stated).

Spiritual men are rarely in the habit of writing a retrospect of their life. Perhaps their total self-effacement makes them regard this exercise in first person singular the vanity of vanities. But when such a person does write his story, it is bound to be of inestimable value to all those committed to the pursuit of excellence.

Cosmic Ecumenism is, from this perspective, a rare document written with transparent sincerity and honesty—two qualities which are, by and large, predictable casualties in autobiographies. As the author himself puts it, ‘I have fought against the inherent subtle psychology to extol oneself, hiding one’s own liabilities and bringing to limelight one’s own credit side.’ This is, in essence, the source of the charm and irresistible pull of the book.

What an amazingly varied facets of Reverend Anthony’s life the book reveals! Versatile and visionary, he rightly calls his book ‘Cosmic Ecumenism’ through Hindu and Buddhist catholicism. In effect, what the book traces is the inward odyssey of a born universalist in quest of the cosmic vision of man. ‘We are’, as the author says, ‘basically human beings and it is only on this larger human basis that we can solve our religious problems, controversies, wars and violence.’ It is this spirit of catholicism that suffuses the tone and temper of the book.

Born on 22nd June, 1915 in a distinguished orthodox Roman Catholic family, Elenjittam led—and continues to lead—an extraordinary active life focussed on the achievement of total inner transformation. Whether it is studying philosophy in a Christian Seminary in Kerala or theology in Rome, England or France, his life acquired its controlling centres in the twin ideals of detachment and service, both secular and spiritual. Whether as a priest, a distinguished

journalist and writer, an active social worker or a committed educationist, Elenjmittam's life reveals a sense of total dedication to the ideals of Universal religion.

The book also captures vividly Elenjmittam's association with leading religious organizations and their luminaries. Among these figure the Brahma Samaj and the Mahabodhi Society. But of fascinating interest to readers of *Prabuddha Bharata* is the chapter on the Ramakrishna Mission whose ideal of universal religion had had a decisive impact on Elenjmittam's idea of cosmic ecumenism. In fact he tells us with refreshing candour: 'I had borrowed the *Jñāna Yoga* and other works of Swami Vivekananda in English from the library of the Pontifical College of Propaganda Fede in Rome and for that I came under the gunfire of my then superior, Father Antonino Silli, who ordered me not to read any book on theology without the ecclesiastical *imprimatur*, i.e., official approval of the official censors of the official church.'

In effect, the significance of the book lies in its graphic description of the several stages through which not only the author but also, by implication, our contemporary society itself, has moved away from this orthodox stance. In making the implicit universality of religion and faith a reality, the author, as the book unmistakably shows, played a dynamic, significant role. The resultant convictions are movingly summed up in the final chapter which rightly suggests that humanity today is poised for a breakthrough in realizing 'the dream of One World and One Cosmic' being, 'One God-the-good'.

Cosmic Ecumenism dramatizes the way of a pilgrim towards this realization and it does this with candour, conviction and above all pragmatism. As such, reading of the book is a significant exercise in liberal, spiritually-oriented education.

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THE GOSPEL OF SRI KRISHNA. BY SWAMI GABHIRANANDA. Published by Ramakrishna Math, Puranattukara, Trichur, Kerala 680 551. 1985. Pp. xxi + 232. Rs. 18

Here is a handy, neatly printed and durably bound new edition of the *Bhagavad-Gita* for the common man especially useful for daily *pārāyana*. It contains the verses in Nagari

script and a running translation with notes added at the end. The author, an erudite scholar, has not sacrificed linguistic grace and clarity for the sake of literality. In some places the translation seems to be interpretative. It is so simple and lucid that it has made word-to-word rendering unnecessary. The real difficulty in understanding the Gita lies not in its language but in the multi-valent meaningfulness of its terms and concepts. The notes (based on Samkara) given by the author remove this difficulty to some extent, but more notes are necessary.

The appendix containing the relevant teachings of Sri Ramakrishna directly or indirectly connected with the Gita adds to the value of the book. Nothing could be more appropriate than the second appendix containing Swami Vivekananda's 'Song of the Sannyasin' which the author rightly regards as bearing a remarkable similarity to the description of the *sthitaprajña* given in the Gita.

S.B.

WHY MAN NEEDS GOD BY SWAMI BUDHANANDA. Published by Ramakrishna Mission, Ramakrishna Ashrama Marg, New Delhi 110 055. 1983. Pages vii + 41. Price. Rs. 2.25

This is a small book on a great theme. Man usually evinces a keen interest in God either negatively or positively. In either case this interest needs to be sustained and fulfilled. The present booklet serves this purpose adequately. Economics deals with our needs and their satisfaction. It states that we have basic needs such as food, clothes, shelter. Then there are conventional needs and luxury needs. In modern times there are needless needs of which we are not aware till a manufacturer's agent on the T.V. tells about them with a smile. Among all these needs the need for God or religion or spirituality is often felt from the depth of our beings and we know very little as to how to attend to that need. For want of proper guidance, many people wade through confusion. The present booklet is a good guide for such persons.

The chapters are so designed as to take the reader gradually into the depths of the subject, correcting his thinking at various levels. Incidents from the lives of Buddha and Guru Govind Singh and the touching songs of Ramprasad and Mirabai given in this book all emphasize

the thirst for God. Sri Ramakrishna has said, 'When God is realized, the world never appears empty.' The author states that whoever seeks to escape emptiness of life must learn to need God. The earlier, the better.

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NEWS AND REPORTS

RAMAKRISHNA MISSION SEVASHRAMA VRINDABAN

REPORT FOR APRIL 1984 TO MARCH 1985

Begun in 1907 as a small homoeopathic dispensary, the Sevashrama has grown into a 121-bed allopathic hospital and an important monastic centre. The hospital has departments of general surgery, ophthalmology, dentistry, general medicine, and homoeopathic outpatient clinic. The general surgery department performs a wide variety of operations, having a neurosurgeon also among its staff. Facilities exist for conducting electrocardiography, radiography, physiotherapy and laboratory tests. An 8-bed ward is provided for cancer patients. The emergency department is a boon to the public, conducting medical and surgical service round the clock. A well-equipped eye department is a special feature of this hospital.

The Pallimangal (Integrated Rural Development) Scheme started about two years ago has been rendering free service to the poor people of 150 villages in Mathura district. The nursing school, which has been functioning since 1980, offers a three-and-half year course in nursing and admits 10 students every year.

During the period under report, the Sevashrama treated 2,12,077 outpatients (new: 45,548), all of whom received free consultation and medicines. The number of inpatients treated was 2,926 of whom 26% received free treatment, and the rest received treatment subsidized to the extent of 80%. The number of surgical operations conducted in the hospital was 445. The homoeopathic clinic treated 504 inpatients. In the Pallimangal Dept. a total number of 45,563 patients received free consultation and medicines.

Immediate needs: It should be noted that the Sevashrama does not ask for or receive any financial help from the government for the maintenance of the hospital and depends solely

on the help received from the benevolent public. A donation of Rs. 50,000 towards the maintenance of a hospital bed may be made as an endowment in memory of someone. The philanthropic public are requested to contribute liberally to the Hospital Fund which will enable the institution to get rid of the accumulated deficit of Rs. 2.35 lakh. Donations may also be made for any of the items mentioned under Future Plans given below.

