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Started by Swami Vivekananda in 1896

A MONTHLY JOURNAL OF THE
RAMAKRISHNA ORDER

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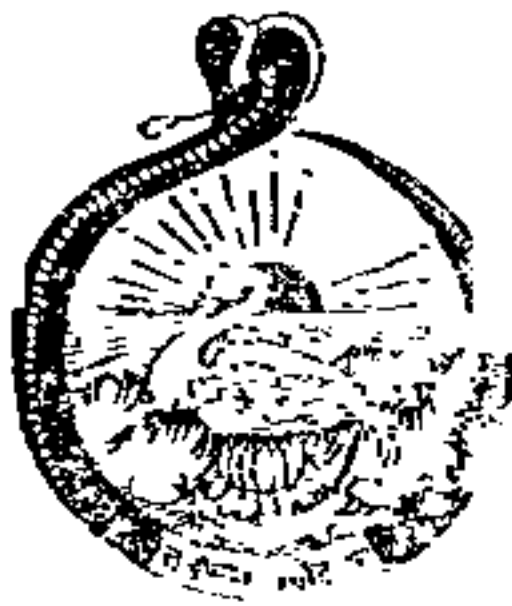


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Mandukya Upanishad

Translated by SWAMI NIKHILANANDA

The epitome of all the Upanishads. It covers 'the entire range of human consciousness beginning from the waking state and ending with the supreme absolute state of superconsciousness where all objective relations and perceptions of duality are completely negated.' Text in Devnagari. English translation of text, Gaudapada's *Karika*, and Shankara's commentary.

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Prabuddha Bharata

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No. 12

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

ETERNAL VOICE OF INDIA

Vidyayā vindate amṛtam

'Immortality is attained through Self-knowledge'

This is the immortal, the fearless. This is Brahman. And of this Brahman the name is Satyam, the True.

The Self is a dam.... This dam is not passed by day and night, by old age, death, and grief, or by good and evil deeds. All evils turn back from It, for the World of Brahman is free from all evil.

Therefore, having reached this dam, he who is blind ceases to be blind, he who is miserable ceases to be miserable, he who is afflicted [with disease] ceases to be afflicted. Therefore, having reached this dam, the night becomes day; for the World of Brahman is lighted once for all.

That World of Brahman belongs to those who realize It by means of continence (*brahmacharya*)—for them there is freedom in all the worlds.

Now, what people call *yajna* (sacrifice), that is really continence. For he who knows [Brahman] obtains that World [of Brahman, which others obtain through sacrifice], by means of continence.

What people call *ishta* (worship), that is really continence. For having desired (*ishta*) the Knowledge of the Self, by means of continence one realizes the Self.

What people call [the vow of] silence (*mauna*) that is really continence. For after knowing the Self [from the scriptures] one meditates (*manute*) on It.

Now, what people call [the vow of] fasting (*anashakayana*), that is really continence. For that Self does not perish (*na nashyati*) which one realizes by means of continence.

What people call the life of a hermit (*aranyayana*), that is really continence.

The gods meditate on that Self. Therefore all worlds belong to them, and all desires. He who knows that Self and understands It obtains all worlds and all desires.

Chhandogya Upanishad

(8.3.4, 8.4.1, 8.4.2, 8.4.3, 8.5.1,
8.5.2, 8.5.3, 8.12.6)

ABOUT THIS ISSUE

This month's EDITORIAL is an attempt to recapture the day of theophany when Sri Ramakrishna revealed himself to his devotees on 1 January 1886, and its impact on the blessed souls who shared the great experience.

RAMAKRISHNA : HIS LIFE AND MESSAGE is an illuminating talk on the subject by Srimat Swami Gambhiranandaji Maharaj, President, Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, Belur Math. By the kind permission of Revered Maharaj, the article, originally published in the Bengali book *Kah Panthah* (What is the way to God Realization?) (Calcutta : Udbodhan 1987), has been translated into English for this issue.

SRI RAMAKRISHNA : HUNDRED AND FIFTY YEARS AFTER is a talk delivered on 3 February 1987 by Srimat Swami Bhuteshanandaji Maharaj, Vice-President of the Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission on the occasion of the inauguration of new building of the Ramakrishna Math at Lucknow. It deals with the original spiritual background of the Ramakrishna Movement.

THE PROBLEM OF RELIGIOUS PLURALITY IN THE LIGHT OF SRI RAMAKRISHNA'S TEACHING by Srimat Swami Tapasyanandaji Maharaj, Vice-President, Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, is a brilliant piece of writing discussing the subject in all its dimensions.

Srimat Swami Hiranmayanandaji Maharaj, General Secretary, Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, Belur Math, in his short article THE SPECIAL SIGNIFICANCE OF PHALAHARINI KALI PUJA IN THE RAMAKRISHNA SANGHA briefly outlines the background and importance of this ritual for the Ramakrishna Order.

A GLIMPSE OF BUDDHISM IN CHINA TODAY is an illustrated article contributed by Prof.

William Page, Thammasat University, Bangkok, who visited China in March-April 1987 and saw the slow return of religion through Buddhist faith in China.

RELIGIOUS MOTIFS ON INDIAN STAMPS (Illustrated) is an interesting document on the subject by Prof. R. B. Magal, who has worked on the subject for more than three decades. Prof. Magal was the founder-principal, Lakshminarayan Desai College, Raichur, Karnataka, and a former universities and group project officer USEFI, New Delhi.

Srimat Swami Ranganathanandaji Maharaj, senior trustee of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission, and celebrated preacher of Vedanta, gave the first Kaka Kalelkar Memorial Lecture on INDIA'S VISION OF SAMANVAYA. We have reproduced the first part of the lecture with the kind consent of the author.

RELIGION AND SOCIAL TENSION by Rev. Swami Lokeshwaranandaji Maharaj, Secretary, Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture, Calcutta, is a reminder that true religion can put an end to today's communal conflicts.

RAMAKRISHNA-VIVEKANANDA MOVEMENT is the presidential speech delivered by Dr. V. K. R. V. Rao, National Professor and a former Education minister of India, in the concluding session of the first three-day seminar on the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda movement held at the Ramakrishna Math, Hyderabad, on 22 October 1983.

TAO OF PHYSICS REVISITED is contributed by the wellknown physicist Dr. Fritjof Capra, the author of the international best-seller *The Tao of Physics*. The author looks back at his own creation after ten years of its publication, and its global impact in forging permanently a link between the world-views of physicists and Eastern mystics. The author is doing

research in theoretical high-energy physics at the Lawrence Berkeley Laboratory and lectures at the University of California at Berkeley.

SATYAKAMA-SATYA-SAMPRADAYA is the concluding portion of the four-scene drama by Swami Sastrananda.

SANTA BARBARA: A HOME OF THE HOLY MOTHER is a firsthand account of the genesis and functioning of the Sarada Convent at Santa Barbara, California, U.S.A., by Revered Pravrajika Varadap-rana of the same convent.

SWING BACK TO RELIGION, an impressive article on modern man's return to religion, is kindly contributed for this issue by Sri S. Ramakrishnan, executive Secretary of

Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, and editor of *The Bhavan's Journal*.

VAISHNODEVI—THE MYSTIC EXPERIENCE by Sm. Sumita Ray, M. Phil., Research Scholar, Osmania University, Hyderabad is based on the author's trip to the Holy Shrine in May 1987.

TWO PARABLES ON PRACTICAL REL'GION is an illuminating piece of writing by Revered Rabbi Asher Block, a distinguished scholar and rabbi of New York who has earlier contributed a number of articles for this journal.

The 'Notes and Observations' (Illustratel) is on the project of tribal development undertaken by the Ramakrishna Mission, Raipur, Madhya Pradesh, in the remote region, Abujmarh of Bastar District.

KALPATARU: SRI RAMAKRISHNA REVEALS HIMSELF

(EDITORIAL)

Sri Ramakrishna finally revealed Himself. It was a time when his intense physical suffering due to cancer, threatened the faith of some of the devotees in the divinity of their teacher. Yet he always remained the same child of Divine Mother and lived in a state of bliss. Despite the dreaded disease, his serenity, God-consciousness, and above all, his passion to lead mankind to God, never ceased even for a moment. A devotee who came to see the ailing man, saw him shedding tears, and lamenting, 'Ah me! Nityananda went from door to door, walking on foot and gave divine love. Alas! I cannot move out except in a carriage'. Another day he said, 'Well, I shall go on doing good to others even when I am on barley water.' To the devotees who were feeling pain at his own terrible suffering, he spoke in consoling words,

My Divine Mother has brought this illness upon this body to convince the sceptics of the present age that Atman is divine, that God-consciousness is as true and practical as it was in the Vedic period, that when one reaches perfection, freedom from bondage is attained... All my religious practices, yoga practices, devotional exercises have been for the good of others and not for my own good. My Mother has set through this form a living example in this age.¹

Yet despair crept into the hearts of many. The devotees brought their teacher a little towards Calcutta in a spacious garden of Cossipore, for better treatment and quicker recovery. Best doctors were brought. An unspoken gloom lurked in their minds.

1. Girish Chandra Ghosh, and Swami Abhedananda, Quoted in Swami Prabhananda, 'Sri Ramakrishna cast His whole secret to the wind' *Sri Ramakrishna Kathamrita Memorial* (Chandigarh: Sri Ma Trust, 1982) p. 55-58.

Only a few like Naren and Girish dared to see the presence of the incarnation of God of this age in the decaying body of Sri Ramakrishna. Their burning faith and devotion kept the drooping spirit of others high. Amid this gloom, Ramakrishna brought the blessed moment of theophany—the revelation of the power of the incarnation of God. Transcending far above the physical sufferings of the apparent man, he stood before his devotees, like a Divine Being capable of giving them everything, and even lifting them upto sunlit heights of unexpected illuminations.

* * * * *

It was on 1 January 1886. Only two weeks ago Sri Ramakrishna had been brought to the Cossipore garden. So long bed-ridden, the Master felt, for the first time, a desire to take a walk below in the garden. It was 3 p.m. Dressed in a red-bordered cloth, a shirt, a wrapper also with a red border, a cap covering the ears, and a pair of slippers, Ramakrishna came down from upstairs along with Latu. Naren and others were sleeping as they kept vigil previous night. The lay devotees who could not come very often to the Master, due to their domestic pre-occupations, were present in a large number, as it was a holiday on account of New Year's Day. As the Master came down unexpectedly into the garden, the lay devotees came forward in joy to greet and accompany him. Latu returned to clean and rearrange the bedding of the Master. There was a freshness and joy in the minds of all, at this recovery of the Master.

It was Girish, the symbol of faith, who precipitated the historic moment. Girish was talking with other devotees like Ram, under a mango tree. For the last few months, despite Sri Ramakrishna's illness, Girish was openly declaring to others that the Master was the latest incarnation of

God on earth. Sri Ramakrishna came along the way to where Girish and others sat, and asked Girish, 'Girish, what have you seen (in me) which makes you say so many things publicly in glorification of me before one and all?' With all his devotion and faith, Girish at once stood up, came near the Master, and fell at his feet. Then with folded hands and a voice choked with emotion, he said, 'What more can I say about Him, even a fraction of whose Vyasa and Valmiki miserably failed to express in their immortal epics and puranas!'²

With these words of fervent faith, a visible change came in Sri Ramakrishna. In front of the devotees he now stood radiant and, through Girish, addressed the gathering of these lay devotees, 'What more shall I say to you? Be illumined.' Hardly had he spoken these words, when he went into samadhi. The words uttered out of a deep compassion immediately brought a divine awakening in all present. At once all of them fell at the Master's feet, took the holy dust of his feet, and rent the skies shouting, 'Victory to Ramakrishna'. Out of a mood of divine grace Sri Ramakrishna now began to bless the devotees, one after the other, with his divine touch. This brought an instant transfiguration in them. Some of them looked at him spell-bound, some of them saw a light or effulgence, some felt the onrush of a spiritual power in them, some of them unable to bear the overflowing joy began to move restlessly, and call loudly to all within the house to come and get the divine touch. Still some others collected flowers and worshipped the Master with them, uttering various mantras. Sarat and Latu heard the calls and saw the whole scene from above. But they continued their task of love, thus renouncing their

2. Swami Saradananda, *Sri Ramakrishna, the Great Master* Tr. Swami Jagadananda (Madras; Sri Ramakrishna Math, 1978) p. 449.

share of joy. The moment of theophany overwhelmed them, too. Sarat wrote later of those blessed moments.

They forgot time and space, forgot the disease of the Master, forgot their previous determination not to touch him till he recovered, and were aware only that an extraordinary Divine Being, out of sympathy for them in their plight, feeling excruciating pain at their misery and overflowing with compassion for them, had come down from heaven and called them affectionately to Him for giving protection, like a mother sheltering her children against all ills by covering them lovingly with the upper part of her sari.³

* * * * *

The much-awaited moment of theophany arrived. God once again revealed Himself through the human body of Sri Ramakrishna. The divine feast was suddenly thrown open to the hungry seekers of divinity, and now they came running. Vaikunthanath Sanyal, who was so long pressing Sri Ramakrishna for the divine grace, was blessed with this divine touch. 'But as a result of it', he wrote, 'a great revolution took place in my mind. I saw the figure of the master light up with a gracious smile in sky, in the houses, trees, plants, men and in whatever else I looked at.' Beside himself with an unspeakable joy he cried to Sarat and Latu, on the roof, 'O you all! Wherever you be, come without delay!' The vision of his beloved Master in everything continued for some days even throughout his waking state, until Sanyal found it unbearable and maddening. Frightened, he returned after some days to the Master with the prayer, 'O Lord I am not able to contain this mental state; please ordain that it may come to an end.' The uninterrupted continuity of visions came to an end, although he 'felt blessed and amazed at the sudden appearance of this vision a few times daily.' Later Sanyal used to regret, 'Woe be to human weakness and stupidity! Why did

I pray so? Why did I not keep my faith firm in him?'

Ramachandra Dutta, blessed with the divine touch on that day wrote,

We saw that our Master had turned into the Kalpataru, the wish-fulfilling tree. We became intoxicated with joy.... Whomever we found in front of us, we brought to the Master, and he blessed them.... We realized that such a rare moment may not come in our life. Frantically we ran hither and thither in search of anyone and everyone to be blessed; until there was none left out. With the loud chantings in the name of Ramakrishna, the sky began to resonate. The devotees began to make a shower of flowers. A sea of divine bliss welled up.⁵

Ramachandra went out running and told Navagopal Ghosh, 'Well, what are you doing, Sir? The Master has turned into Kalpataru today. Go there, hurry up please! If you have desire for something, ask for it right now.' Excited, Ghosh ran towards the Master, fell at his feet and said, 'What will happen to me, Sir?' The Master asked him if he could do a little spiritual practice or even a little of japam on the beads a number of times daily. Ghosh surrendered and said that he could do neither because of the heavy load of his worldly duties. The Master then asked, 'Well, can you take my name a little?' 'That I can do no doubt', he replied. Pleased, the Master blessed him with the words, 'That will be enough—you will not have to do anything further.'

Ramlal, Sri Ramakrishna's nephew, was struggling to have the full vision of his chosen deity in meditation but so long he could not succeed. He, too, now came running. The Master removed the wrapper from his body and slowly passed his hands

4. Ibid., p. 1027.

5. *Mahatma Ramachandrer Baktritavali* (Bengali) (Calcutta: Kankurgachi Yogodyan, Sevak Mandali, 1312 B.S.) 2nd Edition, Vol. 1, pp. 346-47.

3. Ibid., p. 1023.

on his chest saying, 'Now, have a good look'. At once an illumination overwhelmed him. He said, 'Ah! What a beauty! What a splendour of light! How can I tell them?' Later on he confided, 'But no sooner had the Master touched me that day, than the form of my chosen ideal appeared suddenly from head to foot in the lotus of my heart and moved and looked benign and effulgent.'

Girish virtually dragged the cook Ganguly from the kitchen and placed him at the feet of the Master, who bestowed his grace on him. Harmohan Mitra, another devotee, was similarly brought before him, and the Master touched him saying, 'Today let it be.'

One of the most blessed was Haranchandra Das. For as soon as he bowed down at the Master's feet, the Master placed his lotus feet on Haran's head. It is only on a few occasions that the Master used to bestow his grace in this way. Haran used to celebrate an annual festival in memory of the grace the Master bestowed on him on this occasion.

As Sri Ramakrishna was now returning to his room, Akshoy Kumar Sen came running. The Master placed his right hand on his chest saying, 'Be awakened!', and muttered a holy mantra into Akshoy's ear. A powerful, divine force welled up within him. He felt blessed but could hardly stand the great upsurge of the spiritual emotion, which violently began to convulse his body and turned him virtually into a heap of twisted limbs. He experienced a profound bliss, and shed profuse tears of joy.

Atul Krishna Ghosh, and Kishori Roy came. The Master blessed them. Bhai Bhupati came and prayed for samadhi. The Master was all grace that day, and said, 'You will have samadhi'. Upendranath Mukhopadhyaya came and prayed for material prosperity. The Master said, 'You will have wealth'. He did have wealth,

but never forgot the Master, the giver of his prosperity.⁶

Sri Ramakrishna's prediction that 'I will cast my whole secret to the winds', came finally true. Some of the devotees while returning home after this theophany wondered, 'How is it possible that the Master's frail frame, his ailing body, could contain the Self of a God-man with such wonderous powers?' But there were others who realized that this is how God descends through human form, out of sheer compassion for men suffering in worldly bondages, and then gives them just out of love, the blessings of divine grace and freedom from fear.

M. wrote later, 'The Master stood like one of those fruit-sellers who bring their fruits to the market-place, bargain at first about the prices, but then toward the sunset, when the market is about to close, give away the fruits indiscriminately.'⁷

Sometime after this incident, the Master one day asked Ram, 'Tell me why, although you speak all these of me (as an incarnation of God etc.) there is this cancer in the throat? Why is there this emaciated body? Ah! how much of beauty, knowledge and miraculous power Sri Gauranga had! And I have none. And why had I to leave Dakshineswar?' Deeply moved at these words of the Master, Ram answered,

Yes, Lord, from my childhood I have heard about the physical beauty and the divine powers of Rama, Krishna, Buddha, Gauranga and Christ.... I also heard you were just a saint... But today I realize that you have occupied the seat in my heart which was meant for the Almighty. How much have I tried to remove you from that blessed seat and install God there!.... But.... All the worldly intelligence, knowledge and decisions of men, have failed to dislodge you from that blessed spot. Therefore

6. *Sri Ramakrishna Kathamrita Memorial.*, op. cit., pp. 60-62.

7. *Ibid.*, p. 64 and p. 57.

what else can I do? I am compelled to call you as God.

On another occasion Ram spoke to the Master with the same devotion:

Lord, do we not see openly how men without devotion, prayers, austerities, even the downright scoundrels, are changing into divine beings? Shall we mistake you even after seeing these incidents?... From the day you have come out of Dakshineswar common people have been blessed. In the form of a diseased man, thou hast blessed thousands by allowing them to have your darshan.⁸

* * * * *

Sri Ramakrishna asked none of the fortunate souls to worship this God, read that book, or visit this place of pilgrimage or that. He brought to them at once what one achieves through births of austerities—the final awakening of the divine consciousness. The blessed day of the 1 January has since then been immortalized in the minds of these devotees. It was, as his monastic disciple Saradananda said, ‘the day of self-revelation of the Master, or the bestowal of freedom from fear on all devotees by revealing himself.’⁹ The incarnation power in Sri Ramakrishna could not be hidden any more. The pot of nectar was broken in the market-place of life. The King of the Divine world who, according to the Master’s own simile, was so long moving incognito in the guise of a beggar, was finally discovered at the very middle of the road. And the poor beggars of grace came rushing to fill their bowls. Now the King was all compassion. He gave out of God’s plenty, overbrimming their little vessels, and inundating them with the divine flood. ‘He was the power, he was the slope, he was the current, and other streams and

currents ran towards this river. He was the Ganga itself’,¹⁰ wrote Rolland.

Like the all-purifying Ganga, Sri Ramakrishna on this day of theophany, made no distinction between the fit and the unfit, between the saint and the sinner. Even the lost sheep of the fold, the so-called ‘worthless’ got the Master’s encouragement and love which was destined to ‘change the very course of their lives thereby.’ As Vivekananda said, Sri Ramakrishna ‘used to handle human minds, like the lumps of clay, breaking, moulding and remoulding them at ease and filling them with new ideas by mere touch.’¹¹ For these blessed souls, the centre of life was shifted for ever from the mire of the world, to the divinity within. When man’s divine awareness or *hush* is awakened then only he can be called *man-hush* or man, Sri Ramakrishna used to say.

* * * * *

Some of the devotees like Ramachandra preferred to call this day as the Kalpataru day—the day on which their Master Sri Ramakrishna turned into a Kalpataru—the mythical wish-fulfilling tree granting all boons to the devotees. Once Sri Ramakrishna said to Pundit Sasadhar, ‘Pray to God. He is full of compassion. Will He not listen to the words of the devotee? He is the Kalpataru. You will get whatever you desire from Him.’ The doubting Pundit asked again, ‘Does God listen to our prayers?’ The Master replied, ‘God is the Kalpataru, the wish-fulfilling tree. You will certainly get whatever you ask of Him. But you must pray standing near Him. Only then will your prayer be fulfilled.’¹² Sri

10. Romain Rolland, *The Life of Ramakrishna* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1970) p. 257.

11. *Swami Vivekananda on Himself* (Calcutta: Swami Vivekananda Centenary) p. 69.

12. M., *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, Tr. Swami Nikhilananda (Madras: Sri Ramakrishna Math, 1985) p. 479.

8. *Mahatma Ramachandrer Bakritavali*. (Bengali) op. cit. pp. 346-47.

9. *Sri Ramakrishna, the Great Master*, op. cit. p. 1024.

Ramakrishna often used to sing in the lines of Ramprasad, 'Oh mind, let us go for a walk to Mother Kali, the wish-fulfilling tree, and you can gather easily the four fruits thereof—Dharma (fulfilment of worldly duties), Artha (wealth and prosperity), Kama (fulfilment of desires) and Moksha (divine awakening).' One is reminded of Sri Krishna's assurance to his beloved devotee Arjuna that God fulfils all the needs of him who has totally surrendered himself to the Lord. In the Cossipore garden, on this blessed day, the desires of the devotees were fulfilled as they felt that they stood in the presence of God. Did they not wait long for this moment? Did not they surrender and develop total faith in their Master as an incarnation of God on earth?

* * * * *

Once the water of immortality was tasted, could anyone remain satisfied anymore with the water of the ditch or the marshy pond? Does anyone wish to pray for a pice when suddenly confronted with the king with his outstretched arms full of gold and diamonds? As the minds of the devotees were lifted up to a higher level of consciousness at the vibrant presence of divinity, most of them begged for the higher, eternal wealth of a divine life, which neither moths can eat, nor thieves can steal. With his usual, striking simile, Sri Ramakrishna used to say, 'What need have I to know how many houses and how many government securities Jadu Mallik possess? All that I need is somehow to converse with Jadu Mallik... Once I get a chance to talk to him, then he himself will tell me all about his possessions if I ask him. If one becomes acquainted with the Master, then one is respected by officers too.'¹³ 'He (who has realized the Atman) verily becomes the

king among men. Effortlessly he moves around in all the worlds (all the spheres of life)', says the *Chandogya Upanishad*. 'Seek ye first the Kingdom of God, and everything else shall be added unto it', said Christ. On this thrice-blessed day, the Master gave these beggars of grace, the key to the kingdom of God. Could they remain poor or starved, in any way, everafter?

* * * * *

And this grace Sri Ramakrishna brought to the weak children of the Divine Mother, children who are bogged down in the terrible bondage of the worldly life, and are incapable of spiritual strivings. Out of sheer compassion, the Master lifted them, by superhuman power, up to the sunny heights of divine bliss and everlasting fulfilment. Ramakrishna proved what Jesus had told long before, 'With man it is impossible, but with God nothing is impossible.' The unheard cry of these pining souls, their total surrender and unshakable faith in the Master as the veritable manifestation of God on earth, who was also their father, mother, friend, well-wisher, teacher, guide and the dearest one in life, brought them this priceless gift of divine awakening. And this Sri Ramakrishna did, as his disciples believed, by taking their accumulated sufferings, both physical and spiritual on his own self. On that day Ramakrishna returned to his room and said, 'Accepting the sins of the rogues (this is the word with which he used to address affectionately his beloved devotees) my limbs are burning. Bring some Ganga water.'¹⁴ He sprayed himself with the holy water over his burning body. We remember words of prophet Isaiah: 'He hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows... He was wounded for our transgression...

¹³. Ibid., p. 482.

¹⁴. *Sri Ramakrishna Kathamrita Memorial*, op. cit., p. 63.

The chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed.’¹⁵

Saints can show us the way to perfection. They can even inspire us on that path. It is only an incarnation of God who can bring sainthood even in the sinner by a single touch, word, or even a look. ‘A single glance of his could change a whole life.’ Vivekananda wrote about his Master. The great disciple himself realized what his Master once said to him : ‘Living faith may be given in a tangible fashion and more truly than anything else in the world.’¹⁶ Sri Ramakrishna used to say, ‘It is in the degree of power only that an incarnation of God on the one hand, and a perfected man or Jiva on the other, differ.’¹⁷

Many years later, on another 1 January, Ramachandra Dutta remembered this act of divine grace by their Master :

Today is that blessed day. It is on this day that the God of the poor, overwhelmed with compassion for the poor, extended His loving hands for His beloved children and showered on them the bliss of compassion!... Where are you, our Master, our Ramakrishna? Today is that blessed day.... We have come again for your divine grace. Kindly appear before us in that blessed mood, in that world-bewitching human form. Kindly stand before us as the same wish-fulfilling tree. Let us have your radiant vision once again and fill our heart by listening to your words of nectar. O Master! graciously appear today before us once again, and make us hear

15. Quoted in Romain Rolland, *The Life of Ramakrishna*, op. cit., p. 262.

16. Ibid., pp. 256-57.

17. *Sri Ramakrishna, the Great Master*, op. cit., p. 641.

your words of eternal protection and fearlessness bestowed to your blessed children!¹⁸

Is it always on this day only that Sri Ramakrishna's grace is available? God's grace is available wherever and whenever His children pray sincerely to the Lord. Prayer brings the grace of God. The unconditional grace becomes conditional by the intensity of devotion and prayer. Sri Ramakrishna, the God of this age, is a ‘living presence’ today. He is, as a western disciple wrote, ‘a pulsing presence, a living personality ... who is able to walk on the earth, whether in the flesh or in the spirit, a living presence among men.’¹⁹ And there are blessed ones who even today receive the grace of the Master, a grace that transfigures them into saintly beings.

Only a few years ago, a young monk returned to the Belur Math after spending hours in the Cossipore garden on this blessed day of 1 January where thousands thronged to celebrate the Kalpataru festival and pray in Sri Ramakrishna's room. After returning to the Math he asked Revered Bharat Maharaj, why there was no celebration at the Math on that day. The old swami answered, ‘Do you know why we do not observe the Kalpataru festival at the Belur Math? We, too, like you boys, asked the same question to Revered Baburam Maharaj (Swami Premananda). And he replied, “Do you not know that in this Math the Master is Nitya-Kalpataru, always the wish-fulfilling tree, granting boons of all kinds to his devotees?”’.

18. Mahatma Ramachandrer Baktritavali (Bengali) (1316 B.S.) op. cit., Vol. 2, p. 52.

19. Sister Devamata, ‘The Living Presence’ *Vedanta Kesari* (Madras) 1936 February-March.

SRI RAMAKRISHNA : HIS LIFE AND MESSAGE

SWAMI GAMBHIRANANDA*

Sri Ramakrishna came to fulfil a special need for humanity. We generally call him as the incarnation of God for this age. But he did not come for this age only. It will take thousands of years for a complete understanding of the true import of his life and message. His influence will now spread from home to home, from country to country. It will take time for his message to spread everywhere. Very little we can understand or we have understood so far of his life. And equally little we can express him through words.

Sri Ramakrishna said that the aim of human life is to realize God. What is the way to this God realization? He has shown us the way through his Gospel, and has demonstrated the same in his own life. Those who are acquainted with his life and message, know what he has said and done, and how far-reaching is the influence of his life and message.

One idea that he particularly told us, is that the way to God realization in this age (Kaliyuga) is the way of devotion as demonstrated by Narada. Surrendering everything of our life at the feet of God, one should with all eagerness practise truthfulness, simplicity etc. and live the entire life as a spiritual quest for realizing God. This is the way to God realization. He himself prayed to the Divine Mother—'Mother, take your cleanliness, take your uncleanness; take your good actions, take your bad actions; take your prescribed duties, take your unprescribed actions. Give me pure devotion.' For this pure devotion he himself had always prayed. He has told us, too, to reach God through this way of devotion. In the Bhakti-sutras, Narada tells us that Bhakti or devotion means the

supreme love towards Him. By the word 'Him' Narada did not name any particular God or Goddess. Whatever the form in which God may manifest in the mind of man, a mood of supreme love towards that beloved form, is called Bhakti or devotion. By love we mean the greatest and the closest bond between beings. Love is the relation through which one becomes dearest to the other. Even the highest form of this human love, Narada did not equate with devotion. Devotion to God or bhakti transcends all kinds of human feelings, mutual trust, or confidence between human beings. Such love which transcends all ordinary human feelings or relation, is described by Sri Ramakrishna as Bhakti or devotion. This devotion he asked us to inculcate. He himself practised this supreme love in his life.

While explaining Bhakti, Narada has spoken of the inner and outer signs of true devotion. What are the externals of Bhakti? We will find that it means a total surrender of all our actions at the feet of the Lord, and an intense longing to have His vision. These are the signs of Bhakti. Sri Ramakrishna used to say that he had nothing of his own in this world. He moved as the Divine Mother guided him. He spoke as the Mother prompted him. This was always his attitude. These are not just words, but truths which he believed totally, and lived accordingly in his own life. In his Gospels, he repeatedly said that he was being guided by the dictate of the Divine Mother. Whatever truths had come out of him, whatever the ways in which he lived his life—all were possible only because of Mother. Things happened in his life according to the will of the Divine Mother. This is the total surrender of all actions at the feet of God.

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Next we see his intense longing for God. Those who read his life know how he used to cry 'Mother', 'Mother' on the banks of the Ganga. He used to weep with the words, 'Mother, one more day has passed and yet I could not have Your vision.' People used to gather round him and would say that probably he was suffering and weeping due to intense stomach pain. How could they know the divine longing in his heart? They could never understand that he was pining for a vision of the Divine Mother. Then a day arrived when he could no more bear this pain for not having the vision of the Mother. Entering the temple he saw that a big sword was hanging on the wall. Just at the moment when he tried to kill himself with this sword, he got the vision of Divine Mother Kali. This longing, this intense longing, this feeling that without Mother it is no more possible to remain alive, brought him the vision of his most Beloved Mother.

Sri Ramakrishna again said that speaking the truth is the spiritual practice (tapasya) of this age, the Kaliyuga. We have to proceed holding fast to truth. Now various questions may arise in different minds. One may ask, 'Can we really survive in this practical world by clinging fast to truth?' But the fact remains that since we have got a human birth, and since it is possible for us, the human beings, to realize God, we must hold fast to truth. If we cannot do so, it is our fault, our weakness. As Swamiji once said, 'Shall I live with Shyam because I could not get Ram?' In the same way, shall I tell only lies, since sometimes I failed to speak the truth? Never. We have to stick to truth by making all possible efforts. We have to be established in truth.

But this is for ordinary human beings. What happened to Sri Ramakrishna? It is not he who held fast to truth but Truth itself held fast to him. For example, he said, 'The child who walks by holding his father's hand, may have the fear of falling down; but the child whom the father him-

self holds with his hand, never falls.' There are beautiful examples of this idea in Sri Ramakrishna's life. Sri Ramakrishna had gone to visit Navadwip, in order to visit the birthplace of Mahaprabhu Sri Chaitanya. But after reaching the place he felt no divine inspiration. 'Why did I come here?', he asked, 'I am feeling no inspiration'. Then, when he was returning by boat on the Ganga, he suddenly exclaimed 'There, there, they are coming!'. He saw in a vision that Mahaprabhu Sri Chaitanya and Nityananda were coming, as if, towards him. Later researches in history revealed that the original birthplace of Mahaprabhu, was washed away by Ganga and the exact spot lay in the depth of the river. That is why, although he could not feel the inspired presence of Mahaprabhu at Navadwip of today, he felt the same in the heart of Ganga. Truth revealed to him the truth about the place. He needed no hard labour to know the truth. Truth was holding him by the hand. Truth was leading him. On another occasion, he went to the house of Sri Sambhu Mallik. Mallik asked Sri Ramakrishna to take from him some medicine, as he was suffering from stomach pain. At the time of his returning, Sambhu Mallik suddenly went into the house on some errand, and did not return. It was getting late. It was time for Sri Ramakrishna to return to the Kali temple. He saw that the packet of medicine which Sambhu wanted to give him was lying there itself. He thought, therefore, that it was only proper to pick the packet up and return. This he did. But as soon as he came out on the road, he could not see the way to the temple garden. The temple was only at a short distance. It was neither difficult to walk this short distance at night. But however-much he tried to walk on the road, his feet slipped into the drain on the roadside. Repeatedly he tried, but failed to proceed. At the same time when he looked back to the Mallik's house, the road was all clear.

Then he realized, 'Ah! I have not followed the truth. Sambhu asked me to take the medicine from his hand. I did not take this directly from his hand.' Sri Ramakrishna returned to Sambhu Mallik's house. By that time everyone had entered into the inner chambers. The front door was shut. Through the window he threw the packet of medicine inside, and said: 'Here I leave your medicine. Do you hear?' When he started returning, the way to the Dakshineswar temple was all clear. Thus he returned to the temple. This is how truth caught him in its grip. Truth led him in the way of truth. These very truths about devotion, about truthfulness which he himself practised, he asked us also to follow.

Sri Ramakrishna also spoke of simplicity. One has to be simple like a child. Mother tells the child that in the next room there is a ghost. And the child believes it totally and fully. Mother tells the child, 'There, he is your elder brother'. Now the child will at once eat with the man from the same plate. He does not care to know if the man is the son of a brahmin, a blacksmith, or a potter. Mother said, 'He is your elder brother'. That is enough for the child to see in the man his own elder brother. This is simplicity. Once on a horse carriage Sri Ramakrishna was going to Calcutta. Someone told him that one gets a better health by exposing oneself to the mist of the autumn. That evening Sri Ramakrishna held out his head outside the carriage, and exposed himself to the autumnal mist, and finally caught cold and cough. That was his simplicity. Without this simplicity no one can realize God.

He again said that as part of spiritual discipline one must live in holy company and study holy books. These things he first demonstrated in his own life, and then taught the devotees. After being established in truth, when he realized God, he had a desire to live with devotees. How long can a true devotee of God endure the

highly disturbing talk of the worldly people? Mother told him, 'Your devotees also will come. With them you will be able to speak to your heart's content'. But they were still not coming. Sri Ramakrishna could not brook any more delay. In the evening he used to climb up the roof of the landlord's house in the temple garden, and used to call loudly, 'Where are you, my children? Where are you? Come unto me.' Devotees heard this call. Their hearts got stirred. Gradually they arrived. Day and night he began to speak to these devotees about the various ways of spiritual disciplines for God realization. These have been recorded in the *Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, the *Lilaprasanga* or *Sri Ramakrishna, the Great Master*. Swamiji also explained these teachings in his various lectures. All these combined present to us the message of Sri Ramakrishna. Not only the *Gospel*, but also the *Great Master* by Swami Saradanandaji, and the *Complete Works* of Swamiji—all combined together, give us the true message of Sri Ramakrishna.

At Cossipore Sri Ramakrishna established the Ramakrishna Order. To his chosen disciples he gave the ochre cloth of the monks. Then he sent them out to beg food as the monks do. He also made Narendranath their leader, and advised them in various ways how to build up the Order, and how to hold together the monastic brotherhood.

To the devotees' houses he now began to move and offer them the opportunity of holy company. He began now joining in various devotional singings and dancings in the bliss of God. Seeing his God-intoxicated condition Sri Pratap Chandra Mazoomdar of Brahma Samaj once said, 'My goodness! This man seems to be ridden by a ghost, so much God-intoxicated he is!' Mazoomdar unfortunately failed to find any other comparison to describe the divine state of Sri Ramakrishna. So he said of the Master as 'ghost-ridden'. God

had enveloped the body-mind of Sri Ramakrishna in such a way that he was mostly unconscious of the external world. Totally intoxicated was he with the Divine. Sri Ramakrishna came to show us that without this kind of God-intoxicated life, this life of complete renunciation of the world, this life of a beggar for the sake of God, and this passionate crying for God, none can realize God. Through this kind of life, he again preached what he himself had realized.

Sri Ramakrishna brought with him Mahendranath Gupta, Narendranath (Swami Vivekananda), Rakhal (Brahmananda), Sarat (Saradananda) and many other great devotees who have recorded their own experiences with the Master, and the words they heard from him. From all these records we today are able to know of Sri Ramakrishna in many ways. As days, years, and ages will pass by, his life and message will be manifested more and more. It will take thousands of years to imbibe

the full import of his great life. Jesus, Mohammad, Buddha, Sri Krishna, Sri Ramachandra—all are alive even today through their lives and messages. They will continue to be in the same way for thousands of years more. The life and message of Sri Ramakrishna have started spreading among mankind only recently. It will continue to spread for thousands of years more. He said that his photo will be worshipped in every house. Today we see in how many different ways, Ramakrishna-temples are coming up in homes, villages, towns and other places, and in how many ways devotees are gathering in his name. How many more of such things will happen! Whose inspiration is this? All these are due to His inspiration. As revered Mahapurush Maharaj, Swami Shivanandaji, used to say, 'It is He who brings all the devotees to us, and I offer them all at His feet. All this are His actions. It is Sri Ramakrishna who is making all these things happen.'

SRI RAMAKRISHNA : HUNDRED AND FIFTY YEARS AFTER*

SWAMI BHUTESHANANDA

As you are already aware this is a great occasion when we are celebrating the advent of Sri Ramakrishna who was born 150 years ago, and the founding of the Sangha of Sri Ramakrishna, which also has seen a 100 years. These occasions are being celebrated in many parts of India and abroad. So many monks have come here from different centres spread all over India, and some from abroad also, in order to

attend the three-day celebration for the opening of the new Ramakrishna Math at Lucknow. Devotees also have come from various places in order to participate in the function. Such celebrations are going on, in various places, and I have the occasion of attending several of them.