Future Plans

Construction:

- | | |
|---|---------------|
| 1. Intensive Care unit with attached laboratory etc. | Rs. 2,75,000 |
| 2. Modification in the existing operation room complex and wards. | Rs. 1,00,000 |
| 3. Completion of hospital roof | Rs. 1,50,000 |
| 4. Staff quarters | Rs. 3,00,000 |
| 5. Maternity block | Rs. 10,00,000 |

Equipment

- | | |
|---|--------------|
| 1. Ceiling operation lamp | Rs. 40,000 |
| 2. Some essential instruments for general, orthopedic, ENT, ophthalmology and neurosurgery | Rs. 1,94,000 |
| 3. Operating Microscopes | Rs. 2,00,000 |
| 4. Spectrophotofluorometer, Automatic slide-staining machine, refractometer, blood gas analyzer, electronic cell counter, electrophoresis unit, slide counter | Rs. 3,13,000 |
| 5. Angiomat 3000 Viamonte-Hobbs injector | Rs. 3,00,000 |
| 6. Florobrite trimode cesium iodide image-intensifier with TV | Rs. 5,00,000 |
| 7. For Maternity Dept. | Rs. 5,00,000 |
| 8. For Intensive Care Unit: Central Monitoring Cardioscope, Defibrillator, Pacemaker etc. for 8 beds | Rs. 6,00,000 |
| 9. For laundry | Rs. 2,70,000 |

NOTES AND COMMENTS

Christopher Isherwood

On the 5th of January the BBC announced the passing away of Christopher Isherwood at the age of 81. In his death the literary world has lost a distinguished novelist, and the Vedanta movement in the West, one of its most famous protagonists. His variegated life and creative career spanned continents and generations.

This staunch pacifist was born in an army family in Cheshire, England. After working as a private tutor and free-lance journalist, Isherwood turned to writing fiction. He went to Berlin in 1930; his two novels depicting his experiences there brought him wide recognition as a talented writer, and he became a member of a coterie of brilliant young intellectuals which included Stephen Spender and W.H. Auden. His collaboration with Auden in three verse dramas and in *Journey to a War* (about their experiences in war-torn China in 1936) brought him more fame. When he was at the height of his literary career, Isherwood migrated to the United States in 1939. Though he continued to write novels and novellas, some of them showing marks of rare brilliance, he attracted less attention in literary circles. He employed an unpretentious simple style and, though his output was not large, discerning critics regard his craftsmanship as approaching perfection. It is said that his friend Somerset Maugham modelled the hero of *The Razor's Edge* on the restless quest of Isherwood for solace and meaning.

In America Isherwood joined the group of top-flight writers, including Aldous Huxley and Gerald Heard, who rallied around Swami Prabhavananda, founder of the Vedanta Society of Southern California, and gave Vedanta movement an unprecedented boost. Few people in India may know how much courage, sacrifice and aspiration for Truth it needed for a writer of Isherwood's standing in the 1940s to move out into the world of oriental mysticism. In his contribution to John Yale's *What Vedanta Means to Me* (London: Rider and Co., 1961) Isherwood has described the inner compulsions that took him to the portals of Vedanta. What he got from Vedanta was not mere intellectual satisfaction. It was something ineffably personal, and he ever remained grateful to his guru for transmitting it. 'The really decisive convictions of our lives are never arrived at through the power of arguments alone', he wrote. 'The right teacher must appear at exactly the right moment in the right place, and his pupil must be in the right mood to accept what he teaches.'

The followers of Sri Ramakrishna owe Isherwood a debt of gratitude for writing one of the most readable biographies of the Master and for his other contributions to Vedanta literature. He was a sincere seeker of Truth and led an authentic life, although he had a streak of aberration in his character, as geniuses are often found to have, which he admitted with disarming candour. He walked towards the Sun. Only those who are themselves in darkness can fail to see the luminous side of Christopher Isherwood.

RAMAKRISHNA MISSION'S RELIEF SERVICE

Fury of Nature



Ruins of Anguru village in Srikakulam district, Andhra Pradesh, after the floods in 1983



Betel-nut trees—the only source of earning for the villagers—seen dead after the flood waters receded in Tripura in 1984



Water-logged Panchanantala, a low-lying area in Calcutta, after the flood havoc of 1984



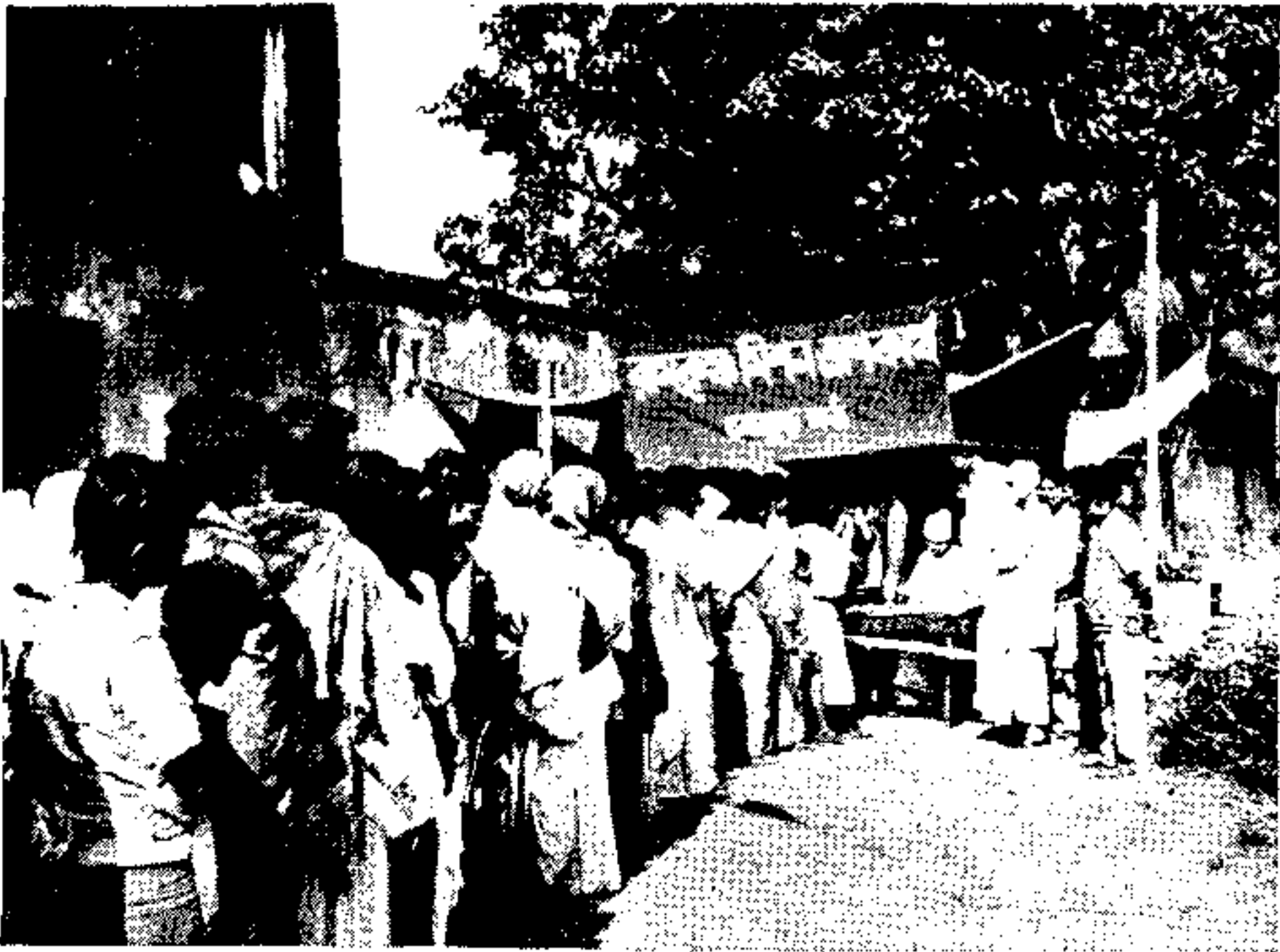
Dazed villagers under the open sky after fire had destroyed their houses in a village near Rajahmundry, Andhra Pradesh, in 1979