What is it that we are celebrating? The advent of Sri Ramakrishna. What does it mean to us who are generations away from him? Sri Ramakrishna, during his life-time, was recognized as a great spiritual personality, variously evaluated by different

* Talk delivered at the Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission Sevashrama, Lucknow on 3 February 1987.

persons. A hundred and fifty years after his giving up the physical body, we find that his message is spreading further and further in different parts of the world. The phenomenon is simply wonderful. How this saint of Dakshineswar, as sometimes a few used to call him, how an almost uneducated man in the sense in which we understand education, could create such a tremendous impact which the whole world is now experiencing. 150 years may be a long period in our eyes, but from the point of view of history, particularly the history of India, it is too small a period. 150 years ago he came, he lived the great life, and gave his message not only to the various eminent personalities in that age, but to a band of disciples who were scrupulously trained to imbibe his ideas, and spread them through the examples of their own lives throughout the world. As you know, Sri Ramakrishna himself used to say that at Dakshineswar there were neither any lecturing, nor any signboard put up for lecture, and yet people would come. Why, what did they get here? The same question is being asked even today. What is it for which we are attracted to the life of Sri Ramakrishna? The more we understand the significance of his advent, the more we will benefit spiritually. Sri Ramakrishna sometimes used to ask his intimate devotees, as to what they thought of him; and from the answer of the individuals, he could understand the extent of spiritual progress that the particular disciple had attained.

To understand Sri Ramakrishna is to develop spiritually. And that is a long process in the case of individuals, and a still longer process in the case of countries or people at large; because Sri Ramakrishna is the simplest of the simple, and yet he is the profoundest of the profound. What he spoke was very simple. Everybody can understand them. His ideas are clear and spoken without any ambiguity. First of all,

Sri Ramakrishna ascertained that God realization is the only ideal that a man is born to achieve. Referring to himself he would say, 'Really I tell you, I don't know anything except God'. And his knowing God means a knowledge by which everything is known. In the Upanishads, the disciple asks the teacher, 'Please tell me, Holy Sir, by knowing whom, we can know everything?' This whole panorama of experiences, the whole of this empirical world is understood by understanding that One principle, which is the source of everything, both outside and within ourselves, Sri Ramakrishna was interested that we too must have this knowledge of God, Because that unique knowledge will explain everything to us. It will make our own existence clear, and will shape our life in a way that it will be a blessing to ourselves, and to the world at large. That is the point that Sri Ramakrishna stressed from the beginning.

I just take up a few salient ideas. Firstly, Sri Ramakrishna, though he had from the very beginning a great spiritual urge, and sometimes profound spiritual experiences, never claimed that he was unique. He says that dharma or spirituality is eternal. It is in everybody lying in a dormant condition. To make that spirituality manifest in our life, we have to realize what we call God or the source of all beings. From his earliest days Sri Ramakrishna experienced, even without any spiritual practice, some of the profound spiritual experiences revealing the existence of God and assuring the unsurpassable superiority of God's bliss. Sri Ramakrishna used to say that there are certain species of plants which first produce fruits, and then flowers. It is just an exception. We see plants and trees growing flowers first, and then fruits. But in the case of this unique personality the great spiritual experiences come first, and then comes their practice in order to demonstrate to us the way to that experience. Sri

Ramakrishna is imbued with that experience from the beginning. His whole life is spent in showing us the way to reach that experience. He again shows us how that experience has to be shared with others. He was innocent of what we call sophistication in this world. He did not have any kind of education which makes people sophisticated now-a-days. He was a simple child of nature, and for him, to know anything, it was enough to ask his Divine Mother, and SHE would explain everything. And Sri Ramakrishna said that his personality was not to be considered as detached from the personality of the Divine Mother. The Divine Mother is the source of all creation. Sri Ramakrishna used to say that within the frame of his body there was nothing except the Divine Mother. She filled the entire body-mind of Sri Ramakrishna. That is why, whenever he would speak or teach his disciples, he would say 'I am only an instrument'. Again and again he would say, 'It is the Divine Mother who is working through this constitution : this body. I am nothing, everything is She'. Sometimes he used to say, 'There are two persons, as it were, in me. One is the devotee and the other is God.'

God and His devotee, both dwelt in the body of Sri Ramakrishna. At normal conditions he would say that he was nothing. He was completely devoid of the least ego. 'I am nothing, I am nothing, Thou art everything, God is everything—' this was his constant refrain. But again at times he would stand before his disciples with the power of God, and was prepared to give them whatever they wanted. He turned himself into a Kalpataru—the wish-fulfilling tree. He stood out before them as all-powerful, capable of giving them everything. It is because Sri Ramakrishna is the medium of God, the Creator, the preserver, and the destroyer of the universe, who was working through his body for the regeneration of mankind. Sometimes, some of the disciples

praised him as an incarnation of God. Sri Ramakrishna got irritated. He was annoyed. When his disciples Ram Dutta, a doctor, and Girish Ghosh, a dramatist, began to speak to the Calcuttans about Sri Ramakrishna as an incarnation of God, he said, 'What is this, what do they know about an incarnation? One is a doctor and the other is a dramatist. What do they know about an incarnation?' Sri Ramakrishna did not have any kind of delight in being addressed as God or Divine, or an Incarnation of God. He was like an eternal child of Divine Mother in whom the ego was erased forever. But at other times he would emerge as a great teacher from whom emanated all lofty teachings which confounded even the most learned scholars. They wondered wherefrom this great wisdom came. They did not understand how this simple priest of Dakshineswar could speak with so much ease, such profound, spiritual truths which baffled the comprehension of even great pundits. That was Sri Ramakrishna. He was an enigma showing within himself the extremes of childlike simplicity and spiritual profundity. To understand him, therefore, is a very difficult task, and nobody should think that he has understood him properly or completely. Swami Vivekananda, the great personality about whom the world is just heaping all praise, used to say that he was afraid of speaking about Sri Ramakrishna, lest he should make a caricature of him. Therefore, when we think ourselves as being informed about the life and teachings of Sri Ramakrishna, we have to be very cautious so that we do not make a caricature of him. He is too big for ordinary people. Sri Ramakrishna alone knows himself. None else can know him. He alone can know because he is unique. There is no comparison, or an other example by means of which we can understand him. He is too big for everybody. But at the same time, as I told you, he is too simple to be understood by us with all

our complexity. He was, indeed, a very simple person, and what he spoke can be clearly understood by an unlettered man, almost as much as it is understood by a big scholar. Many of those teachings we have lost, but just a few of his sayings have been collected, and these are being spread everywhere; and today the world is wondering how and wherefrom this mass of knowledge could come out from an unlettered man. That is the wonder for this world. And that is why it has taken 150 years to gradually understand him, bit by bit, more and more clearly.

Sri Ramakrishna, as we see him, is a wonderful illustration of how a man should proceed along the path of God-realization.

The first thing that occurs in his life is the divine experience of his childhood. This kind of profound religious experience or the mystic experience in trance, he used to experience quite often. From his early days he was practising spirituality in his own way, without any guidance, without any helper to show him the path. Whatever path came in his mind spontaneously, he proceeded along that path. And in this way, he had the first great experience of the Divine Mother, the vision in the Kali temple of Dakshineswar. That was the first phase of his life. There was no systematic spiritual practice until that time. Though he formally took initiation from a householder in the beginning, he never referred to him. Nor do we know anything about his relation to that Brahmin who initiated him into the Shakti Mantra. And then later on, he started his systematic spiritual practices under the guidance of different experts, and, thus began his life of sadhana. Systematically he followed different systems, 'Shakta' 'Vaishnava' and the various other attitudes or paths which were known among the followers of the Hindu religion in those days. One by one, he practised and experienced them, within a short time. But his desire for further experience was unquenchable. He

wanted to know how a Muslim worships and realizes God. He had that experience, too, through undergoing the discipleship of a Sufi mystic. He followed that path and realized the ultimate goal. Then he thought of the Christians, and the various other followers of other paths. Why did this happen in his life? Swami Saradanandaji Maharaj has answered these questions in that comprehensive biography which is called '*Lilaprasanga*'. This has been translated into English, and is called *Sri Ramakrishna, the Great Master*. In that book he describes how everything happened in the life of Sri Ramakrishna, in order to set the example to others. This is how the life of Sri Ramakrishna has to be understood. Whatever event took place in his life was for the good of the world, for teaching mankind about some aspect of the ultimate Truth.

The spiritual experience of his life continued. Then came the period of ministration, the period when he started sharing with others his own experiences of the various ways to the ultimate realization. He was anxious to share them with others, and he wanted pure souls who would be worthy of following those ways. He would seek them desperately, as it were. He would cry from the roof top, saying, 'where are you, my children? Come and share with my experiences'. This is a period which is, again, a special landmark in his life. He was eager to teach, and at the same time he never had the feeling that he was a teacher. He would say, 'Whatever is spoken from here (meaning his own body) is coming from the Divine Mother. It is Divine Mother who pushes all these ideas from behind.' So the profound ideas came without any break, without any check because the instrument never obstructed the ideas from reaching mankind. That is how Sri Ramakrishna lived. He did not come to have only his own personal experiences, and then get buried in samadhi,

without thinking of others. His life was not meant for himself. It is clear from the whole story that we hear about him. One day he was getting into trance, or samadhi. But he was complaining to the Divine Mother, 'Oh Mother, don't make me forgetful of everything in samadhi. I want to talk to the devotees. They are here, and I should share all my experiences with them.' His life was meant for others and not for himself. His life is a story of intense suffering, physical and mental, because he constantly shared the miseries of the world. He said, 'People come with impurities, they come and touch me. When they come I have to take off that load from them and bear it myself.' That is how Sri Ramakrishna lived his life. He lived for others. He breathed his last after the completion of fifty years of life. Within that short period his body was completely wrecked, and yet he never desisted from talking to the devotees, even unto his last days. Even when Sri Ramakrishna was intensely suffering from that awful disease of cancer, when he was only bone and skin, and was unable to move about, he never took rest, and deny an approaching devotee. Even in that condition he was ready to render any help that he could to a single soul seeking God. That is Sri Ramakrishna's life. He wanted to share the great experiences with the people of the world. It was for the regeneration of the people. They needed such experiences.

The gist of his vast religious experiences is this. The whole world is a manifestation of the ultimate Divine Reality. All beings are only parts and parcels of that divinity.

That being the case, there are no questions of our thinking ill of others because by harming others we harm ourselves. Sri Ramakrishna felt so much identified with the entire creation, that even when somebody walked on green grass, he felt a pain in his chest. So much of identification with

the entire universe! One day two boatmen quarrelled on a boat in the Ganga. One of them gave a slap to the other. Sri Ramakrishna felt that slap as if it was given on him, and there was the mark of that slap on his back. That was the extent of his identification with the entire creation. That is what we have to learn from this child of the Divine Mother. We have become self-centred. We do not think of others, and when we live that sort of a completely self-centred life, all our efforts go in vain. What we call peace in the world, the lasting peace, is not coming because we are all too much self-centred. A group of self-centred people creates only more of hatred than peace, more of evil than good, because the very human instruments through which these activities flow are vitiated with a self-centred ego. So Sri Ramakrishna wanted people to be purified first, and then think of spreading the message of purity to others as well. Sri Ramakrishna never thought of himself in isolation from others. When Swami Vivekananda, then Narendranath, said that his ambition in life was to remain immersed in samadhi, and only at times, when there would be a little body consciousness, take a morsel or two of food, and then again get absorbed in that samadhi, Sri Ramakrishna scolded him. He said: 'I thought you would be like a huge banyan tree spreading your branches around, giving shade to the travellers who come for rest, after getting tired of journeys, and get relief there.' Swamiji in the beginning wanted to live for himself only. But that, according to Sri Ramakrishna, was selfishness. And then we find how Narendranath became Swami Vivekananda, through the influence of his Great Master. The personalities of Sri Ramakrishna and Swamiji throw light on the life of each other. To understand Sri Ramakrishna, we should go through the experiences of Swami Vivekananda, and to understand Swami Vivekananda we should know Sri Ramakrishna from whom he

derived his spiritual experiences, and how he shaped his disciple's life. These twin personalities are there before us. Even before Swamiji came to him, Sri Ramakrishna wanted his consort Holy Mother Sarada Devi to be a source of strength for others. He trained her to be helpful to others from the very beginning. When Sri Ramakrishna passed away, the Holy Mother thought of just ending her life. She felt that in the absence of the Master, there was no meaning in her life, as it were. But Sri Ramakrishna appeared and convinced her that she would have to carry on the work that had been begun by him. That is how the Holy Mother could continue her life of spiritual ministration to thousands. That is how Sri Ramakrishna not only carried on his service to mankind from the highest spiritual level, but also silently went on building an organization that would carry on the work of taking the highest spiritual truths to every corner of the world. That is how this Ramakrishna Order was created by him. Deliberately he made the Sangha,

a perfect instrument for preserving the great spiritual messages of his own life, and disseminating them for the good of mankind.

Today we see that the simple priest of Dakshineswar is becoming the source of inspiration to people who come even a century after him. That influence is still alive. That is why we are celebrating this great occasion. Sri Ramakrishna came for everyone of us, and for the whole world. Let us see how far we can benefit ourselves spiritually, and be of service to others. It is a great occasion. Let all of us seek his blessings so that we can be worthy instruments in his hands, so that our lives also are guided by the desire for the realization of the highest goal. That will shape our life, and we shall also be able to help others to reach that stage of spiritual perfection. May he shower his blessings on all of us, those who are here, those who have come to him, and those who will come in future, because his teachings are for all time and for all people.

THE PROBLEM OF RELIGIOUS PLURALITY IN THE LIGHT OF SRI RAMAKRISHNA'S TEACHINGS

SWAMI TAPASYANANDA*

I

Religion is a universal phenomenon in human society. In spite of strong anti-religious forces working for its effacement, and the devastating criticisms directed against it by rationalists and free-thinkers, it has not only survived but flourished with redoubled vigour when the opposing forces have lost their momentum after a time.

What exactly is the subject matter and sphere of religion, is a matter on which a clear view and an agreed formulation have defied all attempts of thinkers. It may be generally agreed that it instructs us about our ultimate trans-physical destiny, about the ways of right living, and about the origins of this mysterious universe. But vast differences on numerous points in these respects have continued to divide the followers of religion. What is worse, ambitious politicians and military leaders,

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having the blessings of like-minded priests and theologians, have found in religion a convenient smoke screen for their aggressive designs, and a means to mobilize the fanaticism of the ordinary man, and make him shed his blood for achieving their own nefarious ends. Priests have propounded dogmas under threat that their non-acceptance means certain doom. Not only that, for the enforcement of their dogmas on people, institutions like the inquisition, which used even torture for breaking the will of dissenters, were instituted by the custodians of religion. Religious sanctions have been invoked for preserving the privileged position of the so-called high-born groups for keeping the oppressed and the depressed in continued subjection, and to fleece them of their hard-earned savings. At the same time, all religions speak unanimously of a Supreme Being who is the origin of this mysterious universe, and who is benign by nature, and is the source of all love and goodness. But in the name of that benign God and the propagation of His saving message for man, the worst forms of cruelty have been practised in different parts of the world.

This paradox of religion was not felt too jarringly in the past because of the comparative isolation of many religious communities and the strong hold of priestly influence on a society that was largely uneducated. All the world religions, except those that originated from the Vedas, claimed that they have the monopoly of the saving Truth, and that those who did not accept their claims and failed to join their group, were doomed. Christianity, for example, holds that all are sinners, and that except those who accept Jesus Christ as the Son of God and also the atoning power of his blood, will perish. Islam, though it professes to be not so dogmatic, holds that Mohammed is the seal

of all prophets, and that all those who do not accept him and revelation given to him, are Kaffers beyond redemption. Though established churches and priestly bodies still hold such views, they parade it openly nowadays only before primitive communities without any cultural background, while in regard to well-informed people, they engage themselves in some sort of a dialogue in an assumed attitude of tolerance.

II

At present the study of comparative religion has emerged as an important part of social studies, and this has acted as an antidote to the exclusiveness and fanaticism which churches and priestly bodies have been fostering. The study of comparative religion has demonstrated that all the great world religions have produced exemplary characters and contain noble teachings, thus exposing the hollowness of the exclusive claims of certain religions to contain the whole of the saving truth. In spite of this, till recent times the study of comparative religion was a study with the attitude of a critic, having the Christian monotheism as the standard, and finding the shortcomings of other religions from that point of view. Even amidst the prevalence of this attitude, the study of comparative religion, by its very nature, exposed the followers of one religion to the best that is in those of others also, and thus acted as a liberalizing influence in the attitude of at least the well-informed followers of different religions.

In modern times the study of comparative religion has taken a still novel turn. It has been realized that one can have a true understanding of a religion not by approaching it as a critic, but as a believer in it. An inner view of a religion alone can yield a correct estimate of its worth. Such an approach to religion is called the pheno-

menological study of religion. While this liberalism in inter-religious attitudes is finding more and more acceptance among savants studying the religious phenomenon independently, organized churches and priestly bodies do not seem to be much influenced by it. Dogmatism is in their very marrows, and the utmost limit of liberalism that one could expect of them is toleration, that is, readiness to live and let live.

III

This is the background of inter-religious understanding against which Sri Ramakrishna's life and teachings appear before us. As a follower of Vedic religious tradition, having for its watchword the dictum, *ekam sat viprah bahudha vadanti*, 'Truth is one; but wise men speak of It in many ways', his attitude towards religious plurality is bound to be one of universal acceptance. But one point has to be specially borne in mind to understand his attitude. By 'religion' what Sri Ramakrishna, the Great Master, had in mind always, is its spiritual content, and not its politicised and grotesque shell that passes for religion generally. The quest for the Supreme Being and the means that are helpful in that quest alone form the essential content of religion. Religious exclusivism, which makes votaries think that God is only 'this' and never 'that', is at the root of all fanatical Gospels which put forward exclusive claims to the 'key of Heaven', and condemn to hell fire others who do not accept their claims. It is such an attitude to religion that politicises it, and makes it into the most grotesque form of group selfishness. The Master had no truck with religion of that kind.

The Master maintained that all the great religious traditions, in spite of their striking differences, are channels that take aspirants

to the same God. 'As many faiths so many paths', was his watchword. 'There are several bathing ghats', he says, 'in a large tank. Whoever goes to whichever ghat he pleases to go, and take a bath or fill his vessel, reaches the same water, and it is useless to quarrel with one another claiming one's ghat to be better than that of another. Similarly there are many ghats that lead to the water of the fountains of Eternal Bliss. Every religion of the world is one ghat. You go direct with a sincere and earnest heart through any one of these ghats, and you will reach the water of Eternal Bliss. But say not that your religion is better than that of another.'

Such a statement about the validity of all religions as paths to God will meet with stout opposition from the so-called universal religions like Christianity and Islam. Beyond the idea of toleration, they cannot go further, as the aim of their organized clergy responsible for formulating their dogmas, is to bring, if possible, the whole of humanity within their empire by claiming exclusive right to give salvation. Unless universal acceptance of the type Sri Ramakrishna preached, is accepted, the problems created by politicised religions and the consequent conflict among religions cannot be avoided in a world where religious plurality is an unavoidable situation.

IV

One of the important causes of conflict in a situation that admits religious plurality, is the wrong notion of spiritual Truth entertained by some of the world religions. Christianity, for example, identifies the spiritual Truth with certain historical events and considers that man's salvation depends on his acceptance of the supposed historical facts, which are of a mysterious nature. If a person does not accept it, he has no

salvation. Islam, identifies truth as what was revealed to Mohammed, who is regarded as the seal of all prophets. The revelation that came to him were not only on spiritual Truth but on all matters, social, political, economic, and even on minute matters like dress, having a beard etc. They are relevant, according to Islam, for humanity in all parts of the world for all time. Those who do not accept the claims of the prophet are Kaffers who are outside the pale of society, and of salvation.

All these religions of Semitic origin fall into this narrow and unspiritual outlook, because while they profess to accept that God is infinite, in practice their God is the only symbol of the Infinite. Infact, such a god is only their group consciousness personified. Until they grow out of this outlook and clearly perceive that the Infinite Being cannot be limited as 'this' only, and never 'that', religious fanaticism and exclusiveness cannot be overcome. Only a perception of the inexhaustibility of the Infinite Divine can raise religion from its politicised version into a pure spiritual concern, with not mere toleration but universal acceptance as one of its principal features.

Every religion that speaks in exclusive terms has only a partial insight into the Infinite, though they claim finality and completeness for what they have known. When the understanding is only of a segment, and where that segment and the way of attaining that are claimed to be the whole, the resulting cult becomes a kind of fanatical idol worship. The religions that claim to have complete and exclusive understanding of the Infinite, are the real promoters of idolatry. They in fact commit the great sin of limiting the Infinite.

About the Infinite Being and its understanding by great sages and seers, the Master says: 'God is like a hill of sugar. A small ant fetches from it a tiny grain

of sugar, and a bigger one takes from it another grain considerably larger in size. But in spite of this, the hill practically remains as large as ever. So are the devotees of God. They become ecstatic even with a single Divine attribute. No one can contain within him the realization of all His glories and excellences.'

There is another saying of Sri Ramakrishna which is extremely relevant for driving home this point, especially the ideal that only one who has a peep into the mystery of the Infinite, can really understand the doctrine of universal acceptance. He says: 'Two persons were once disputing over the colour of a chameleon. One said, the chameleon on that palm tree is of a beautiful red colour. The other contradicted, saying, "You are mistaken, the chameleon is not red but blue". Being unable to settle the matter through argument, both went to a man who always lived under that tree and had watched the chameleon in all its phases. One of the disputants asked him: "Is not that chameleon on that tree, of a red colour?" The man replied, "Yes, sir." The other disputant said, "What do you say? How is that possible? Surely it is not red but blue". The man again humbly replied, "Yes, sir". He knew that the chameleon constantly changed in colour. So he said "yes" to both the conflicting views. God, who is Existence-Knowledge-Bliss Absolute, has likewise various forms. The devotee who has experienced God only in one aspect knows that aspect, and that alone. None but he who has seen Him in His manifold aspects, who always sits under the tree can say, "All these forms are of the One God, for God is multiformed. He is formless and with forms, and many are His forms which no one knows about."'

These sayings of Sri Ramakrishna reveal wherein the fallacy of dogmatists and exclusivists lies. The truth of God is not like the mathematical truth that two plus

two can only be four and never five. If God were subject to this mathematical logic, He would be one among measurable objects, which is equal to saying that He is only a material substance with all the limitation of such substances. He would be unworthy of worship. If God is the Infinite Spirit, no prophet or scripture can limit Him to be only 'This', and not something contrary or contradictory even to the 'this'. As the chameleon in Sri Ramakrishna's saying can be both red and blue, all contradictory views stand resolved in the Infinite and Absolute Spirit. The perfect seers understand this. The *Katha Upanishad* also means the same thing when it says: 'Except me (that is, the Perfect Seer) who understands that Divinity who is at the same time 'Samada' and 'Amada' (that is, having apparently contradictory forms).' The problem created by religious plurality can be solved only through the acceptance of such a liberal philosophy of religion by all the organized faiths. But so long as these religions are organized on dogmatic ideals, which is only another way of telling they are politicized, there seems to be little chance of their whole-hearted acceptance of it. For the object of the ecclesiastics who control these religions is world-conquest under the guise of showing the path of salvation. A chance of their acceptance of this liberal doctrine lies only through their acquaintance with the life and experiments of the Great Master, Sri Ramakrishna.

V

The importance of Sri Ramakrishna in effecting harmony in a world of religious plurality is that he is the only person in world history who has supported this doctrine by the example of his life. What phenomenology of religion tries to do in an intellectual way, Sri Ramakrishna achieved

in terms of actual life, long before the phenomenological way of thinking had originated. 'I had to practise the various religions in my life', he says, 'Hinduism, Islam, and Christianity, and I have walked the paths of different sects of Hinduism, the Sakta, the Vaishnava, the Vedanta etc. And I have found that it is the same God towards whom all are travelling, only they come through diverse ways.'

To get a full idea of this saying of Sri Ramakrishna, one has to read a detailed life of his. Besides the long period of intense spiritual aspiration, his early life was remarkable for the varieties of systems of spiritual disciplines which he practised. Being born and brought up in the Hindu spiritual traditions, he underwent the disciplines presented by various schools of Vaishnavism, Saktism, Advaita Vedanta etc., that is, practised both the paths of Bhakti and Jnana. Generally all spiritual aspirants adore and meditate on the Deity according to one tradition, and if they attain perfections in that, they attain spiritual fulfilment. But Sri Ramakrishna's spiritual life developed in a different way. In all the spiritual disciplines he practised, he attained perfection in an incredibly short period of three days' practice. But his urge for adoring the Divine did not subside with it. As he said in later days, just as a glutton is eager to take the food stuff dressed in different ways, he felt an urge at that time to practise all known systems of spiritual disciplines, and, as he has said about his experiences, they all take one to the same Supreme Being.

His urge for spiritual practices did not therefore end with the practice of the disciplines of the Hindu cults. He came across a Muslim holy man, probably a Sufi, and felt inclined to be initiated into the Muslim way of sadhana for God-realization. Speaking about his days of Muslim sadhana, he says: 'Then I used to repeat the name

of Allah, wear my cloth in the fashion of Mohammedans, and recite the Namaz regularly. All Hindu ideas were banished from my mind. Not only did I not salute the Hindu deities, but I had no inclination for visiting them. After passing three days in that way, I realized the goal of that way of devotion.'

Just as he practised Islam, he practised Christianity too. He had heard parts of the Bible read by his devotees and was acquainted with the holy life and ideals of Jesus Christ. One day when he was intently looking on a photo of Infant Christ with the Madonna, he found the idea behind the picture blazing into a luminous spiritual aura which overpowered his mind. Just as it happened in the practice of Islam, all the strongly imprinted concepts and images of Hindu theology were swept away, and the Christian pattern of devotionality fully occupied his mind. He spent three days in this mood, and at the end of it he had a vision of Christ.

It will thus be seen that he accomplished in truth and in reality what the modern idea of phenomenistic approach to the study of comparative religion seeks to accomplish—that is, to understand a religion from within, as a **believer in it** would do. But there is great difference between his method and that of the scholars. While the modern method is more theoretical and merely intellectual, Sri Ramakrishna adopted the method of complete identification with the spiritual content of each religion he chose to understand, and lived like a Muslim or a Christian and adored the Divine in their fashion with the fullest devotional identification. It is after this practical experiment that he declared that all these great religious traditions led to the same God. The same was his experience when he practised the *Sadhana* of the differ-

ent sects and cults coming under Hinduism. He experienced the adored Deity first as dissolving in Brahman with attributes, and then in the attributeless impersonal Absolute, in spite of all the differences in the theologies and practices of the different sects. So he could declare with perfect conviction: 'Different creeds are but different paths to reach the One God. Diverse are the ways that lead to the temple of Mother Kali at Kalighat in Calcutta. Similarly various are the paths that take men to the house of the Lord. Every religion is nothing but one of these paths'.

We have already pointed out and answered a possible metaphysical objection that some of the monotheistic world religions might bring against this doctrine of universal acceptance. It is their segmented view of the Infinite Being that makes them fanatically limit the Infinite to their understanding of It, and look upon any other version of It as heterodox and false. It is this narrow view of religious truth that is belied by Sri Ramakrishna's actual experience of all religions as leading to the same Infinite Personal-Impersonal being, in spite of the differing versions they give of it and the differing paths they prescribe to their aspirants.

VI

Apart from this, the validity of Sri Ramakrishna's practice of different religions has been challenged on another ground. It is said that there is no meaning in saying that one lived like a Muslim or Christian for three days and his experiences have to be accepted as valid. To be Muslim you have to follow its precepts and practise all through life or at least from the time you are converted into that faith. The same is the case with Christianity, too. They do not subscribe to the view that the function

of religion is to give an experience of Divine existence. His existence is accepted on scriptural sanction. What is required of a true follower is a life-long adherence to the faith given by the scripture and the meticulous observance of the religious duties and of undergoing the sacraments ordained by them. So there cannot be anything like being a Christian or a Muslim for three days and then going back to one's old ways. Man's salvation is a post-mortem affair and all that is required for it is a strict adherence to the dogmas and practices set forth in the scripture, all through his life.

While such firm and continued observance of one's religion minus the exclusiveness which such an attitude often engenders, is commendable in ordinary men, in the case of Sri Ramakrishna it has no application. Sri Ramakrishna considered religion and its institutions as a means for preparing the human mind to get an experience of the Supreme Reality. The institutions of religion are means for that purpose, and not an end in themselves. Identifying the spiritual content of religion with its institutions and dogmas, will lead only to fundamentalism and fanaticism. It is this attitude that the Master demonstrates as unwarranted by the practice of the disciplines of different religions, and showing that they all lead to the same Divine. What Sri Ramakrishna proved was not only that each of these religions has an identity of its own, but even while remaining as distinct traditions, they are capable alike in taking man to the same summum bonum. It is, therefore, beside the point to say that to be a Muslim or Christian the Master should have remained as a follower of these religions all through life.

Moreover, Sri Ramakrishna's mind had extra-ordinary powers. Ordinary men find it very difficult to cast off the impressions and attitudes they have cultivated through experiences of a long period in their lives. In the case of religion, it is all the more so for a sincere adherent. Thus for a confirmed Vaishnava to become a Shaiva, or for a strong Dvaitin to become an Advaitin, it will be almost impossible. Much more so will it be for a pious Hindu to be a Muslim or a devoted Christian to be a Hindu, be it only for a short period. The reason is that our mind controls us, and not we the mind. It was just the reverse in Sri Ramakrishna's case. No mental impression, however strong, could dominate his mind against his will. He could efface all early impressions from his mind and assume new ones, or remain without any impression at his will. It was this power of mind that enabled him to set aside all his cherished Hindu devotional ideals from his mind when he assumed Islam and Christianity. The conversion into the new ideologies was so complete that during the period he was engaged in the new disciplines, he ceased to be a Hindu in thought or action completely. This remarkable capacity of his mind enabled him to get such identification with, and experience of, those new ideals, which take their votaries a whole life-time. What the critics forget is this intensity of his mind and his absolute mastery over it, when they say that one cannot be a Christian or a Muslim for three days and then go back to his old religion. The Master could do this easily because of the extraordinary constitution of his mind, by means of which he could achieve in three days what the ordinary votaries fail to achieve in a life-time.

THE SPECIAL SIGNIFICANCE OF PHALAHARINI-KALI-PUJA IN RAMAKRISHNA SANGHA

SWAMI HIRANMAYANANDA*

The *Phalaharini-Kali-Puja* is performed in many centres of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission. This Kali Puja has a special bearing on the Ramakrishna Sangha. On this day Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna observed the end of his sadhaka-life in a special way. He worshipped Sri Saradamani Devi as Goddess Shodasi on this day. All of us know that Adyashakti (the Primordial Energy) has various names and forms. Of those, Kali, Tara, Shodasi, Bhuvaneshwari, Chhinnamasta, Bhairavi, Dhumavati, Bagala, Matangi and Kamala—these ten forms are well-known. Sri Ramakrishna worshipped the Adyashakti, the Goddess of the universe through the manifestation of the 'Vidyarupini', a female human form embodying the transcendent knowledge, and surrendered himself, his rosary and all other aids to his *sadhana* at Her feet and thus drew an end to his long, historic, and all-encompassing *sadhana*.

Why did Sri Ramakrishna worship Holy Mother as the Goddess Shodasi? The Ramakrishna Sangha belongs to the *dasanami sampradaya* of Shankaracharya. This Dasanami Sampradaya includes the ten monastic systems, holding the name of Puri, Giri, Bharati, Tirtha, Ban, Aranya, Parvat Ashrama, Sagar and Sarasvati. The monastic organization of ours belongs to the Puri Sampradaya. Srimat Tota Puri was the Sannyasa Guru of Sri Ramakrishna. That's why we also belong to the Puri Sampradaya of Sannyasins. The original Math of this Puri Sampradaya sannyasins is the Sringeri Math. Every sampradaya has various gods and goddesses. The presiding deity of

the Puri Sampradaya is Kamakshi Devi. The temple of Kamakshi Devi is at Kanchipuram in South India. In that temple there is the Shodasi murti of the Devi. The other names of Shodasi Devi are—Rajarajeswari, Tripurasundari or Sri Vidya.

In South India the worship of Sri Vidya is specially in vogue. The worship that is prevalent in Bengal is called the Kalikula Upasana; and the worship that is in vogue in the South India is called Sri Kula Upasana. Acharya Shankara founded four Maths at the four corners of India, for the sannyasins. In the Sringeri Math in South India he placed Sri Yantra as the presiding deity, and arranged for its daily worship. In Kanchipuram he consecrated the temple to the Devi and named Her Kamakshi; he installed Sri Yantra there too. This goddess Kamakshi is the Ishta-devi, the chosen deity of the Puri Sampradaya monks. Every God has a specific Yantra. These Yantras, made by certain specific curves and lines, are thought of as the seat of particular gods. In Sringeri Math Sri Yantra was installed as the presiding deity of the Sannyasins there. Devi Shodasi, also called Kamakshi, Tripurasundari, or Sri Vidya, as has been told earlier, is the presiding deity of the Puri Sampradaya. Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna, after being ordained into sannyasa, came under the fold of Sri Kula of the Puri Sampradaya. Though he started his *sadhana* in the Kali-Kula, he ended it after embracing Sri Kula and following its instructions. This fits squarely with the injunctions of the Tantra scriptures. In South India Tantra *sadhana* is attested by, and follows Parashuramakalpa sutra. In that Parashurama Sutra the chief deity of the Sri Kula has been called Samrajni. *sa*

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iyam Samrajni. Sri Devi is the Samrajni—the queen amongst all the goddesses. Shyama or Kali is Her chief attendant. So, for worshipping Sri Vidya, Shyama is to be worshipped first. Why? Why is the chief attendant's worship first? Samrajni, the empress, should have been worshipped first. But no. To adore the King, the minister is to be pleased first. *Pradhanadvarya rajaprasadanam hi kuryat*. That is why a sadhaka after attaining the *siddhi*, fulfilment in Kali worship, also gains access to the worship of Sri Vidya or Samrajni Shodasi Devi.

Of course, Sri Ramakrishna did not consult scriptures nor did he do such sadhana after knowing fully well of its purport. His life itself comprises scriptures. As we have seen, after the realization of the Divine Mother of the universe, Kali, it is Divine Mother who led him, one after another, through various forms of sadhana. Through his life the truths of the scriptures and objectives of various sadhanas, were reverified and revived. One after another these sadhanas came in his life spontaneously and in natural course. And all those

sadhanas happened to run in the same lines prescribed by the scriptures. He attained *siddhi* in the sadhana of Kali-Kula. He attained the vision of Mother Kali and then performed the Upasana of Sri Vidya. But he did not perform the worship of Sri Vidya in any clay image. Sri Vidya found Her incarnation in the body and mind of one divine woman. That divine woman is Devi Saradamani. She is identical with Sri Vidya. Sannyasin Sri Ramakrishna worshipped this Samrajni as the highest manifestation of the Primordial Energy. He worshipped Kanchipuram's presiding deity Devi Shodasi, Kamakshi as Tripurasundari, through this Devi Saradamani.

From that very day it was ordained that Devi Sri Vidya of our monastic organization would conduct and guide Sri Ramakrishna Sangha through Her human form of Sarada Devi. This is the philosophy behind Phalaharini Kali Puja in our Ashramas. The devotees of Sri Ramakrishna perform Phalaharini Kali Puja, recalling Sri Sri Ma. The philosophy depicted above has given Phalaharini Kali Puja a special bearing on the Ramakrishna Order.

A GLIMPSE AT BUDDHISM IN CHINA TODAY

(Illustrated)

WILLIAM PAGE

Conventional wisdom holds that Buddhism on mainland China was pretty much wiped out during the Cultural Revolution of 1966-1976. During that period, most of the monks and nuns were forced to return to lay life, and monasteries were destroyed or turned into offices and factories, and some were razed to the ground.

Under the current reforms instituted by Deng Xiaoping, Buddhism has started making a comeback. Historically important temples and monasteries have been restored, and the restoration work is still going on. A small number of monks and nuns have been permitted to return to the monasteries. Of course, many of the restored temples

have been turned into museum or incorporated into public parks.

In effect, conventional wisdom says, Buddhism has been permitted to revive only in fossilized form. But why even this beginning of religion in an officially atheist state? Two reasons may be given. First, Buddhist temples and monasteries attract tourists, and most of whom are the present generation of Chinese themselves. Second, a modest revival of Buddhism encourages religious freedom. The Chinese constitution guarantees citizens the right of both to 'practise religion' and 'promote atheism'. The semantic distinction gives atheism a considerable advantage.

Not content to accept conventional wisdom in this case, I decided to go to China and see for myself how Buddhism is faring. So this past March I set out, hoping to see how a revived Buddhism is beginning to reassert itself as an active force in Chinese life. I can speak Chinese, and I know something about Chinese Buddhism from having lived on Taiwan. (See 'Notes on a Chinese Monastery', *Prabuddha Bharata* October-November 1980). The following expanded excerpts from my diary record the sequence of my impressions.

*Chengdu City, Sichuan Province, March 29:
the Wenshu Monastery*

This is an old monastery, dating from the Tang dynasty, reconstructed in the seventeenth century, and now officially known as Wenshu Park. It is located down a long alley in the northern part of Chengdu. The alley is lined with vendors' stalls selling firecrackers, joss sticks, rosaries, and tourist souvenirs.

It is Sunday, and the temple courtyard is thronged with devotees offering joss sticks and prostrating before the shrine. (The standard Chinese prostration is the *ketou* or 'kow-tow', in which the devotee

kneels down and touches his forehead to the ground three times.) Most of the worshippers are little old Chinese ladies, many of whom wear the black or brown knitted caps of the type worn by the Buddhist monks and nuns in Taiwan. But there are middle-aged and younger people among the worshippers as well.

Inside the temple compound is a shop that does a bustling business selling rosaries, Buddha images, and books on Buddhism. An adjacent exhibition room features a series of Chinese wall-scrolls depicting scenes from the life of the Buddha.

The whole atmosphere is one of somewhat hectic devotional activity. Chengdu is the capital of Sichuan province, a city of over a million souls. And this seems to be the only functioning temple in town.

My next destination is Emei Shan, 185 kilometers to the southwest. During the five-hour bus ride through the Sichuan countryside and several towns, I do not see a single temple.

Emei Shan, Sichuan Province, April 3-9

Emei Shan is one of the four sacred mountains of Chinese Buddhism. It rises from the Sichuan plain like a great rectangular slab, but it is usually shrouded in mist. Taoists and Buddhists began building temples on the mountain as early as the second century. At one time there were as many as 152 monasteries. Now there are about twenty. Many of the old monasteries now function as hotels for tourists. Most of them have been restored, and in almost all of them construction work is going on.