PRABUDDHA BHARATA

Distribution of food and other necessities



Starving children taking their meal received from the mass feeding camp at Arambagh, Hooghly district, affected by floods in 1978



Clothes, blankets, etc. being distributed among the flood victims of Burdwan district, West Bengal in 1985



Children waiting for lunch at one of the camps set up in West Bengal during the flood havoc of 1978



Villagers affected by floods in 1984 queuing up to receive clothes from one of our distribution centres in Malda district, West Bengal

RAMAKRISHNA MISSION'S RELIEF SERVICE

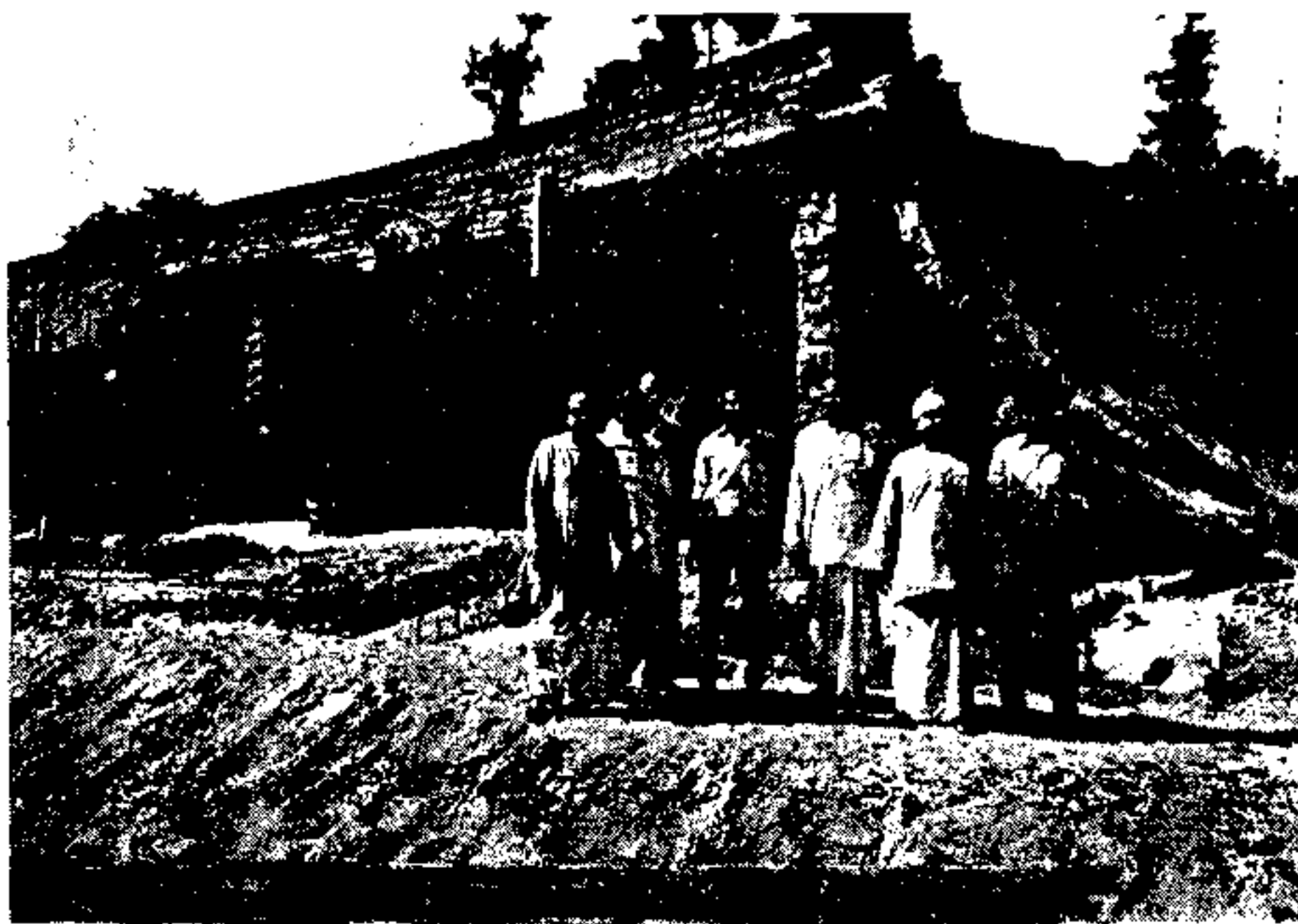
Construction work



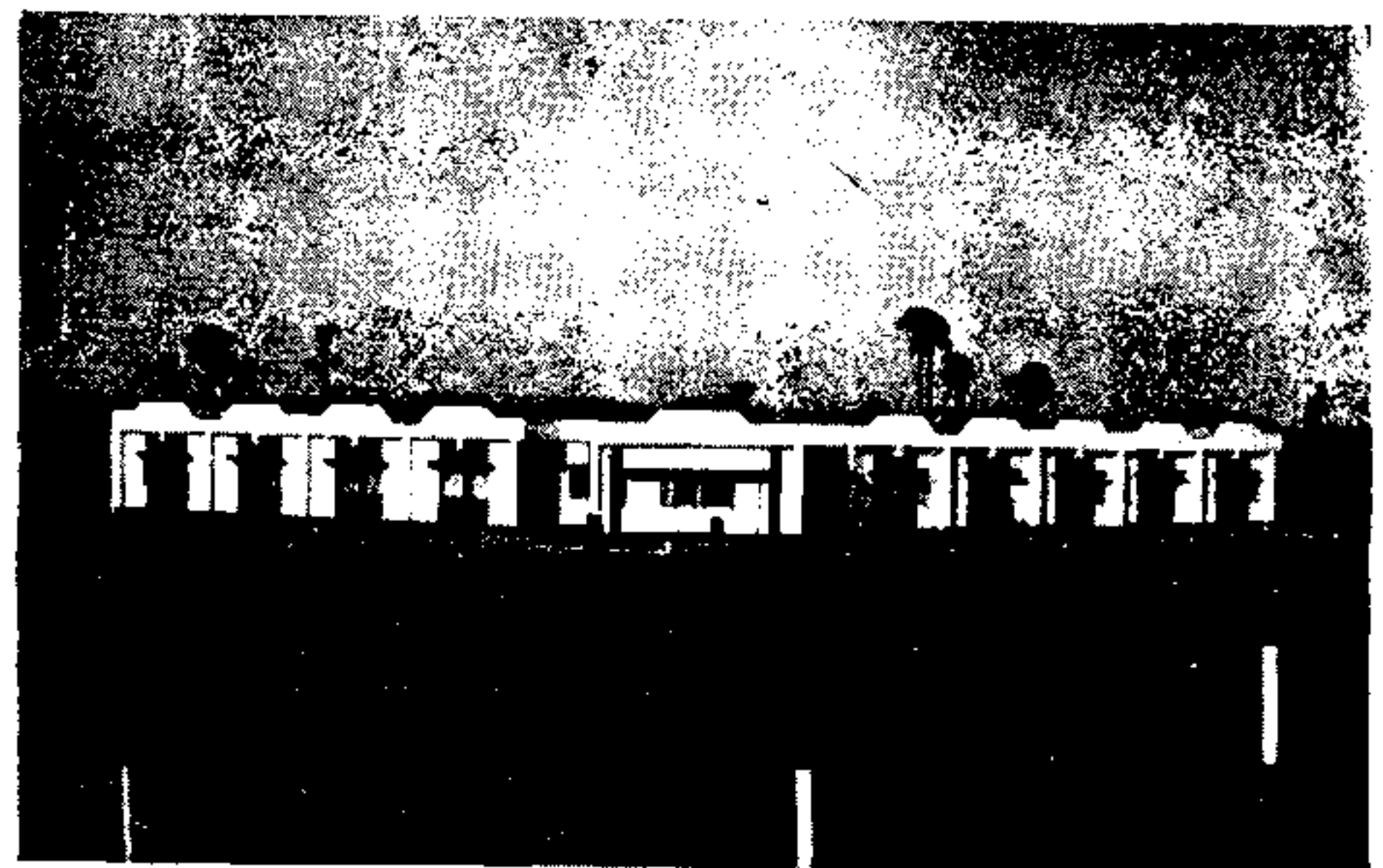
A seven-acre pond being excavated in Gondpendri village, Durg district, Madhya Pradesh



A completed well ready for use at Gattasilli village, Raipur district, Madhya Pradesh. 44 wells were dug for Harijans and tribals, each at a cost of Rs. 6,000



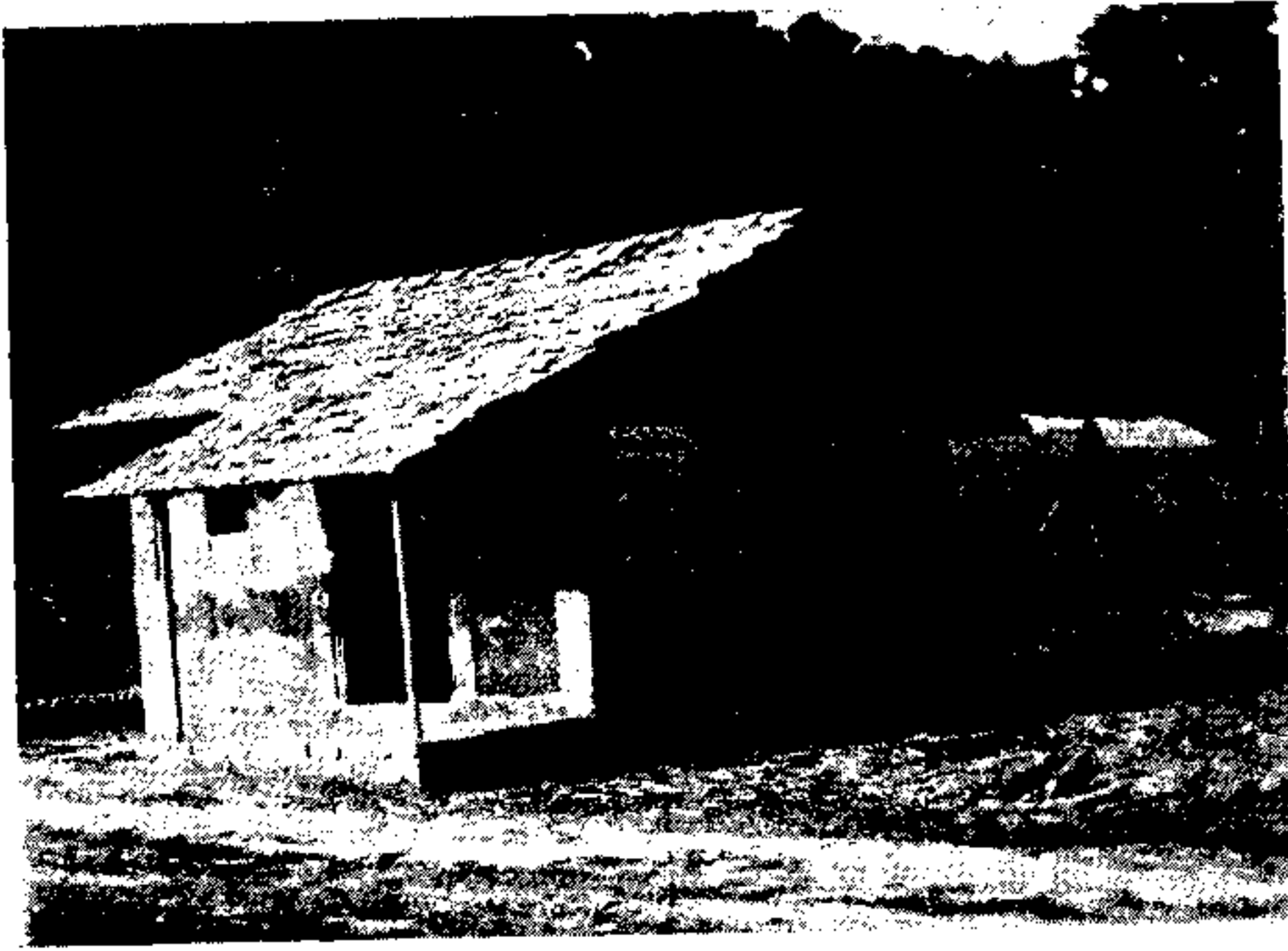
The Krishnabhamini Girls' School at Bali Devanganj, Hooghly district, West Bengal, completely destroyed by flood in 1979



The new building, built at a safer place, of the school renamed Saradamani Balika Vidyalaya