1. *Baoguo Si*. This is a large, splendidly ornate old monastery at the base of the mountain, the starting-point for the arduous, 3099-metre climb. Its name translates

rather awkwardly as 'Loyalty to the Country' monastery. It has four main halls, rising one above the other up the slopes of the mountain, interspersed with courtyards, gardens, and pavilions. The atmosphere is peaceful and serene.

Arriving late in the afternoon, I go to the *ketang* (guest hall) and find an old monk beginning to nod off behind the desk. I greet him in the standard Chinese Buddhist way, pressing my palms together in front of my face and intoning, 'Omīto Fo', an invocation of Amitabha Buddha. I enquire whether it is possible to spend the night here, he summons a young laywoman who briskly takes me in tow. She charges me six yuan for the night's lodging, makes me fill out a form, issues me a receipt, and escorts me to my room at the rear of the monastery. 'What time do you have the worship service?' I enquire. She looks startled. 'You want to see the worship service?' 'Naturally'. She smiles thinly. 'Worship service is at five a.m.', she replies.

The room I am assigned is austere but tasteful, with a desk, a table, a hatrack (!), a wash-stand with a basin, and the mandatory thermos full of boiled water. The walls are painted a deep brown, and the bed is a traditional square Chinese bed, piled high with quilts and surmounted by a mosquito net draped over a wooden frame, much like a canopy. I am ecstatic. This is traditional China, all right. Outside the room is a courtyard containing a small garden.

The next morning, I am up at five. I can hear the droning of the morning worship service coming from the main hall. I go down there, but the door is locked. Even so, the lights are on, and I can hear the sonorous chanting coming from inside. Peeping through a crack in the door, I can see several monks dressed in their ritual robes performing the worship. Disappointed because I can't get in to watch, I return

to my room. Maybe they don't want tourists gawking at their worship service.

Around mid-morning, I leave Baoguo Si. The place is now swarming with mobs of Chinese tourists tramping through the precincts, staring at the shrines, and uttering loud exclamations. Outside the main gate there is a regular mob scene. Chinese are posing for photographs in front of the archway.

I board a minibus that goes almost to the summit of the mountain. For four hours, it drives all over the flanks of the mountain through the fog and rain, proceeding inexorably upward. Eventually it reaches a miserable mountain village, lets off its passengers, and we begin to flock up to the summit through the mud and drizzle.

And now I begin to learn something new. Climbing a sacred mountain in China today is not just a solitary spiritual experience. Emei Shan is a scene of crowding tourists. Hundreds of Chinese tourists are swarming up the stone stairway that leads to the summit. They range from tiny babies being carried on their fathers' backs to ancient grannies who can barely hobble.

2. *Xixiangchi*. This is a big monastery consisting of a series of rambling red buildings with tin roofs, sprawled over a ridge about a third of the way down the mountain. Its name means 'Elephant-Washing Pool', derived from a legend that the Bodhisattva Samantabhadra once flew in on an elephant and gave it a bath there.

Having climbed to the summit and spent the night, I am now on my way back down the mountain. I arrive at noon. *Xixiangchi* is being renovated, and the grounds are littered with piles of lumber and the detritus of ongoing construction. In the building that houses the main dormitory, carpenters are hammering away.

While I am waiting to register for a room, a Chinese gentleman invites me to sit by a

pot full of burning coals. It is chilly out, so I sit down and begin to warm myself. An elderly Chinese monk is sprawled out in a chair, his hands folded across his stomach and his feet stretched toward the coal fire. This is my first close look at a monk on the China mainland, and I inspect him as if he were some sort of rare jewel. He wears the traditional black knitted cap and a gray smock with a Y-shaped collar, with loose pants and gray leggings bound just below the knee. This is the usual uniform of the Chinese monk, except that he is wearing jogging shoes. There are about ten monks at this monastery, most of them elderly, but several of them young. One of the older monks is sitting beside the shrine, smoking and looking bored. At one point an elderly monk approaches me, and I greet him respectfully with pressed palms. 'What country are you from?' he asks. (This is the standard introductory question for foreigners in China). I tell him. 'How old are you?' I tell him that, too. 'Are you travelling alone?' I nod. (The fact that I am travelling alone always amazes the Chinese, who customarily travel in groups.)

In the evening, there is a brief worship service at Xixiangchi, in which four or five monks participate. It lasts about fifteen minutes, which surprises me, because the same service on Taiwan would go on for 45 minutes at least. While they are chanting inside the shrine, a group of Chinese tourists watch from the doorway, talking, smoking, occasionally spitting, and making loud remarks.

Xixiangchi is packed out with Chinese tourists, many of them young college and high-school students. At night, the atmosphere is that of a summer camp, with young Chinese men and women enjoying the entire area.

3. *Huayen Ding*. The trail descends

steeply from Xixiangchi till it mounts a knoll and reaches Huayen Ding, Avatamsaka Peak. Huayen Ding looks like a construction camp: the top of the knoll is marked by a big clearing, with piles of lumber and cement strewn about and new buildings going up. Over at one side is a small shrine which looks brand new. I am taken by surprise; there actually seems to be some spiritual atmosphere here.

A short, stout, middle-aged lady is cleaning the shrine. As soon as she sees me, she exclaims, 'You're a Buddhist!' Surprised, I ask, 'What makes you think so?' She points to my shoulderbag, a cloth bag I picked up in Calcutta, with the face of Lord Shiva imprinted on it. 'Your bag', she explains. 'That's Kuan Yin Pusa'. (Kuan Yin Pusa is the Chinese name for Avalokiteshwara Bodhisattva, who is represented as being female and is very popular among Chinese Buddhists. She is the Bodhisattva of Compassion, 'She who Heeds the Cries of the World') 'That's not Kuan Yin Pusa, it's Lord Shiva', I protest. 'No, it isn't, it's Kuan Yin Pusa. Look.' She leads me around behind the altar, where there is a representation of Kuan Yin Pusa. 'See? Kuan Yin Pusa. Same as on your bag.' Touched by her simple devotion, I say, 'All right, *Shihfu* (Venerable), you're right, it's Kuan Yin Pusa'. She shows me around the shrine. 'This all looks new', I remark. 'It is new', she affirms. 'Everything was burned. This is the only thing that survived.' She indicates a marble Buddha image, about a foot tall, on the altar. I examine it with interest. It has a serene expression, and does indeed look old. I make obeisance to it.

Beside the altar is the traditional 'wooden fish', a large, hollow, wooden device that functions as a sort of drum during the worship service. This one is black, and seems to be poorly made. When she strikes it with the mallet, it makes a

dull 'thunk-thunk' sound instead of the healthy 'bok-bok-bok' sound that a wooden fish is supposed to make. At this point I make a mistake. I carry in my bag a miniature wooden fish that I use in performing my morning devotions to Sri Ramakrishna. Now I take it out and show it to her. 'I have a wooden fish, too,' I say. Her eyes light up in amazement. 'Where did you get that?' 'Er, on Taiwan', I mumble, not sure how this information will be received, since relations between Taiwan and the mainland are somewhat less than cozy. 'Sell it to me', she urges. She pulls out a fistful of dirty, wadded-up Chinese currency and thrusts it at me. Instantly I realize my mistake. 'Er, well, I can't', I confess. 'I need it for my own worship services.' 'We can't get those here. You can get another one. Please sell it to me', she begs, pushing the money practically into my face. 'I can't', I repeat miserably. 'I don't know when I'll be able to get another one. But if you give me your address, if I ever find another one, I'll get it and mail it to you.' Eagerly, she writes down her name and address, and I begin to realize how starved Chinese devotees must be for decent ritual equipment. The wooden fish I've seen so far in temples have all been poorly carved and not hollow enough to make a decent sound, and the rosaries I've seen on sale are generally cheap, shoddy affairs that seem to be made of painted papier-mache. Even the meditation cushions in the shrines are always made of straw. I depart Huayen Ding impressed with this lady's simple devotion and determined to send her a decent miniature wooden fish at the earliest opportunity.

4. *Wannian Si*. Wannian Si, 'Ten-thousand Years Monastery', is an enormous monastic complex almost at the base of the mountain. One has to buy a ticket just to get in. As

at Baoguo Si, everything is ornate, traditional, and tasteful. Several big new halls are under construction. There is a white stone temple containing a large statue of Samantabhadra on his elephant. Since it is so close to the bottom of the mountain, the crowds of Chinese tourists are particularly thick.

By now I am beginning to notice something. The men are often noisy and boisterous in the temples. Either that, or they just survey the scene with an air of skepticism. Some of them practically sneer at the images, and others make disdainful or patronizing remarks.

But the attitude of the women is different—especially the old ones. Gray-haired old ladies approach the shrines reverently, offering their joss sticks and prostrating before the images. Often their daughters do the same. Young women make their children 'kow-tow' before the altars, and occasionally a young woman will insist that her husband 'kow-tow', too. On the rare occasions that you see one do so, he does it sheepishly, as if embarrassed.

The idea begins to dawn on me that if Buddhism is to really revive in China, it will have to come through the women. Only in them do you see evidence of real devotion. Some people might say, 'Well, when the old women die off, that will be the end of Buddhism in China'. But they forget that it is the old women who bring up their daughters and tell stories to their grand children. And if devotion to Buddhism takes root among the younger women, it will become a force to reckon with. Anyone who knows anything about Chinese women knows that they exert more power within the family (and over their husbands!) than may at first be readily apparent, especially to outside observers. And when they get into positions of power, they are often more formidable than the men.

5. *Fuhu Si*. 'Crouching Tiger Monastery', is also near the base of the mountain, off a side road that winds through the woods. It is evening, and in the main hall a worship service is about to begin. The Buddha images are made of painted plaster, and are somewhat garish, like something out of Disneyland. But two nuns are leading four young laywomen in chanting the evening service. The laywomen are dressed in the black 'butterfly robes' of *upasikas*. They perform the ritual with real devotion, and the atmosphere is charged with fervour. This is the first worship service I have seen in China that is really 'alive'. The spiritual atmosphere is almost palpable.

At the same time, Chinese tourists are crowding around the railing in front of the shrine to watch. They are all men, and they are gossiping, making remarks, and some are even smoking. The contrast between the women performing the worship and the men in the audience is striking. I go away admiring the women for the staunchness of their devotion in the face of the rudeness of the onlookers, and despising the men for their bad manners. Once again I get the feeling that the future of Buddhism in China lies with the women.

Zhenjiang City, Jiangsu Province, April 18-21

From Chengdu, in western China, I fly to Nanjing, near the east coast, and travel by train to Zhenjiang, an industrial town on the Yangtse River. This is the heartland of Chinese Buddhism. Zhenjiang is located in what used to be known as the 'cradle of Monks', a part of Jiangsu province that used to contain many famous monasteries and produced a number of eminent monks.

Among the monasteries of Jiangsu, two of the most renowned are Jin Shan ('Golden Mountain') and Jiao Shan. Jin Shan monastery used to be famous for its strict

discipline; indeed, it set the standard for monastic discipline throughout China. Much of the research for the definitive work on Chinese Buddhist monasticism, Holmes Welch's *The Practice of Chinese Buddhism*, was done in this region; Welch refers to Jin Shan repeatedly throughout his book. If Buddhism is flourishing anywhere in China, it ought to be here.

1. *Jin Shan Si*. From a distance, Jin Shan looks a bit like Mont St. Michel, in France, except that it's not on an island. Surrounded on three sides by artificial lakes, Jin Shan is a hill covered with monastery buildings, topped by a prominent pagoda spearing skyward. From a distance, it looks quite imposing.

Up close, it doesn't look so imposing. Jin Shan and its adjacent grounds have been turned into a public park. Outside the front gate is a bus stand, with sidewalk vendors, restaurants, and stalls selling snacks and souvenirs. A huge mob is besieging the ticket window, mostly school children being shepherded about in groups by lady teachers. Tour buses are arriving continually, disgorging their passengers and adding to the crowds.

Inside, my first impression is one of chaos. This place looks as if it's being rebuilt after being bombed. Right smack in front of the entranceway, in the centre of the courtyard, the wooden framework of a huge new temple is under construction. Off to the right is a series of tile-roofed monastery buildings. A stone stairway leads to the summit of the hill and the pagoda, flanked by temple buildings. The *ketang*, or guest hall, has been turned into a souvenir shop. Indeed, as I mount the stairway I find that many of the temple buildings are functioning as shops and restaurants. This is, after all, part of a public park.

Jin Shan doesn't look anything like the

photos in Welch's book, which showed a series of magnificent long halls rising tier upon tier to the summit. Where these halls should be, there is only the framework of the huge new temple, backed by a concrete wall. Most of the remaining buildings are off to the right, facing into the courtyard. Beyond the construction area, off to the left, are other buildings, including a lovely little pavilion, but most of these are in a sad state of disrepair, and the detritus of construction blocks my path when I try to get to them. Many of the older buildings are either locked up, blocked off by stone walls, or under repair. I begin to wonder whether there might not in fact be two Jin Shans, and I'm at the wrong one.

Most of the shrines feature new, with glitzy-looking Buddha images. Unlike Sichuan, where most of the restoration work has been conscientious and tasteful, these images look gaudy: Amitabha Buddha, Kuan Yin Pusa, Maitreya Bodhisattva, and various fierce-looking *arhats* and temple guardians, all garishly painted and looking as if they have come marching straight out of a comic book. Except for one temple near the bottom of the stairway, where there is a very fine old Buddha image, most of the shrines seem built just for attracting more and more of Chinese people.

Nevertheless, here again are the ubiquitous old ladies, offering their joss sticks and prostrating in front of the images. Here again are the younger women, also prostrating and teaching their children to do likewise. And here again, the men just stand around, stare, look uncomfortable or disdainful and pass loud remarks.

At one temple, several old monks are sitting at a table drinking tea. I ask where the main worship hall is, and they say, it's on the other side of the construction area. I go my way through the piles of lumber, cement and barbed wire and find an old

temple blocked off by a wall and rusty gate, which is locked. Peering over the gate, I can't see any sign indicating that this is the main hall. (Usually the main hall is marked by a prominent plaque over the entrance reading *Da Hsiung Bao Dian*, the Precious Hall of the Great Hero.) I give up in disgust and go back to the buildings to the right of the construction area. There is a new building with a yellow wall labelled *Bu Er Fa Men* (Gate of the Non-dual Law, or Advaita Dharma Gate). Going around it, I find a small side entrance with a sign in Chinese telling tourists to stop here.

As a foreigner, I can't be expected to read Chinese, so I walk right in and find myself in an old section of the monastery. There is an old temple, somewhat shabby, with lots of meditation cushions on the floor. Several old monks and a few young ones go inside. Coming downstairs from a rickety adjacent building is an almost continuous file of gray-haired old women, some of them wearing yellow shoulderbags stamped with red seals. They enter the temple and put on butterfly robes. I sense that a worship service is about to begin, and it occurs to me that the old women must be pilgrims staying in the upstairs section of the adjacent building. But at this point a young Chinese in a military-looking uniform spots me and gestures for me to get out.

On another day I go back to Jin Shan, and now there aren't so many people. Returning to the old temple which the monks had said was the main hall, I find that the rusty gate is open. I go in, and there is an old temple building with a canvas cloth which covers the doorway. On one of the pillars is a sign reading, *Nien Fo shr shei?* ('Who is it that recites the Buddha's name?') This is one of the standard *koans* of Ch'an (Zen) Buddhism. Peeking through the windows, I see only a new, gilded Buddha image in an unpainted

wooden shrine. There is no sign of people, but somebody is ringing a bell inside. Soon a monk comes out and points me toward the gate. He makes gestures indicating that there are people inside meditating, and locks the rusty gate behind me.

I go back to the Advaita Dharma Gate and try to go back into the side entrance to see if any religious activity is going on, but now a monk is sitting by the entrance-way. I greet him with pressed palms: 'Omīto Fo'. I ask if I can go in. He pretends not to understand and waves me away. I feel he does not like a tourist break the peace of their rituals. I leave, but pause to look through a window in the wall of the Advaita Dharma Gate. Inside, I can see devotees circumambulating.

All of this is extremely edifying. Jin Shan has been turned into a tourist attraction, but even so, devotional activity is going on behind the scenes. While mobs of sight-seers rampage through the restored temples and gawk at the glitzy new Buddha images, the monks and nuns have retreated to their greatly reduced living quarters, and perform their devotions in the one or two old shrines reserved for actual worship. But they seem very secretive about it all. Is this because of some restriction imposed on them? Or is it just that the monks are fed up with the mobs of tourists swarming through their precincts and don't want people disturbing them while they worship? I suspect the latter. Given the behaviour of the modern tourists at these temples, I can't blame the monks and nuns of Jin Shan for barring outsiders from their worship services. Even so, I have the impression that things are much more open and relaxed in Sichuan, which is far from the centre of power in China. Here the devotional activity seems reclusive and furtive.

On yet a third day, I explore the part of the park which extends beyond the monastery

grounds, and here it is truly carnival time. There are artificial lakes and canals, with bridges going over the canals and boating on the lakes. There are gardens, too, and even a zoo! This zoo is inside a makeshift tent. Garish signs outside advertise the original 'Lady White Snake'. (Lady White Snake is a famous character in Chinese mythology, a thousand-year-old white snake who has magical powers. In search of love, she transforms herself into a beautiful woman and finds herself a husband, but is eventually thwarted by the abbot of Jin Shan, who also has magical powers.)

2. *Jiao Shan Si*. Jiao Shan is another famous monastic complex which has been turned into a public park. It is on an island in the Yangtse River. To get there, you have to take a ferry. The island is dominated by a big hill—not very high, but fairly long, covered with lovely green forests of spruce and bamboo. Its main landmark is a small pagoda at the summit of the ridge. I envision idyllic, solitary walks through the woods amidst temples and shrines, perhaps pausing at the monasteries to take some tea and discuss the profundities of the Mahaprajnaparamita Sutta with learned monks.

As usual, the ferry crossing is choked, again, with crowds of Chinese tourists, all pushing and shoving to get on the boat. At the landing on the Jiao Shan side, they swarm off the boat and up a path lined with stalls selling souvenirs.

The first monastery seems to be the only one that is actually functioning. Its name is Din Hwei Si, and it has a big main hall that seems to have been restored. There are new stone tiles on the floor, and three new gilded Buddha images above the altar. Two old monks sell incense and souvenirs inside the shrine. To the left of the main hall is a small old concrete temple with a statue of the Earth God on the

altar. A bicycle is parked inside, and the place is piled high with lumber and bags of cement. Right in front of the main hall, another huge new temple is under construction. The framework is fairly complete, but there is no roof yet, and nothing is painted. But signs outside already announce its name: Tien Wang Dian, or Heavenly King Hall.

A stone pathway leads around the island and up over the crest of the ridge to the pagoda. Just below the pagoda is an old temple that has been converted into a restaurant. As at Jin Shan, many of the temple buildings have been turned into shops and restaurants. Tourists are as noisy and boisterous as ever, and the stone pathway is strewn with litter. Everyone is taking photos. Some of the paths lead off into the forest but every time I follow one, trying to get away from the crowds I come upon a pair of young lovers billing and cooing in the grass. Probably this is the only place they can find to be alone.

At the bottom of the hill is a cluster of restored caves cut into the rock, a series of gardens, and a number of lovely old monastery buildings. Some of these function as museums, with examples of calligraphy on the walls. Others are locked, while still others have been turned into souvenir shops.

As I walk along, I overhear an old lady remark to her son (who is smoking and practising *kungfu* kicks as he walks), 'Where are all the temples? There were lots of temples here when I was young'. Another woman, a younger one remarks to her companion at one point, 'They all want money. It wasn't like this before'. I don't know whether she is referring to

the entrance fee you have to pay or to the souvenir shops, or to the vendors who hawk their wares along the pathway.

Conclusions:

To summarize, the Chinese government has indeed restored many of the old temples and monasteries, and for this it deserves credit. But I felt sad that boisterous crowds of Chinese tourists rampage noisily through the shrines. Probably this is their first reaction of a free life in the temple precincts where religious freedom is promised for all.

Nevertheless, by reopening some of the temples, the government has perhaps unwittingly provided Buddhism with a base from which to function. It is true that, with a few exceptions, none of the monasteries have any spiritual atmosphere. It is also true that the few remaining monks and nuns serve primarily as caretakers. But religious activity has started after it was virtually dead for nearly two decades. In Sichuan, it goes on more or less openly. In Jiangsu, it goes on behind the scenes, and seems more furtive and repressed. It may not seem like much, but even a flickering candle-flame is better than no light at all.

The future of Buddhism in China depends, in my view, on women, many of whom are staunch in their devotion despite the incomprehension of the men. Any significant revival of Buddhism in China will probably come through the women. If China can manage to maintain its current policy of relative liberalization, I would expect that the next generation may see a genuine resurgence of Buddhism.

RELIGIOUS MOTIFS ON INDIA'S STAMPS

(Illustrated)

PROF. R. B. MAGAL

As a secular State India does not emphasize any Religion or Religion as such. However, as a dominant factor in the lives of all Indians, Religion cannot be altogether ignored or overlooked. Hence in depicting life in India, the Indian Post Office has to portray aspects of Religion on its stamps. It may not endorse, or even approve, but must, and does, take account of reality. As the philosopher-President Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan pointed out, secularism does not mean irreligiousness. The traditional Indian precept 'Sarva Dharma Samabhava' is the abiding secular principle which does not deny religion, but views all religions on the same level. Secularism is indigenous to India, and not a western import.

Most known religions are practised in India. It has been, traditionally, a home for the persecuted. Followers of Zion, of Zoroaster, of Jesus and of Mohammad, at one time or other in the long history of India, came to seek asylum from persecution in their own lands where their faiths had become politically endangered. The Dalai Lama fleeing his Tibetan homeland from the invading Chinese in 1959, is the latest example.

Broadly, the established faiths of India can be grouped in two—Indic faiths indigenous to the land, like the umbrella group of Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, Sikhism and a variety of heterodox beliefs, and, those coming from outside, broadly categorized as 'semitic' faiths like Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, in their several varieties. Zoroastrianism, is not a semitic faith, and belongs more to the Indic category. The incoming faiths have a commitment to a monotheistic

version of God revealed to man through His Messengers. In contrast, the Indic, refuse to define God, though they may extol His many forms and features, leaving it to the individual to imagine the Unmanifest in his own way. Since all ways are viewed as equally valid, the indigenous faiths are not, by and large, evangelistic.

Thus all variations of Religion have been welcomed, and practised, in India. All these faiths find a place on Indian Postage Stamps. Portraits of saints, of temples and of shrines, of events in Religious history, appear on these stamps. In keeping with its secular policy, India pictures religious individuals or institutions not necessarily as saints and temples but more as contributors to the heritage of the vast variety that is India. Saints are leaders of men and moulders of thought. Temples are beautiful buildings, for the worship of One Almighty, and also architectural monuments.

Almost all religious faiths have been represented on India's stamps. Theocratic states may have more stamps with religious motifs, but, by definition, those stamps would be restricted to reflect but one of man's several ways of reaching out to the Infinite.

Even before independence some of the very few pictorial stamps of India, the George V Silver Jubilee set, included four stamps depicting shrines in different parts of the country. After independence the first definitive series, the archaeological set of 1949, had a number of statues and temples portrayed. Since then Centennials and other celebrations have been special occasions for the release of stamps with religious motifs.

The saint-singers, great integrators as

they are aptly called, have a special place in Indian life, and on India's stamps. Singing of the Infinite and of His grace, in the forms of their individual 'Ishta Devatas', Chosen deities, they have, throughout Indian history, in every age, helped renew faith. The saints, both of the past and those living with us today, are viewed as part of God's merciful bounty to Man. The Buddha, Mahavira, the Sikh Gurus, and founders of faiths form another strain on Indian stamp issues. Modern developments in Indian Religion like the Brahmo Samaj, the Arya Samaj, and the Ramakrishna Movement form yet another strain.

In fact, religion is the mainspring of man; his built-in guardian of the sense of right and wrong. Even professed atheists have faith akin to religious which many view as but a substitute. Fads and fashions change, but faith in the Eternal is abiding even when appearances are to the contrary. Such a transitory, and ephemeral phenomenon as postage stamps reflect this basic reality.

By mid-1986 India had issued around one hundred stamps with religious motifs. Of these, thirty-seven carried portraits of saints or religious leaders and the rest portrayed temples, institutions or other religious insignia. These hundred stamps have been grouped into 18 categories for the purpose of this essay disregarding the chronological order in which they were actually issued by the Post Office. Those whose main characteristics lie elsewhere and that are not primarily religious are not included in these categories. The eighteen categories are:

- (1) Concepts
- (2) Ramayana
- (3) The Krishna theme
- (4) The Buddha
- (5) Tirthankara
- (6) Saint-singers
- (7) Early Religious Leaders
- (8) Sat Sri Akal

- (9) World of Islam
- (10) Christ in India
- (11) Modern Religious Leaders
- (12) The Ramakrishna Movement
- (13) Aurobindo
- (14) Arya Samaj
- (15) Linguistic expression
- (16) Thespian expression
- (17) Temples
- (18) The Eternal flow.

Only fifty seven stamps that reflect some aspects of religion are included. The dates or years on which they were issued by the Post Office are also indicated. Readers can identify them with the help of serial numbers of these stamps. For the sake of space the stamps are arranged conveniently.

1. Concepts

Trimurti. (Sl. No. 1) 15.8.1949. Definitives, Archaeological Series. 8 C. Rock cut temples at Elephanta, Bombay. Brahma, Vishnu, Maheshvara Trinity.

Nataraja. (Sl. No. 2) 15.8.1949. Definitives, Archaeological Series. 8 C. Chola Bronze. Shiva's Cosmic dance of Creation.

Nataraja. (Sl. No. 48) 2.8.1977. Ananda Coomaraswamy Centennial. (1877-1977). Art Historian author of *The Dance of Shiva*, and several books on Indian art, history and culture.

2. Ramayana

Valmiki. (Sl. No. 3) 20.10.1970. Homage to Maharshi Valmiki. Adikavi, creator of the immortal *Ramayana*. Sri Rama, Sitadevi and Lakshmana at the Valmiki Ashram.

Kambar. (Sl. No. 4) 5.4.1966. Homage to the author of the Tamil *Ramayana* 9 C. sage and savant transcreated the National epic with a regional flavour.

Tulasidas. (Sl. No. 5) 1.10.1952. Saints and poets series. Varanasi (1533-1624) Goswami Tulasidas created the *Ramacharitmanas* in simple Hindi chaupad.

Ramacharitmanas. (Sl. No. 6) 24.5.1975. Quadri-centennial of Goswami Tulasidas.

The *Ramayana* exists in simple translations in all Indian, and many foreign languages and

continues both to be extremely popular as well as a constant guide to human behaviour.

3. *The Krishna theme*

Bhagavad-Gita. (Sl. No. 7) 25.8.1978. Homage to India's credo. The Song of the Lord, a chapter from the *Mahabharata* Sri Krishna's guidance of Arjuna in Kurukshetra, viewed as Revelation. Theme of duty done without care for consequences is an eternal, pervasive, call for righteous action.

Arjuna the Archer. (Sl. No. 8) 6.11.1982. IX Asian Games, New Delhi.

Arjuna, the classic archer, watches Sri Krishna's feat. Rajasthani painting in the Udaipur palace museum.

Radha. (Sl. No. 9) 15.5.1973. Indian Miniature paintings, Krishnagarh school 1778.

Constant companion of Sri Krishna. Viewed as the epitome of the relationship between the Lord and the devotee.

Kaliya Mardana. (Sl. No. 10) 23.3.1982. Festival of India in Britain. 9th century Chola Bronze. Balakrishna subduing the Naga terror of the Yamuna. From the *Bhagavata*. Sri Krishna dancing on the serpent hood holding its tail in one hand and showing the Abhayamudra with the other.

4. *The Buddha*

Buddha Jayanti. (Sl. No. 11) 24.5.1956. Commemoration of 2,500 years of Siddhartha Gautama (B. C. 563-483).

Stylized Ashwattha tree at Bodhgaya associated with the illumination on the two-anna stamp, and, Chhatri, symbol of sovereignty, on first-century Mauryan sculpture in the Sarnath Museum on the fourteen annas stamp.

Abhayahasta. 3.11.1972. Asia 1972 trade fair. Ninth-century sculptural representation of the Buddha's Abhayahasta denoting freedom from fear.

Padmapani. (Sl. No. 12) 4.11.1971. UNESCO Jubilee.

2 c.B.C.-1 c.A.D. Ajanta fresco of Bodhisattva Padmapani. Future Buddhas, the Bodhisattvas are viewed as the compassion of the Buddha who, despite attainment of salvation, is born again and again in the world to guide man in his search for peace and salvation.

Avalokiteshvara. 15.7.1950. Definitives, Archaeological series,

First-century Gandhara sculpture of Bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara in the Lucknow Museum. Image reverse in the first stamp corrected in the second version.

Bodh Gaya. (Sl. No. 13) 15.8.1949. Definitives, Archaeological series.

Facing the celebrated Ashwattha tree, the temple was first built in Mauryan times, reconstructed several times, last in the 12-13 C. by the Burmese.

Pagoda. 7.5.1935. Silver Jubilee of George V. Wooden Monastery at Mandalay, Burma, a Buddhist province of India till 1936.

Sanchi Torana. 15.8.1949. Definitives, Archaeological series.

3-2 century B.C. Mauryan reliquary stupa built on the ashes of the Buddha's disciples, Sariputta and Mahamoggalayana in Sanchi. The reliquary urns taken to the British Museum were returned to India along with some urns of the Buddha's ashes during the 2,500-year celebration and were sent on a triumphant procession to Buddhist countries before reenshrinement in Sanchi.

5. *Tirthankara*

Pavapuri Samosaran. 13.11.1974. 2,500 years of the Mahaparinirvana. (B.C. 538-467).

Twenty-fourth Tirthankara, historical founder of the Jaina pantha, stressed asceticism, and the individual salvation of souls.

Shatrunjaya Temple. (Sl. No. 14) 15.8.1949. Definitives, Archaeological series.

8-10 century temple complex of over 516 shrines at Palitana, Gujarat. Main temple is of the Adi Tirthankara Rishabhanatha. Temples destroyed and renovated several times.

Gommateshwara. (Sl. No. 15) 9.2.1981. Millennial Mahamastakabhishekha.

Tallest monolithic sculpture, 58-feet atop the 400 foot hill at Shravanabelagola, Karnataka, sculpted by Minister Chavundaraya in the 981, to commemorate Bahubali, second son of the Aditirthankara, who renounced his empire to seek salvation.

Jain temple. 7.5.1935. Silver Jubilee of King V. 18 century modern marble temple in Calcutta enshrining the Aditirthankara Rishabhanatha.

6. *Saint-singers and musicians*

Kabir. (Sl. No. 16) 1.10.1952. Saints and poets series, Varanasi 15 century.

Central personality in the religious history of medieval India. Urged followers to shed distinctions and seek the Universal within themselves. His 'dohas' (couplets) in simple, of catchy Hindi, have influenced all subsequent religious thinkers especially Guru Nanak.

Surdas. (Sl. No. 17) 1.10.1952. Saints and poets series. Vrindaban 1479-1556.

Blind singer of Vrindaban sang of Sri Krishna and universal love. Major contributor to the Hindusthani musical style, this Vaishnava poet typifies the Saint-singers.

Meerabai. (Sl. No. 18) 1.10.1952. Saints and poets series. Queen of Mewar 1496-1546.

Rajput princess, devotee of Krishna, composer of Kirtanas, outstanding woman-saint of medieval India. Meerabai's devotion is the ambition of all aspirants. Her songs of Madhava inspire and solace the distressed.

Tyagaraja. (Sl. No. 19) 6.1.1961. 114 death anniversary (1767-1847).

Devotee of Sri Rama; wrote innumerable Kirtanas eulogizing the seventh Avatara of Mahavishnu in Telugu that continue to delight and inspire millions. Laid the foundations of modern Karanatak Music. *Endaro mahanubhavulu. Andaruku vandanamulu*—'Many indeed are the illustrious. Salutations to them all.' is one of his popular compositions.

Purandaradasa. (Sl. No. 20) 14.1.1964. Quadri-centennial. 1484-1564.

Foremost among Haridasas—servants of Lord Sri Hari—whose Kirtanas in Kannada in praise of Vitthala, Sri Krishna, are haunting melodies of His grace and Love. The Haridasas of Karnataka are saint-singers who turn miracles into everyday affairs.

Narasimha Mehta. (Sl. No. 21) 30.5.1967. Homage to seventeenth century Vaishnava saint-singer. Saint of the Bhakti-cult who stressed service to man as the supreme form of worship. This idea inspired Gandhiji's approach to religion. 'Where distinctions appear, God disappears'.

Tiruvalluvar. (Sl. No. 22) 15.2.1960. Homage to first century Tamil sage and savant.

His creation, the *Thirukkural*, is a compendium of practical wisdom and is comparable to the Gita in its popularity and solicitude. Pithy maxims that are deeply spiritual yet secular. 'God is the Ultimate Reality in life. The highest virtue is love for all forms of life.'

Namadeva. (Sl. No. 23) 0.11.1970. Septcentennial of Sant Namadev. 1270-1350.

His *abhangas* in Marathi emphasizes Bhakti through constant repetition of the Divine Name. 'Namasmarana' remembrance of the Divine Name is often viewed as the highest form of devotion in the Kaliyuga.

Shyama Shastri. (Sl. No. 24) 1985. Stamp released on the eve of 225th Centenary (1762-1867). Celebrated South Indian devotional musician.

Arunagirinathar. (Sl. No. 25) 14.8.1975. Homage to 14th century Tamil Saint. His *Thiruppugazh* containing over 1,600 songs in praise of Muruga is famous.

Muthuswami Dikshitar. (Sl. No. 26) 1976. Centenary Homage to the celebrated Karnatak musician.

Swami Haridas. (Sl. No. 27) 1978. 500-th Birth Anniversary (1478-1573). The saint-singer of Vrindaban.

Vemana. 16.10.1972. Tricentennial of Kavi Vemana 1672-? Religious and mystic seer. His Telugu aphorisms are catchy, relevant and popular.

7. Early Religious Leaders

Basaveshwara. 10.5.1967. Octicentennial of Jayanti. 1102-1167.

Founder of Veerashaiva Movement in Karnataka. His 'Vachanas' contain an egalitarian approach with emphasis on direct, personal experience of God. Bhakti and service are commended in preference to form and ritual. One of his inspiring maxims: *Kayakave Kailasa*—'Effort is the abode of God'.

Ravidas. 10.2.1971. Homage to 15th century sage from Varanasi.

Cobbler revered as saint in a caste-ridden society. Stressed the unity of all Religions and emphasized the equality of all in God. 'The highest expression of religion is service of Man.'

Vallabhacharya. (Sl. No. 28) 14.4.1977. Quincentenary of Mahaprabhu Vallabhacharya Jayanti 1477-1531.

Vaishnava guru who preached total devotion to Sri Krishna and Radha. Sincere Bhakti rather than individual meditation was recommended, leading his followers to deify life rather than merely pondering over it,

Chaitanya. (Sl. No. 29) 13.3.1986. Quincennial of Chaitanya Mahaprabhu 1486—?

Forerunner of the renaissance of religion, thought and literature in Eastern India, practised a caste-free non-communal life in an increasingly fractionalized society. Established through his 'Namasankirtanas' the reality of a Universal Religion for developing love for the One Supreme Lord, the Supreme Controller of everyone and everything.

8. *Sat Sri Akal*

Nankana Saheb. (Sl. No. 31) 23.11.1969. Quincennial of Guru Nanak 1469-1538.

Founder and first Guru of the Sikhs. He combined the best in the Sanatana Dharma and in Islam to create a syncretic faith that could be shared by both. He compiled most of the *Granth Saheb* culling the best of the saint-composers and Sufis. He said: 'Bringing out the best in man, not any vague salvation, is the aim of religion.'

Golden Temple. (Sl. No. 30) (i) 7.5.1935. Silver Jubilee of King George V.

(ii) 15.3.1949. Definitives, Archaeological. series. 17th century Temple in the Amrita Sarovar, Amritsar, the pool of Nectar. Repository of the original '*Granth Saheb*'; built, destroyed and rebuilt several times as though to prove the invincibility of Man's faith. The Harmandir dome was covered in Gold plate by Maharaja Ranjit Singh in the early nineteenth century.

Nandeb Saheb. 17.1.1967. Tricentennial of Guru Govind Singh 1666-1708.

The tenth, and the last, of the Sikh Gurus, Govind Singh established the 'Khalsa', an institution for universal brotherhood. In a trying time when the Sikhs were struggling for survival he terminated the apostolic succession of Gurus declaring that the *Granth Saheb*, hereafter, would be the abiding Guru.

Sisganj Saheb. (Sl. No. 32) 16.12.1875. Tricentennial of Guru Teg Bahadur 1621-1675.

The ninth Sikh Guru, Tegh Bahadur, had to face the bigotry and persecution of Mughal emperor Aurangzeb. Appealed to by Brahmins for protection the Guru went from his stronghold Anandpur Saheb to Delhi where he was publicly beheaded at the site of the Sisganj Gurudwara near the Red Fort for defying Aurangzeb.

Baoli Saheb. 21.12.1979. Quincennial of Guru Amardas. 1479-1574.

The third Sikh Guru, consolidated the hymns of the *Granth Saheb*, founded Ramdaspur which later became Amritsar, and, established the 'Langar' or common kitchen in Gurudwaras to overcome caste and creed distinctions.

9. *World of Islam*

Hijri Era. (Sl. No. 33) 3.11.1980. Commencement of the fourteenth-century Islamic Calender.

The Hijri era, one of the two followed by Islam, marks the departure of Prophet Mohammad in 622 A. D. from Mecca to Madina to escape persecution. In Madina he consolidated his forces into the army of Islam. Discrepancy in dates is due to the lunar base of the Islamic calender.

The Mosque. 23.3.1978. Modern Paintings series.

Painting by Sailaja Mookherjee executed in 1960 depicting a stylized Mosque with two worshippers returning after prayers.

Dar Ul Uloom. (Sl. No. 34) 21.3.1980. Centenary of Deoband Theological College.

Islamic Theologic College established by Nationalist Maulana Mohammad Qasim during the first war of Indian independence in 1857. The institution issued a 'Fatwa' against British rule. The stamp commemorates the centennial of the founder's death.