PRABUDDHA BHARATA

Rehabilitation



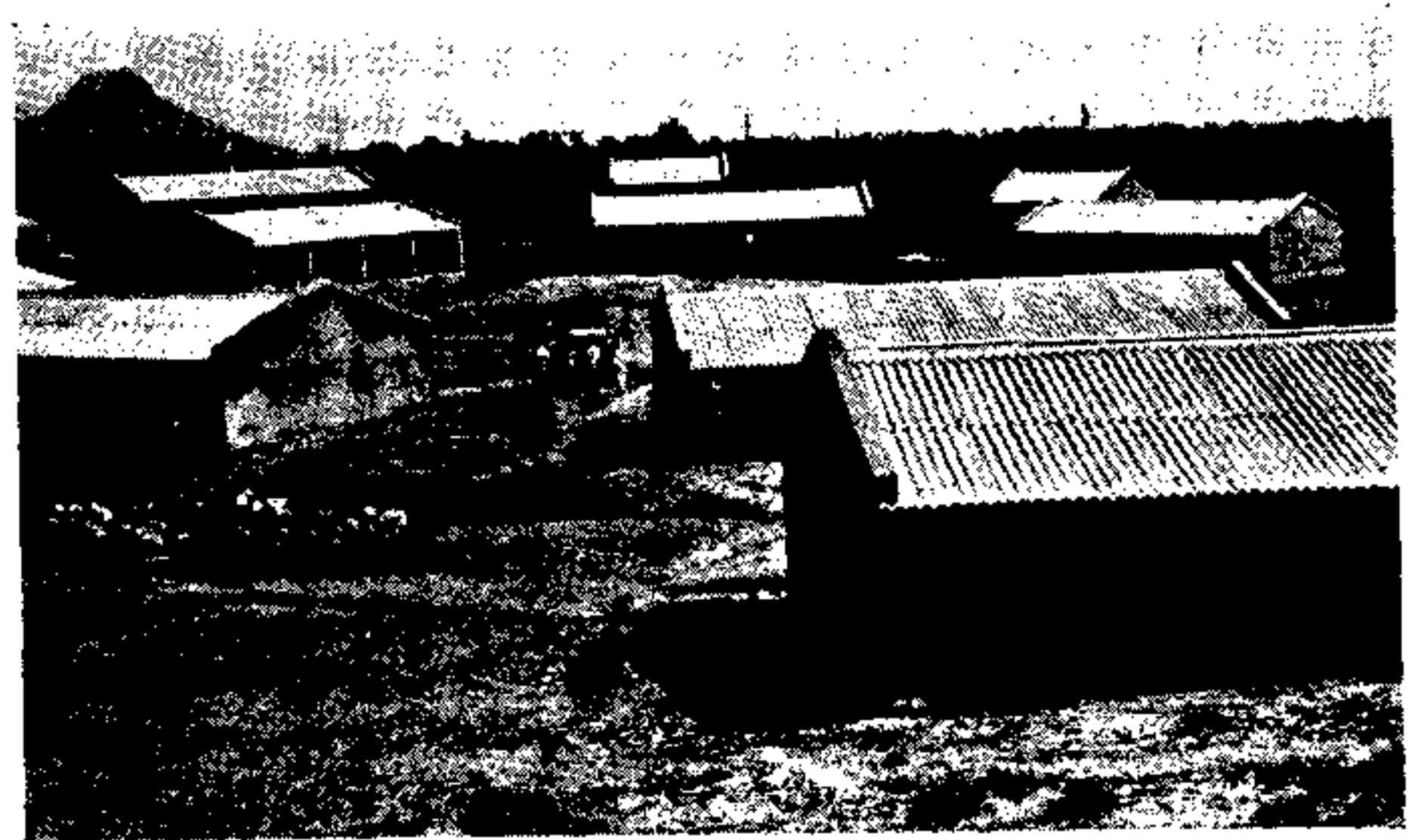
Rehabilitation after floods at Malda, West Bengal in 1981 : a newly constructed house



Rehabilitation work at Malda, 1981 : bricks being taken to an interior village



Rehabilitation work at Malda, 1981 : transportation of bamboos



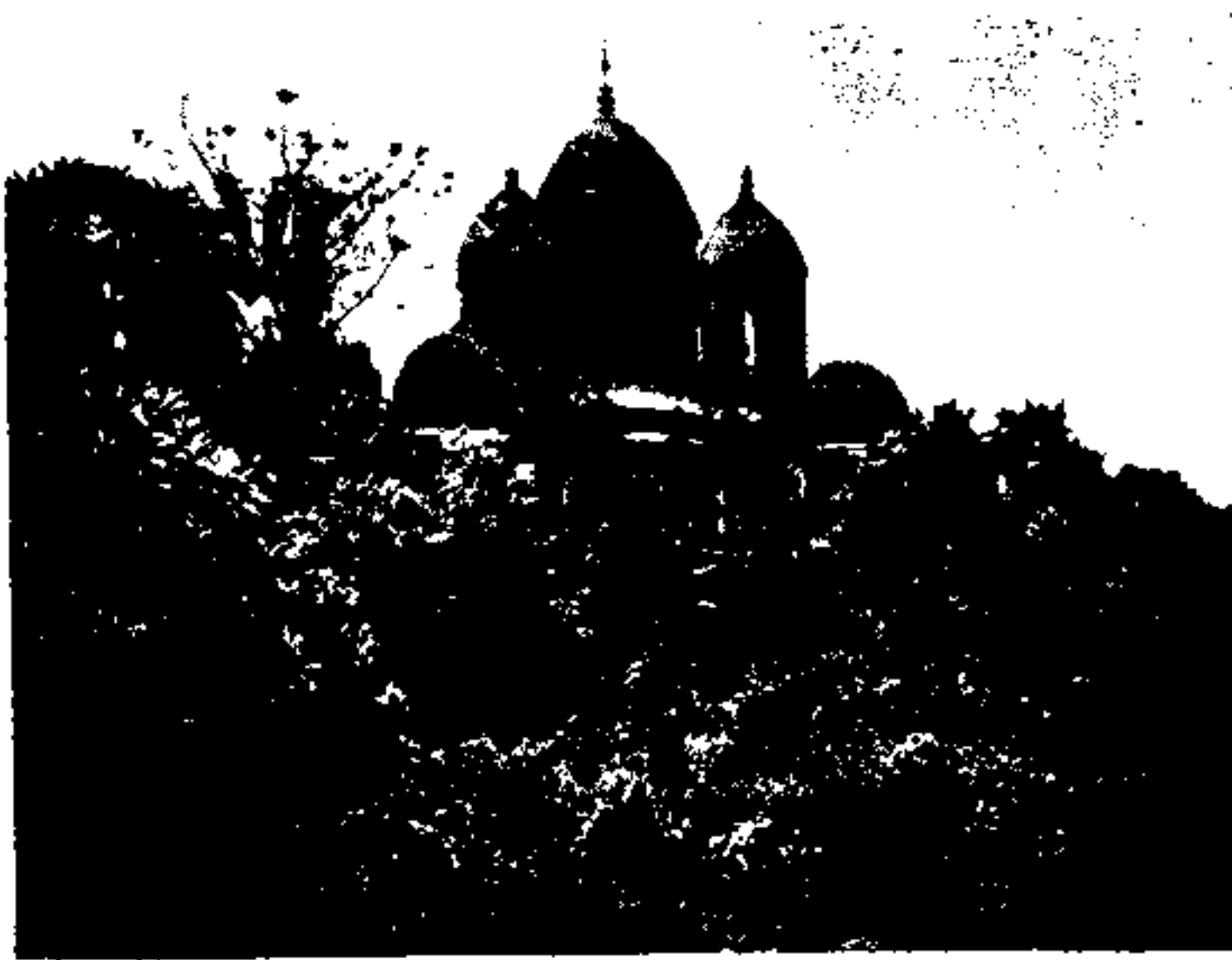
Houses under construction in 1982 in the newly organized colony named Saradapalli at Gunupur, Orissa