10. *Christ in India*

Saint Thomas. (Sl. No. 37) 2.12.1964. 38th Eucharist Congress, Bombay. One of Jesus' twelve disciples, 'Doubting Thomas' was given the Mission to the Indies. After reaching Northern India during a period of dynastic chaos he landed on the west coast in Cranganore. The Mar Thoma Church accepts this tradition of St. Thomas' arrival in the year 52 A.D.

The Stamp was issued to mark the visit of Pope Paul VI to India for the Eucharist congress, and features a silver bust of the Saint in the Ortona cathedral in Italy.

Persian Cross. (Sl. No. 38) 3.7.1973. 1900-th death anniversary of the Apostle.

The Persian Cross, different from the commoner elongated Cross, before which Saint Thomas was reputed to have been praying at the time of his assassination at Peria Malai near Madras since called St. Thomas Mount. The Cross is installed

in the St. Thomas Mount Church, and the saint himself appears to be buried in the Basilica nearby.

St. Francis of Assisi. (Sl. No. 39) 4.4.1983. Octicentennial. 1183-1226. The Saint who loved birds, marks the emergence of the European Renaissance at the end of the dark ages. St. Francis established various Franciscan orders of monks to care for the lowly and the helpless.

Creation. (Sl. No. 40) 28.6.1975. Quincennial of painter Michaelangelo Buonarrotti 1475-1564. Artist, sculptor, painter, designer, many-sided genius Michaelangelo painted the ceiling of the Sistine chapel in St. Peters Cathedral, Rome. The set-tenant block of four stamps illustrate the Biblical story of the creation of the sun, the moon, the planets and Man.

Mother Teresa. 27.8.1980. Homage to Nobel Peace Prize awardee Mother Teresa 1910-

Albanian born Mother Teresa joined the order of St. Loreta to serve in India. Moved by inspiration she sought the Church's permission to come out of the cloistered convent to found 'The Missionaries of Charity' to aid those in distress especially the destitute and the dying by making them feel wanted. The Mother has won several awards for inspiring service; is an Indian National, and has extended her work to other countries.

Charles Frere Andrews. 12.2.1971. Centennial of Deenabandhu Andrews 1871-1940.

British Missionary more concerned with Christ's precept of service to man rather than evangelism. Friend of the poor, educationist, trade union leader, supporter of India's aspiration to freedom; Gandhiji called him 'Deenabandhu'.

Francis Xavier. (Sl. No. 41) 24.12.1974. St. Francis Xavier 1506-1562.

Jesuit missionary known as the apostle of the Indies was in India from 1542 to 1547, died in Macau in 1562, canonized in 1622. His body is preserved in the Basilica of Bom Jesus in Velha Goa and exposed ceremoniously every twelve years.

Serampore College. 7.8.1960. Tercentenary of the College 1818. Established by Royal Danish charter in a suburb of Calcutta by William Carey to train European missionaries in Indian languages and lore, the Serampore college is now a theological university affiliating colleges all over India, conferring theological degrees and diplomas to Indian Christian priests and missionaries.

11. *Modern Religious Leaders*

Ram Mohan Roy. 27.9.1864. Homage to Raja Ram Mohan Roy 1772-1833.

Social and religious reformer at the beginning of the Hindu renaissance he laid the foundations of modern religious thought in India. With a truly seminal influence he founded the Brahmo Samaj which attempted to cut the deadwood of centuries from Hindu society, especially caste distinctions, superstition, idolatry, and social evils like sati, polygamy, child marriage etc.

Rama Tirtha. 11.11.1966. Homage to Swami Rama Tirtha 1873-1906.

Scholar from Punjab turned into a Vedantik Sannyasi who said: 'True religion is not belief in God but is a complete trust in the goodness of man'.

Ramana Maharshi. (Sl. No. 42) 14.4.1971. Homage to Ramana Maharshi 1879-1950.

Saint and spiritual leader from Arunachala, Tamil Nadu, his concept of Mahayoga 'Quest for the Self', realized through meditation, had deep impact both in India as well as elsewhere. By far the best known of the twentieth-century saints.

Narayana Guru. (Sl. No. 43) 21.8.1967. Homage to Sri Narayana Guru 1855-1928.

Social and religious reformer from Kerala, Sri Narayana Guru emphasized the need to eliminate the distinctions between man and man in a caste-ridden society, for whatever reason, especially religious ones. He established the Sri Narayana Deena Paripalana Yogam, an organization for the education of people against discrimination. He said: 'Whatever the religion, it suffices if it makes a better man'.

Sadhu Vasvani. 25.11.1968. Homage to Vasvani 1879-1966. Religious leader and educational innovator from Sindh established his institutions in Poona after the post-partition migration and was a great solace to the homeless refugees. He said: 'Be simple. Be strong. Spend your strength in the service of the poor and the broken'.

Yogananda. 7.3.1977. Homage to Paramahansa Yogananda 1893-1952.

Founder of the Self-realization Fellowship in California, U.S.A., Yogananda's concept of Kriya Yoga, a disciplining of the senses, has helped seekers in the West and in India. His widely

read *Autobiography of a Yogi* is a simply-written account of the reaches of religion.

Theosophical Society. 20.12.1975. Foundation Centenary. 1875-1975.

Founded by Mme. Blavatsky, a Russian, and, Col. Olcott, an American; Theosophy or Brahmavidya, knowledge of God, is a universal organization based on the Hindu concepts of Dharma, Karma and Punarjanma: Centred in Adyar, Madras.

Sivananda. 8.9.1986. Centennial of Swami Sivananda. 1887-1963.

Imbued with a deep sense of service, not satisfied with the limited opportunity of his profession as a doctor in Malaya, Kuppaswamy renounced the material life to become a Sannyasi, Swami Sivananda, and started an Ashram in Rishikesh in 1924. He founded the Divine Life Society in 1931 for the spiritual awakening through Yoga. He wrote over 300 books on the subject.

12. *The Ramakrishna Movement*

Ramakrishna Paramahansa. (Sl. No. 44) 18.2.1973. Homage to Sri Ramakrishna 1836-1886.

Worshipped as the modern incarnation of God for this age and our time, Sri Ramakrishna practised the spiritual disciplines of all religions, realized the same truth in each, taught and preached the harmony of all religions and the universality of the religious experience. 'As many faiths, so many paths, all leading to one Reality, God'. His disciples formed the Ramakrishna Monastic Order which has since become a world-wide organization.

Swami Vivekananda. (Sl. No. 45) 17.1.1963. Centenary of Swami Vivekananda 1863-1963.

Most adored modern Sannyasi, Swami Vivekananda was intensely Nationalist while remaining truly universal. Revitalizer of the Sanatana Dharma, Eternal Religion in India, he carried the spiritual truths of Vedanta to western countries and founded the Ramakrishna Mission for the worship of God in Man. His pithy maxim 'Religion is the manifestation of Divinity in man' contains the essence of all religions.

Sister Nivedita. (Sl. No. 46) 27.10.1968. Centenary of Sister Nivedita 1867-1911.

Irish-born Margaret Nobel, disciple of Swami Vivekananda, entered the Monastic Order in 1898. Active in the social and spiritual ferment

in India at that time, she was especially successful in the spiritual and political regeneration of women.

13. *Aurobindo*

Sri Aurobindo. (Sl. No. 47) 15.8.1964. Homage to Sri Aurobindo 1872-1950. Mystic, scholar and political activist, he retired to found the Aravindashrama in Pondicherry. His vision of India, Hindu Dharma, and, the renaissance of man led to a vast amount of writing and intense influence. His concept of the Integral Yoga best expounded in his monumental work *Savitri* views: 'Man's continuing emergence into Divine wisdom'.

Sri Aurobindo. 15.8.1972. Centenary of Sri Aurobindo 1872-1972.

Foundation of Auroville the International village in the Aravindashrama, Pondicherry, by children of various nations bringing potfuls of their native earth to pour into the foundations of the proposed city of peace and tranquility.

The Mother. 21.2.1978. Centenary of The Mother 1878-1973.

Parissien Mira Richardson first came to India in 1914, and, finally, in 1920. She helped establish the Aravindashrama and was acknowledged by Sri Aurobindo as 'Ma'. Auroville was inaugurated by the Mother as an international spiritual city after Sri Aurobindo's death.

14. *Arya Samaj*

Arya Samaj. (Sl. No. 35) 11.4.1975. Centenary of the Arya Samaj 1875-1975.

Major reform movement aimed to counter the aggressive evangelism of alien faiths against Hinduism. Its plea for a return to Vedic purity revitalized the native faith by renewing its confidence in its own tenets and beliefs.

Dayananda Saraswati. (Sl. No. 36) 4.3.1962. Homage to Swami Dayananda Saraswati 1827-1883.

Founded the Arya Samaj with headquarters in Ajmer as a Hindu reformist movement to rid the faith of deadwood and encrustations of centuries of stagnation by his clarion call 'Back to the Vedas', which was as much a defense against evangelistic encroachment as a cry against priesthood, idolatry, casteism and superstition.

Swami Virajananda. 14.10.1971. Homage to Swami Virajananda 1778-1868.

Blind sage of Mathura he emphasized the verity of the Vedas and enjoined on his disciples their perpetual propagation. Swami Dayananda, his foremost disciple, was thus inspired to enshrine this message in the 'Arya Samaj'.

Swami Shraddhananda. 30.3.1970. Homage to Shraddhananda 1856-1926.

Scholar, ascetic patriot, Munshi Ram became a sannyasi of the Arya Samaj and established the Kangri Gurukul, a traditional seat of learning, which conferred the title of 'Mahatma' on Gandhiji. The only known non-muslim to have preached in Delhi's Jama Masjid he was assassinated by a Muslim fanatic for his efforts to reconvert Hindus forcibly converted to Islam in communal riots.

15. Linguistic expression

Tamil. 3.1.1968. Second International seminar-conference in Tamil studies, 1968. Held in Madras, first one having been held in Malaysia in 1966 under the auspices of the International Association of Tamil research. The stamp portrays Temple Gopuram, Book and World map.

Hindi. 10.1.1975. World Hindi Convention 1975.

Held in Nagpur under the auspices of the Bharatiya Hindi Bhasha Prachar Sabha. The stamp portrays twelfth-century statuette of Goddess Saraswati, now in the National Museum, with excerpts from the Rig-Veda in the background.

Telugu. (Sl. No. 49) 12.4.1975. World Telugu Conference 1975.

Held in Hyderabad under the sponsorship of the Government of Andhra Pradesh drew Telugu scholars from both India as well as other parts of the world. The stamp portrays the statuette of Saraswati but with excerpts from renowned classical works in Telugu.

16. Thespian expression

Sun Moon Narasimha Ravana (Sl. No. 50,51) 15.4.1974. Indian Masks. Block of four stamps.

Masks used in dance-dramas throughout India to depict demons and divinities. Surya and Chandra are common characters in most plays as planetary divinities. Narasimha the lion-man incarnation of Vishnu appears in common village-plays as does the rakshasa, demon Ravana.

17. Temples

Lingaraja. (Sl. No. 52) 15.8.1949 4-annas brown purple. Definitives, Archaeological series. 30.4.1951 4-annas blue.

7-8 century temple complex in Bhubaneswar, Orissa, in the middle Vetara style. Dedicated to Maheshwara the temple is one of the largest in India containing the usual Gopuras, Natya Mandira and Bhoga Mandira, and other attendant edifices. Of Indian temple-architecture it has been aptly observed that the Indians 'conceived like giants and finished like goldsmiths'.

Kandarya Mahadeva. 15.8.1949. Definitives, Archaeological series.

10-12th century Chandela temple complex at Khajuraho in Bundelkhand was possibly one of the largest temple construction programmes while elsewhere in the country destruction of temples by iconoclastic bigots was beginning. The elaborate carvings on all available space in this Nagara style Shiva temple, especially the Vimana which is constructed of an innumerable number of smaller reproductions of itself is a remarkable feature of this complex which later became the model for similar temples elsewhere.

Somanatha. (Sl. No. 53) 16.10.1967. Definitives fifth series.

1.11.1976. Fifth Definitives-style difference in denomination.

Maheshwara temple possibly first built in the 7-8th century at Prabhaspatan on the Gujarat seashore destroyed by Mohamad of Ghazni in 1025, rebuilt several times only to be destroyed again and again by bigotry. Last restored after independence, this temple, more than anything else in the country has become a symbol of Hindu perseverance and faith as also proof of the Hindu belief in the cyclical birth, death and rebirth of all things created.

Temple Chariot. (Sl. No. 54) 15.3.1967. Fifth Definitive series.

Monolithic temple-chariot with movable wheels carved out of a single granite block of huge dimension is in the courtyard of the Vijaya Vitthalaswamy temple in Hampi, the capital of the Vijayanagar kingdom on the banks of the Tungabhadra. Construction of temple commenced in the reign of Sri Krishnadevaraya, continued in successive reigns, was never completed and consecrated but was destroyed in the seven-year sack of Hampi by iconoclastic bigotry after the

battle of Talikota in 1565. Gigantic structure and an apt memorial to man's faith in God.

Jewish synagogue. (Sl. No. 55) 15.12.1968. Quadricentennial of the Cochin Synagogue.

The Jews first settled in India in 72 A.D. in Cranganore on the Kerala coast and were granted a village by the local kings documented in a copper plate inscription maintained in the Synagogue. The first Synagogue built in Kochangadi in 1345 was destroyed by Muslims and by the Portugese. The second Synagogue in² Cochin was built by the Maharaja in 1568. This Synagogue is the second oldest Synagogue still in existence in the world and is a symbol both of consistent anti-semitism as well as the heritage of Hindu tolerance. India was perhaps the only country where there was no anti-semitism.

Maheshwar Chhatri. 4.10.1975. Homage to Ahalyabai Holkar 1725-1795.

Queen of Indore saw much tragedy in her life, widowed early she was an able ruler in troubled times and took upon herself the restoration of Hindu temples destroyed by Muslim bigots all over India, especially the Kashi Vishvanatha

and the twelve Jyotirlinga temples throughout the land. The Chhatri at Maheshwar on the banks of the Narmada was constructed at the site of her cremation.

Shore Temple. (Sl. No. 56) 14.3.1983. Commonwealth Day 1983.

7th century Pallava temple complex at Mahabalipuram-Mallampuram on the eastern shore of India. Surrounding temple complex presumed submerged by the advancing Bay of Bengal. Twin Garbhagrihas (sanctum sanctorums) behind each other sharing a common wall, where the shrines of Vishnu and Maheshwara are respectively located.

18. The Eternal flow.

(Sl. No. 57) 3.10.1983. World Tourism Conference 1983.

The Ghats on the Ganga at Varanasi. The Ganga represents the theme of eternality in Hindu thought and practice., the Anadi, Ananta, Sanatana, forever new.

INDIA'S VISION OF SAMANVAYA*—I

SWAMI RANGANATHANANDA

1. *Introductory*

I am grateful to the Kaka Kalelkar Centenary Committee for asking me to come here and give the first Kaka Kalelkar Memorial Lecture. I am a great lover and admirer of human greatness, in whatever field, and in whatever section of people, that greatness appears; and in Kaka Kalelkar we have that stamp of creativity, originality, and greatness; he was big in heart and big in head. And so I was very happy when I was asked to come and participate in this function. He was associated with two great personalities, Tagore and Gandhiji. Both of them were of universal dimensions; in fact, they represented that universal dimension of

culture which we have developed in this country these five thousand years and have continued to develop it in the modern age as well. With this close association with two of our gigantic personalities, and himself a giant of intellect and of heart, he had lived a rich life, contributing richly to our national life as well.

2. *The Soul of All Education*

Today we are engaged in re-formulating and reorganizing our education. In this

*Based on the tape-recorded speech of the 'First Acharya Kaka saheb Kalelkar Memorial Lecture' delivered at the Sapru House, New Delhi, under the auspices of the National Committee for the Birth Centenary Celebrations of Acharya Kaka Saheb Kalelkar.

context, it will be rewarding to become acquainted with his ideas on education. We have a long and continuous history and a very rich cultural tradition. A universal vision has brightened that history from the very beginning. And our education today must help our youths to capture that spirit of our culture and pass it on to the new generations. Then we shall have the continuity of the universal vision of our culture in the modern period as well. In that context, these few words from Kaka Kalelkar on the subject of education will be of utmost value to us. I am quoting from our Professor Uma Shankar Joshi's speech given in this very celebration a few days ago where he discussed Kaka Kalelkar's varied attainments. On Education, Kaka Kalelkar has this to say—Mr. Joshi has referred to Kaka Kalelkar's capacity for coining very beautiful Sanskrit terms for great ideas and values. One such Sanskrit term is *vinaya* for the English word education. And so here is a passage in which *Vinaya*, the very soul of education, says to all students:

'I am no maid-servant of power, nor attendant of law. I am not a pawn to science, nor to any of the arts, nor a slave of economics. I am the coming back of *Dharma*. I, the mistress, hold sway over man's heart, reason, as well as on his senses. Psychology and sociology are my two legs, art and craft are my two hands. Science is my head, *Dharma* is my heart, observation and reasoning are my two eyes, history my ears, freedom is my breath, enthusiasm and endeavour are my lungs, patience is my vow, faith my life-spirit; such a universal goddess am I, the sustainer of the whole world. He who is my votary will not need to look to anybody else, and all his desires can be fulfilled through me.'

Today, we are dealing with education as human resource development. We are also trying to make it value-oriented. *Vinaya* embraces these two dimensions of education. This wide and deep vision of

education will be a great source of inspiration to us. The very ideal which our culture has embodied is expressed in the great concepts of our two goddesses, namely, goddess *Sarasvati*, who represents all knowledge and the arts and wisdom, and goddess *Lakshmi*, who represents knowledge getting transformed into wealth and welfare. The spirit of these two goddesses is found beautifully expressed in its universal dimension in this passage.

3. *Kalelkar's Concepts of Jeevan and Samanvaya*

Professor Joshi also has referred to Kaka Kalelkar's various writings, dividing them into two parts. His earlier writings deal with life, human life, in all its various aspects; that is called *Jeevan*. Many of his books bear this name in their titles—*Jeevan* this, *Jeevan* that. All are many aspects of *jeevan* or life. But in the more expansive national context after independence, another theme became prominent in his writings, a new music began to come out of his pen, namely, the beautiful concept of *samanvaya*, harmony or concord. He wanted this wonderful concept of *samanvaya*, which is the heart of Indian culture, which has sustained a tremendous cultural experiment in a continental-size country like India, for thousands of years, to be assimilated by all people today, not only nationally within India, but also internationally outside India. And the theme of my lecture today, composed, in consultation with Sri Pohekar and others of the Committee, is *India's Vision of Samanvaya*.

It is a great subject for all our people today, when we are not engaged in merely *studying* our rich ancient history, but also in *creating* a richer modern history. I often tell our young people in our various educational institutions: you study history; but

that is not enough. You have to develop yourselves to create history. We are living in a highly creative period. We had such creative periods before, of which the most outstanding, the most dynamic, and the most universally pervasive in their impact, were, one, the Upanishadic age, which set in towards the end of the Vedic period, two, the five centuries in the wake of Bhagavan Buddha and his movement of the pre-Christian period, and three, the three centuries of the post-Christian Gupta period.