SRI RAMAKRISHNA'S VISIT TO EAST BENGAL

Tala : Jeul tree under which
Sri Ramakrishna sat

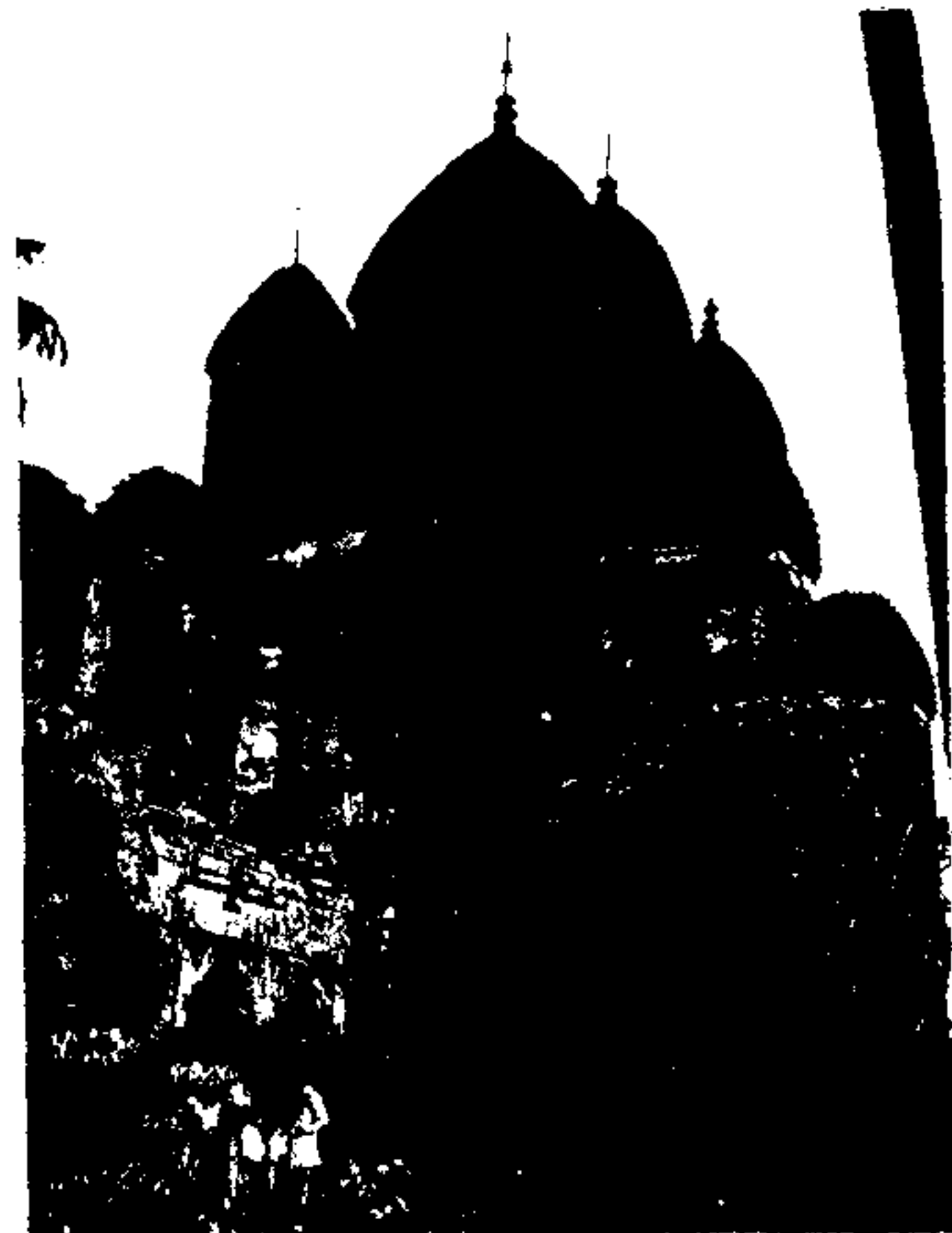


Tala : ruins of Candimandap



Sonābere : Shyamsundar Temple
(Mathbāri)—front view

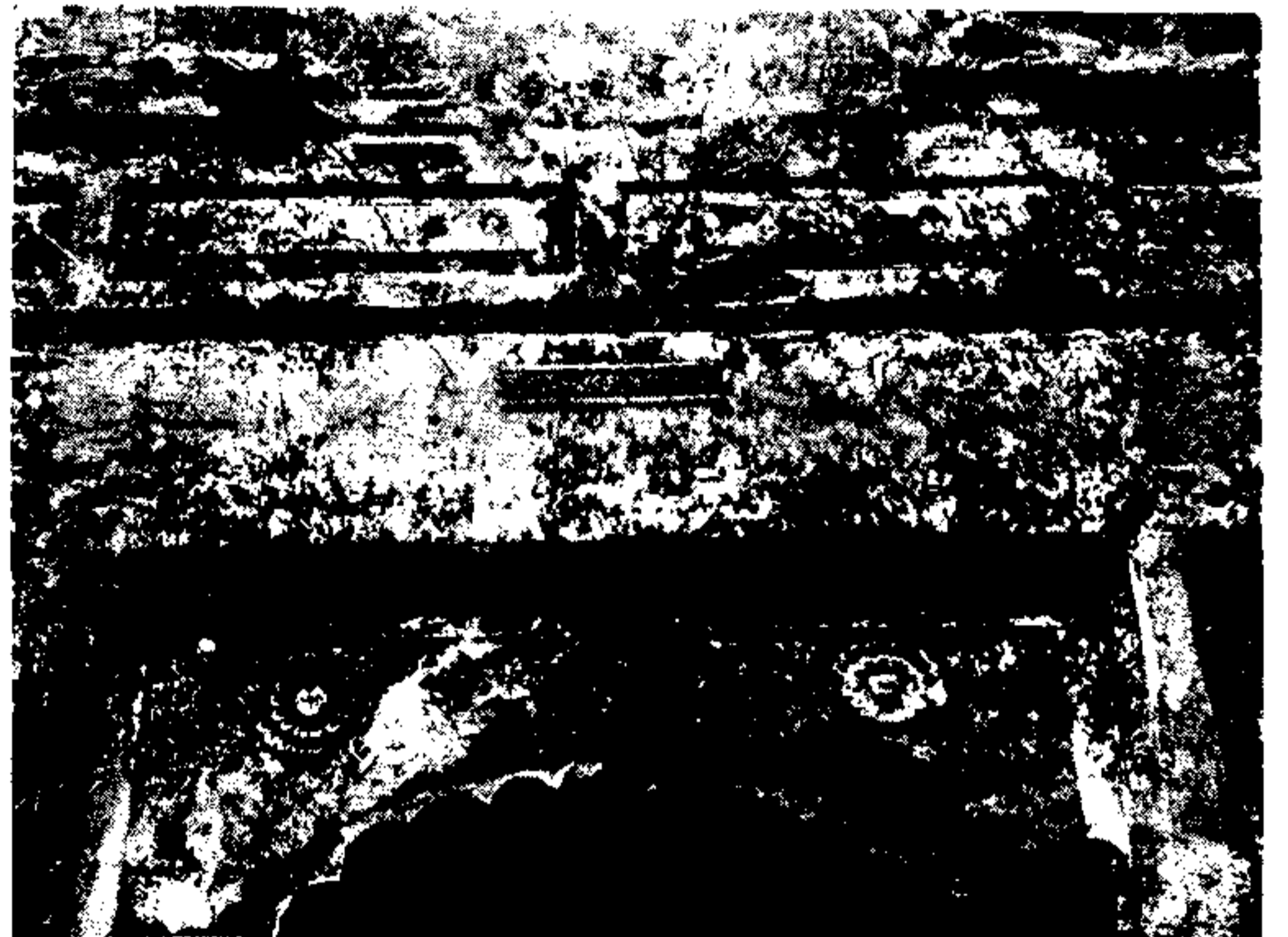
Shyamsundar Temple
(Mathbāri)—side view



PRABUDDHA BHARATA



Sonābere : entrance to Shyamsundar Temple



Sonābere : Bhogghar of Shyamsundar Temple—front view



Sonābere : Siddhesvaritalā

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA AT CAMP PERCY



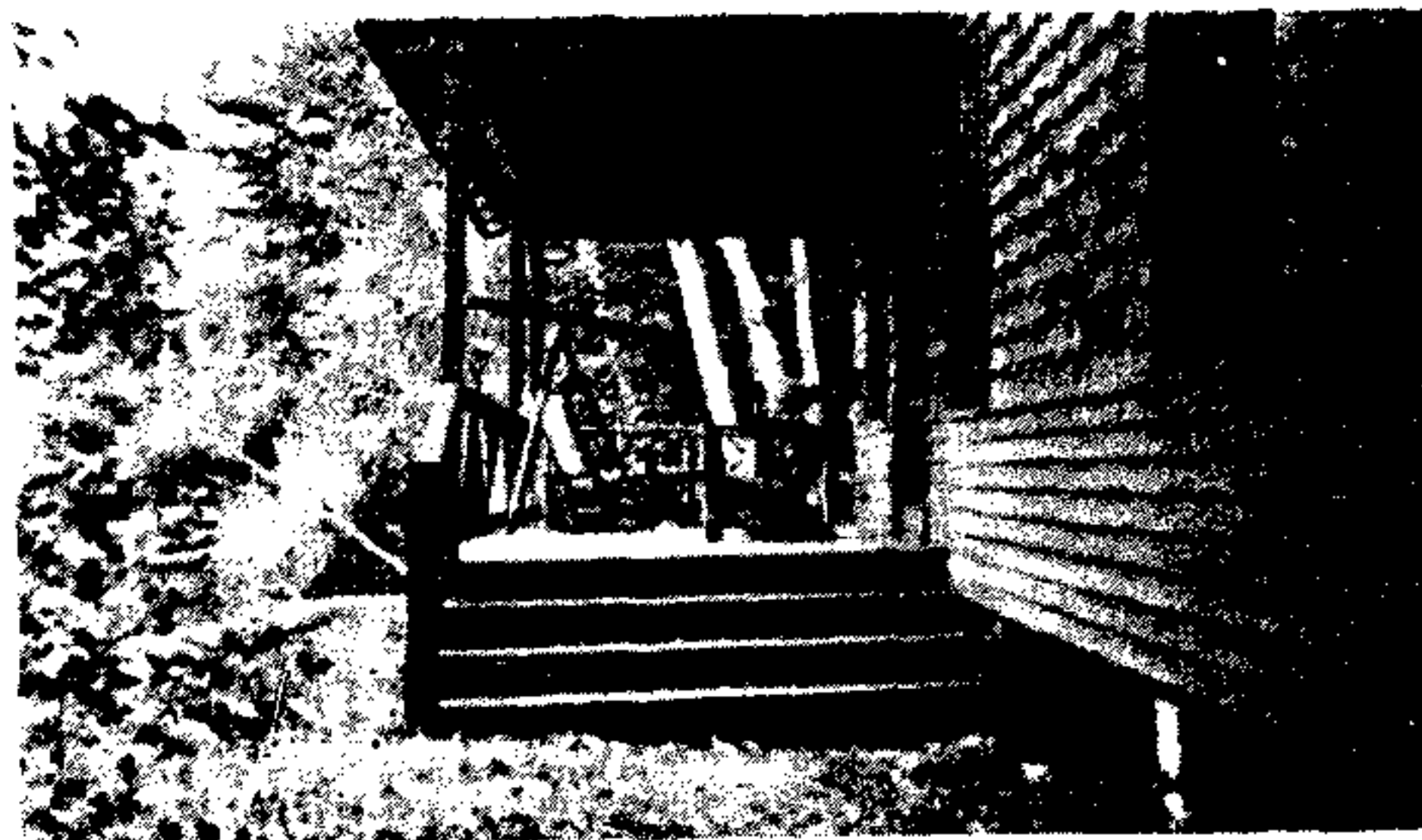
Road leading to Lake Christine. From here the camps are about a mile to the right



Lake Christine looking toward the camps. Building on the left was not present when Swamiji was there



An early picture of White Birch Lodge (on the left), Francis Leggett's camp where Swami Vivekananda stayed. The roof barely visible on the right did not exist at the time of Swamiji's visit



Front porch of a camp

PRABUDDHA BHARATA



Path running from camp to camp through the woods. One could easily get lost in these woods if one strayed from the trails, for this was true wilderness that extended far into Canada



The woods, with dark pines and white birches, where Swamiji used to meditate

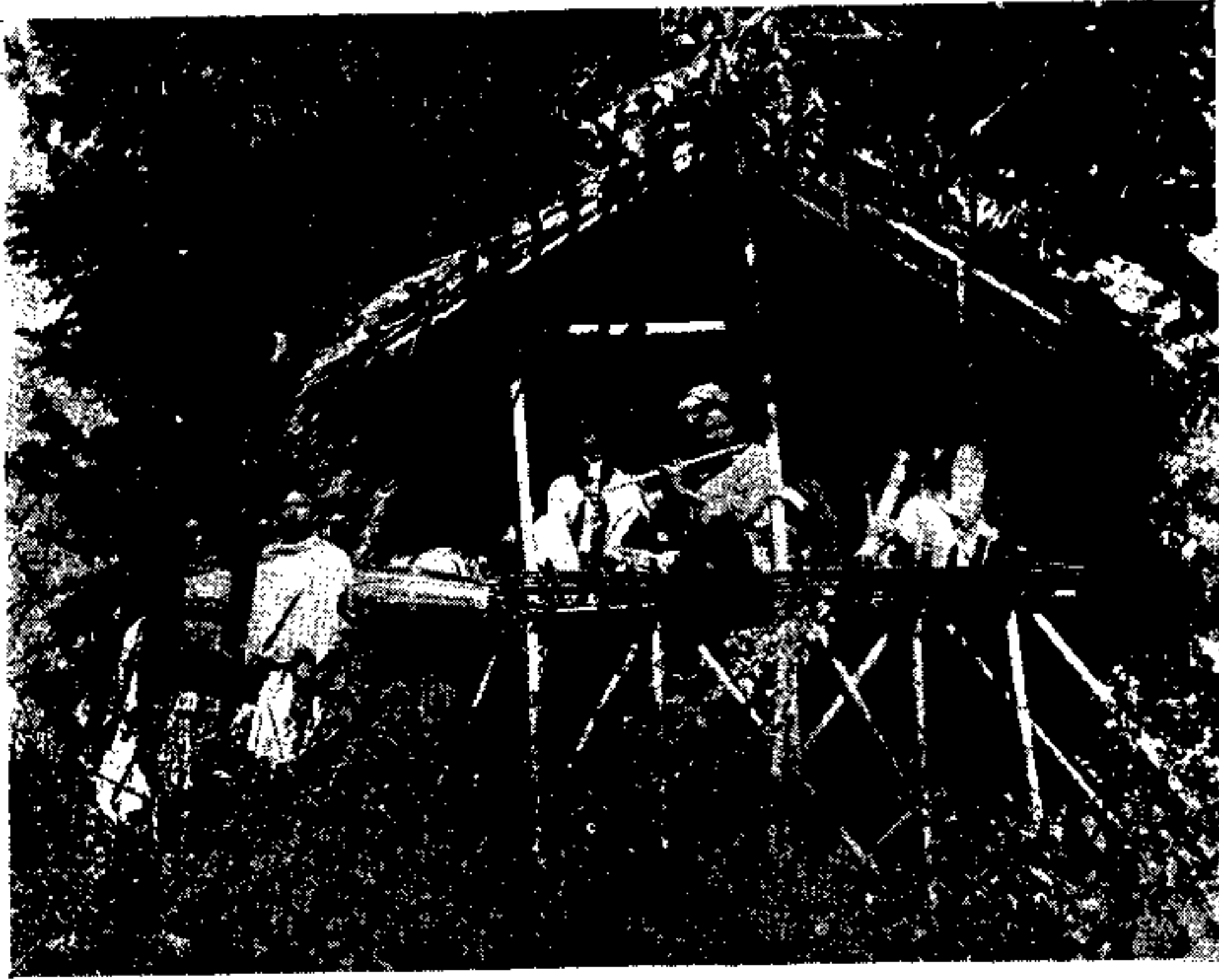


Swami Vivekananda went into Nirvikalpa samadhi along this path where it winds farther along the shore



View of the lake between the white birch trees

TRIBALS OF TRIPURA : THEIR RELIGION AND CULTURE



Tribal house known as *tong-ghar*

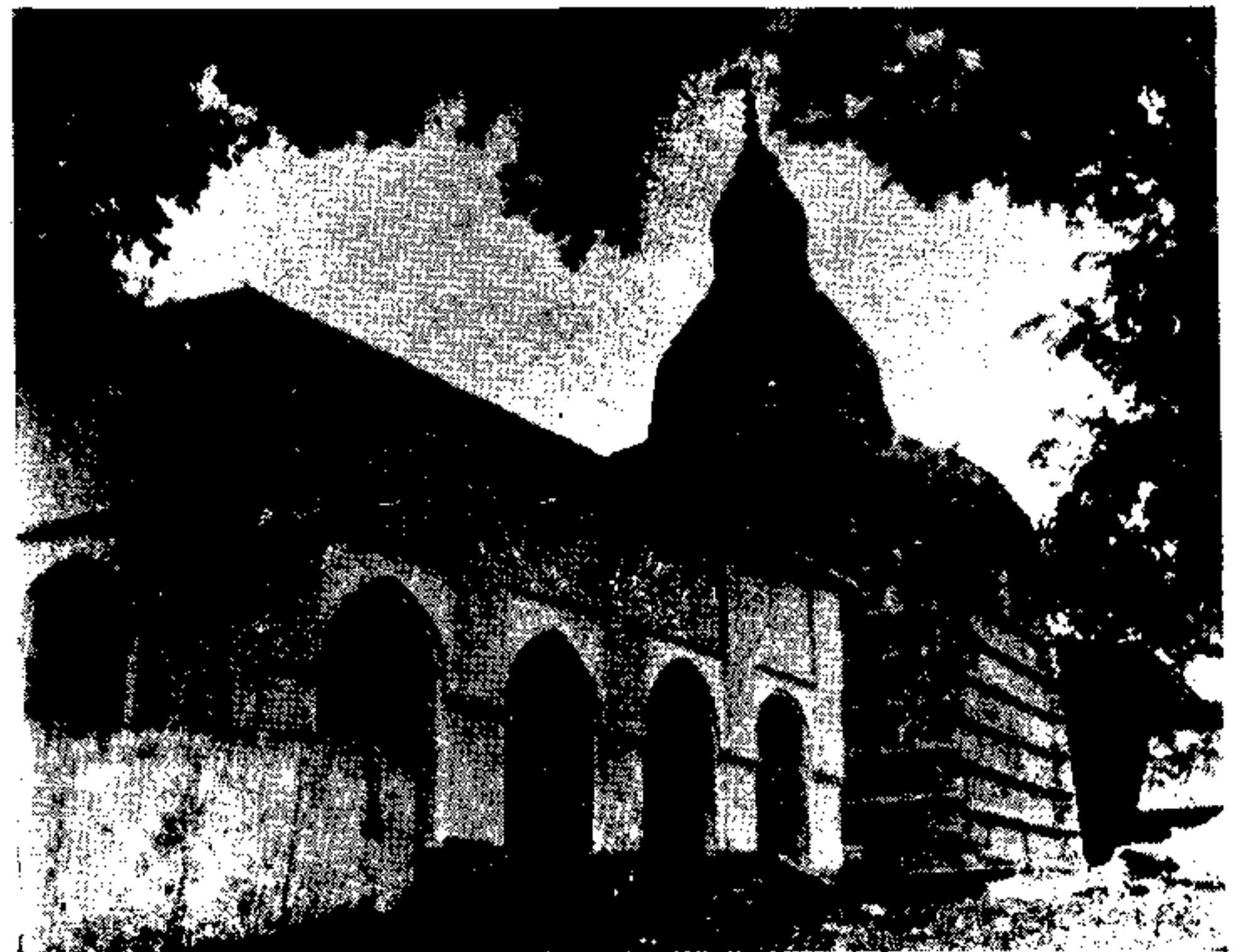


Jhum cultivation



Bamboo dance by Lushais

Tripurasundari temple (Mātābāri) at Udaipur, considered to be one of the 51 Śakti-pithas in India



PRABUDDHA BHARATA



Umā-Mahesvara temple at Agartala



Buddha Mandir at Agartala



Worship of Caturdasa-Devatā during Kharchi Pujā



Garia Pujā, a remarkable tribal festival in Tripura