And, today, after centuries of uncreative life, of social and political immobilization, the whole of India is entering into another uniquely tremendous creative period of history. Let all our children be educated to understand and to realize that they are participators in that creative process and that, behind this process, there is a galaxy of dynamic and creative minds who appeared in the modern period. We in India do not live entirely on our old heritage, but we remake it age after age. We make it fresh every time; and that is the uniqueness of the story of India—a culture getting refreshed again and again, by the assimilation of new values, by the shedding of old obsolete ones. That is why our culture is *sanatana*, perennial, immortal. In other countries, culture does not get that re-creation, that kind of a freshness; and so, after some centuries, cultures fade away, die away, for want of inner strength to cope with new and unforeseen situations. On this continent of India, the ancient forefathers of the present people of India started experimenting on the creation of a culture. They were dynamic, far-seeing, and great creative minds, and they imparted to this culture an inner spiritual strength, a resilience, an adaptability, and a capacity for assimilation—all coming from that ideal and vision of *samanvaya*, harmony,

concord. It is a fascinating time for any student of India and, especially, for a child of India. How this culture has developed, what are the formative forces that shaped it, modern as well as ancient, and how we can grasp and assimilate that spirit of *samanvaya* in this modern period—that must be the central theme of our education, so that our country continues to inspire its own children, and also the rest of the world, with this beautiful value of *samanvaya*.

I am glad to say that, in this modern period, all the great ones that were born in this country were representatives of this value of *samanvaya*. It found expression in a spirit of universality in the field of religion, in the field of art, in the field of politics, and in the field of the search for knowledge. They were universal minds whose sympathies were co-extensive with mankind. They were not narrow, they were not exclusive, they were not biased either by nationality or by race or by religion. This greatness we have behind us even in this modern period, apart from our possession of it as a unique inheritance from our past.

Raja Ram Mohan Roy, the first product of the impact of ancient India and the modern West on the soil of India, in the early part of the last century, was universal in outlook and sympathies. Then came Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda, the very embodiment of universality, of *samanvaya*, towards the end of that century, followed by Rabindranath Tagore and Gandhiji, in the present century; and, among administrators, we had Jawaharlal Nehru, a personality of international vision and sympathies. Everyone of them breathed the spirit of India, the very soul of India. The tragedy is that many of our people are not in touch with it today. Since independence, we have been moving far away from that soul of India, from that wisdom of India. That is why we have

got intractable problems confronting us—communal conflicts, caste conflicts, linguistic conflicts, and widespread corruption and social malpractices. Our India is a land of conflicts today. Why? Because we have no touch with our own wisdom. We have no nourishment from the very soul of our culture. That re-education must come to our so-called educated people today. Men like Kalelkar spent their life in this very great work, in the dissemination of the beautiful value of *samanvaya*, with its universal vision, with its humanistic attitudes. That is the greatness that his literature, which is coming out in various volumes, will inspire our people with, for years and years to come.

4. *Samanvaya: Its Early Evolution in Vedic Culture*

Let us study how culture arose in our country and slowly rose to that universal vision and evolved this great value of *samanvaya*. We have, in the early part of our history, tribal groups quarrelling and fighting with each other, often a big group with another big group. Such fights were both political and religious. But very soon, thinking developed, and it was calm, rational, detached thinking, and thinking together; and that laid the basic foundations for the rich culture which you have today as your inheritance as also with the challenge to reshape it in the modern age. That thinking was not one-sided, dealing with only religion in the narrow sense of the term. It was the thrust of human development, it was the development of the whole science of human possibilities. In fact, I am using a phrase, which was coined by the late Sir Julian Huxley, the British biologist and humanist, to refer to the philosophy that was developed towards the end of the Vedic period, the Vedanta. He said: we have many sciences today,

but we want a new science, and he called it *the science of human possibilities*. And these ancient Indian sages of the Upanishads were creating that very science of human possibilities.

It is a tremendous subject. Modern man knows very little about it. For, modern science deals primarily with physical nature's possibilities, and only incidentally with man, as merely an outpost of that physical nature. Even Julian Huxley himself has admitted: we (of Western science) have only scratched the surface of this great science of man and his mind. It is here that India's contribution, both in the world of thought and vision and in its implementation, becomes of supreme significance for all modern humanity; for modern humanity is struggling towards that spirit of universality, that mankind-awareness. Modern man is building institutional structures to bring us that vision of unity in political terms, without an insight into the philosophy and spirituality of that vision. We need that insight today, to inspire such activities. It is that vision that you will find at the heart of India's rich and ancient culture. So, in the Vedic period, these sages took up this great subject of human possibilities and expounded it in very simple and convincing language.

We can evolve a society, narrow, exclusive, intolerant, both in social terms and in religious terms; but then that society will be full of conflicts, full of violence, full of inner tensions, and war. We can also evolve another type of society, when we have gone a little deeper into human possibilities, that will be characterized by harmony, tolerance, peace, and human concern. These are the levels from which humanity can function: If you find, in various parts of the world, cultures generating war and violence, intolerance and destruction, along with the so many good

things also that they give, we can conclude that the thinkers there, and the people there, have not gone deep enough into the science of human possibilities.

In India, we achieved that great blessing long ago—a depth penetration into the human spirit and discovering a Divine focus within every human being. When that is stirred, nothing but harmony, nothing but love and human concern, can come from that human individual. This search for the deepest level of the human personality, where you come in touch with the divine, the infinite, the immortal—it is this that initiated and sustained this tremendous richness of our culture, and a spirit of universality, from the end of the Vedic period. In the earlier parts of the Vedas, we find great thinkers already pronouncing this beautiful idea of universality and its expression in a pluralistic vision of cultural and social and religious expression.

The first great and unique expression of this spirit of universality, and the attitude of tolerance as acceptance that it generates, we get in The *Rig-Veda*, the earliest literature of mankind, and nowhere else except in India (1.164.46):

*Indram mitram varunam agnim ahuh
atho divyah sa suparno garutman;
Ekam sat, vipra bahudha vadanti
agnim yamam matarishvanam ahuh*

‘They speak of (gods) Indra, Mitra, Varuna, Agni, as well as the divine bird Garutman, Yama, and matarishvan; Truth is One; sages call It by various names.’

In the *Atharva-Veda*, a little later, we have that vision translated into a social experiment of India as a land of plurality—plurality of peoples, plurality of languages, plurality of religions—that concept and experiment commencing to inspire our cultural experiment on this Indian sub-continent from so early a period (12.1.45):

*Janam bibharti bahudha vivachasam
nana dharmanam prithivi yathaukasam;
Sahasram dhara dravinasya me duham
dhruveva dhenuh anapasphuranti—*

‘This earth is one home, which holds together, according to their respective attitudes and interests, people speaking different languages, people following different religions; like an immovable steady cow (while milking), this earth makes us prosperous through thousand streams of wealth and welfare.’

5. *Samanvaya: Its Fullest Expression in the Advaitic Vision of the Upanishads*

But, later, when we come to the Upanishads, those dynamic last books of the ancient Indian Vedic tradition, this vision of universality becomes strengthened by a rational and experiential philosophy and spirituality. In the Upanishads, we come across a very cross-section of Indian humanity—men, women, children, kings, emperors—all endowed with a passionate love of truth, and all engaged in a search of what is the deepest and the most excellent of human life and possibilities. And they discovered the infinite and the immortal in man and nature, and called it Atman or Brahman; and by discovering the immortal, they also created a literature, a philosophy, and a culture which also became immortal. This is the great Vedanta philosophy, with its vision of Advaita, non-duality, the vision of the One in the many, of the One as the many.

Referring to the profundity of this philosophy and the scientific mind of the sages who discovered it, Professor Max-Muller says (*Three Lectures on Vedanta Philosophy*, pp. 39-40):

Much of the excellence of the ancient Sanskrit philosophers is due to their having been undisturbed by the thought of there being a public to

please, or critics to appease. They thought of nothing but the work they had determined to do; their one aim was to make it as perfect as it could be made...Need we wonder then that their work was done as well as it could be done, and that it has lasted for thousands of years?

Again, in his *The Six Systems of Indian Philosophy*. Max Müller says (p. 182):

It is surely astounding that such a system as the Vedanta should have been slowly elaborated by the indefatigable and intrepid thinkers of India, thousands of years ago, a system that even now makes us feel giddy, as in mounting the last steps of the swaying spire of an ancient Gothic cathedral. None of our philosophers, not excepting Heraclitus, Plato, Kant, or Hegel, has ventured to erect such a spire, never frightened by storms or lightnings. Stone follows on stone in regular succession, after once the first step has been made, after once it has been clearly seen that, in the beginning, there can have been but one, as there will be but One in the end, whether we call it Atman or Brahman.

It is this philosophy that stands sponsor to India and her culture, and that created not only a *Sanatana Dharma*, or Perennial Philosophy and Spirituality, for the whole of humanity, but also an *Amar Bharat*, Eternal India, as the friend and servant of humanity.

That is the strength behind India and her culture—a strength that is the source of its continued vitality, in spite of so many challenges, in spite of so many invasions, and centuries of political subjections. After thousands of years, India is still young. She has greeted many contemporary cultures in the past, she is there greeting the dynamic culture of the modern West today. That strength came from that touch of the deepest level of man, the Atman, the Divine Self, which is also the one Self in all. Out of that came the vision of the oneness of all existence and universal love.

That is how the Upanishads set in motion this wonderful energy of *samanvaya*

as a perennially operating concept and value in Indian culture. This is the Advaitic vision, the fruit of the Mount Everest of spiritual experience, that we are all essentially one, in which the value of *samanvaya* reached its fullest expression. These external differences are on the surface, but deep down there is unity. *Advaita*, literally means, not two, the negation of all separateness.

This is not a theory, this is not an opinion, this is not a creed or a dogma. This is Truth experienced by the great sages of the Upanishads. They discovered the One behind the many, they saw the many in the light of the One. That is the great vision, checked and re-checked by different sages, women as well as men, that is embodied in that great and immortal literature of the Upanishads. In this scientific age of ours, if any one wants to come across a scientific investigation into the truth about man, you must go to these Upanishads. It is no wonder that many a great scientist of the modern age are turning to the Upanishads, quoting passages from the Upanishads in their writings, because there they find that scientific mind with a penetration into the depth of human possibilities, just as the modern scientist penetrates into the heart of physical nature and discovers the truths that are there.

In the work of these great sages of India, there is the same scientific rationality and thoroughness. They saw that man, when viewed by the sensory system, was flimsy and finite; he or she is just a creature like any other creatures, subject to the pressures of external nature, a few of which he or she can overcome through the scientific understanding and control of the external world. Knowledge destroys fear. It is a modern statement, and Vedanta fully accepts it. But the knowledge that physical science gives destroys only some fear, but not all fear. It has saved modern man from the

fears that haunted the primitive pre-scientific man, but has landed him in new fears and tensions. To alleviate these fears also, knowledge must rise from the secular to the spiritual, from the sensory to the super-sensory or transcendental, from the sciences of the perishable to the science of the imperishable and the infinite. This is knowledge rising to wisdom; and India's Vedanta comprehends both these dimensions of science, both the *apara*, sensory, and the *para*, transcendental, dimensions of all *vidyas* or sciences, as the *Mundaka Upanishad* proclaims it. The Indian sages, therefore, wanted to know the truth about man, about man the *jantu*, the term coined by the Sanskrit language conveying the idea of the word *creature* in the English language. The whole world is full of *jantus*; all the livings are *jantus*. Man also is a *jantu*, a creature; but in this creature, there is a profound dimension; if only he or she will care to search for, and understand, it, he or she can cease to be a *jantu* or a creature, and become free. Nature has endowed this human creature with a versatile organ, namely, the cerebral system, with which not only can man enquire into and understand and manipulate the energies hidden in the external physical nature and thus uplift oneself into a civilized state, but also the energies hidden in the inner world of man himself and thus raise oneself, from all creatureliness to true freedom and fulfilment.

It is that second effort that leads man to the experience of his or her true luminous nature, as the 'ever pure, ever awakened, ever free, infinite Atman', *nitya shuddha, buddha, mukta, svabhava paramatman*, as Shankaracharya expresses it in his commentary on the *Brahma-Sutras*. That truth, that lies hidden within man as creature, can be realized by man with the help of the science and technique of spirituality—*adhyatma-vidya*, and thus raise himself

from creatureliness to blessedness. This is the vision that you get in the Upanishads—the One behind the many, the Infinite behind the finite, the Immortal behind the mortal. With that vision came a wonderful new understanding of man, that he has the innate possibility to raise oneself from creatureliness to blessedness, from helplessness to freedom. India considers this whole journey of man from creatureliness to blessedness as the meaning and scope of religion, the science and technique of spirituality, the consummation of all sciences, natural and human.

The Indian sages did not deal with the subject of man in terms of sect, creed, race, sex, or nationality. They investigated man as man. What are his possibilities? And how can he achieve fulfilment? With that scientific approach, they came to the subject with a single-minded devotion to truth which is rare in the history of religious or philosophic thought. How could they do so? And there comes the beautiful remark by Prof. Max Muller quoted above: 'because they had no public to please or critics to appease!'; therefore, they could discover truth. When you are swayed by a public to please and a critic to appease, you water down truth, the box-office appeal holds you down. The sages had a one-pointed mind, directed to truth; their faith in truth finds expression in *The Mundaka Upanishad* in a famous statement which our modern Republican Indian State has taken as its motto: *Satya-meva Javate*, 'Truth alone triumphs' This profound expression of their faith in truth, unafraid of anything and unattached to pleasing fancies, gave birth to this immortal philosophy. They found the profoundest truth hidden in nature, hidden in man; through discovery of the truth hidden in the finest product of nature's evolution that is man, they discovered also the truth hidden

in all nature. As the *Shvetasvatara Upanishad* proclaims it (2.15):

*Yadatma-tattvena tu brahma-tattvam
dipopameneha yuktah prapasyet ;
Ajam dhruvam sarvatattvaih vishuddham
jnatva devammucyate sarva-papaihi—*

'When the self-controlled spiritual aspirant realizes, in this very body, the truth of Brahman (the ultimate Reality of all existence) through the truth of the Atman (the Self in man), self-effulgent as light, then, knowing the luminous One, which is unborn, eternal, and untouched by the modifications of nature, he is freed from all evil.'

It is this theme that you get in fascinating expositions in the various Upanishads. Wherever there is fearless search for truth, you will certainly raise human life to the profoundest levels of experience, you will enrich human life in a fundamental way. This is the Advaitic vision, this sense of oneness, that we are all essentially one, there is only one divine Reality that unites all 'like the one thread that runs through all the different pearls in a garland', as Sri Krishna expresses it in the Gita—*mayi sarvamidam protam sutre manigana iva*. It is this spiritual and philosophical vision that was taken as the basis, by our Vedic sages, to build up a continent-wide culture which is universal in outlook and sympathies, and which was nourished and strengthened by all the subsequent great teachers and sages like Bhagavan Sri Krishna and Bhagavan Buddha. A later Vedanta teacher Gaudapada, the teacher of the teacher of Shankaracharya, has expressed this vision and its sweet fruits in a beautiful verse of his *Mandukya Upanishad Karika*, which is one of the profoundest books of our Vedanta literature, and which, with its luminous exposition of the nature of truth and of non-causality, is now inspiring modern nuclear

scientists like Schrodinger and also Heisenberg, the discoverer of the principle of indeterminacy in the depths of nature. It is good for you to know that Gaudapada did tapas on the banks of our River Narmada in the seventh century after Christ, as Tota Puri, the teacher of Sri Ramakrishna, did it in our own age. Says he in that verse (4.2)

*Asparsha yogo vai nama sarva-sattva-sukho hitaha
Avivado aviruddhasca destitastam namamyaham*

'I salute this profound philosophy, which proclaims the unity and solidarity of all existences, which works for the happiness and welfare of all beings, and which is free from disputation and contradiction.'

This philosophical and spiritual vision is called by a well-known name in the verse—Asparsha Yoga—the 'Yoga of non-touch', the yoga of non-duality, non-separateness. When everything is essentially one, and when that Truth is realized, there is 'no scope for disputation and contradiction'—*avivada* and *aviruddha*. Then only love and concern for all, irrespective of sect, creed, race or sex, can set in—*sarva-sattva sukho hitaha* and the verse ends with: *desitaha tam namamyaham*—'I salute this profound philosophy which has taught this'. Right from the ancient Vedic ages, down to the time of Gaudapada and Shankaracharya in the seventh and eighth centuries after Christ, we find this great Vedanta upholding this vision of harmony and active toleration. What a beautiful conception of basic unity, and all the harmony and peace that flow from that vision, is that statement of Sri Krishna in the Gita quoted earlier. Krishna was a universal teacher; a universal message can come only from a universal mind. Our culture has produced the largest number of universal minds right through the ancient medieval, and modern times. In medieval times, even when the devastating Mughal invasion of Babar was

going on, and India's political conditions were bleak, the Punjab produced men like Guru Nanak, a man with a universal mind and heart, out of which came only peace, love, harmony, and fellowship. And in the modern period, even under British political subjection and cultural domination, India produced universal men like Sri Ramakrishna, Swami Vivekananda, and Mahatma Gandhi.

It was this central theme of our culture that men like Kalelkar wanted to expound to our modern youths, youths who were forgetting it, and losing their touch with it. And it is good for all of us to be educated in that wonderful vision, so that this great continent of India becomes converted into a mighty anthropological laboratory for human development and fulfilment for one sixth of humanity. Out of that will come the energy to influence the rest of the world.

The rest of the world is waiting for that very great message from India. During the last one hundred years, there has been a tremendous cumulative effort all over the world towards the development of a mankind-awareness. And since the post-Second-World-War period, we are having more and more international organizations and international efforts to solve human problems, and less and less the merely national, the merely parochial. We need to strengthen this international outlook, this mankind-awareness; and India has nourished this awareness for ages, and produced great thinkers, writers and sages, and had projected this vision on to the social plane to create a culture and a political state based on it. That is the wonderful chapter of human history written in this country.

(To be concluded)

RELIGION AND SOCIAL TENSION

SWAMI LOKESWARANANDA

Religion is supposed to take man towards God though he knows nothing about Him except that he imagines that God is the sum-total of all that is good, noble and beautiful. If man takes any interest in religion, it is because he values these qualities and he hopes that by practising religion he may someday be good, noble, and beautiful himself. In other words, he is seeking self-improvement and in this, he seeks God's help. The prayers he addresses to God are all for this help. How far God helps him is a matter of personal experience. Some will say He does help and they are so sure about it that it is no use arguing with them about it. The vast majority of people of course are not so sure about it. They still keep praying in the hope that some day

they will receive help from God as the more fortunate worshippers claim they have. So the purpose of religion is self-improvement and all that man does in the name of religion should be directed to that end.

But if the purpose of religion is to make man good, noble and beautiful, how is it then that, in its name, man commits heinous crimes like murder, or even worse? How much blood has been spilled and is still being spilled in its name! It is indeed a paradox that religion has been a cause for violence throughout history. No wonder many blame religion for this situation. They say that religion creates artificial divisions among mankind and promotes hatred, greed and jealousy between them. They view religion as vicious and suggest that it be banned.

Others say that it is obscurantism, obsolete and useless. If it was devised to improve man, it has done just the reverse. Man remains as wicked as ever. If religion has served any purpose, it has served as a cover to hide man's wickedness and cheat others. Religion, in other words, has promoted hypocrisy.

How can man then improve? There are pessimists who will say man can never improve. He will always remain a savage under the thin veneer of civilization. All his boastful talk of truth, goodness, and beauty is humbug. He is basically selfish, crooked and unscrupulous and he will remain that, religion or no religion.

There are others who say that man can improve only if the social system improves. Several views are current as to what sort of social system is ideal. The ideal social system is that in which there are no vested interests. It is a system which offers equal opportunities for all. It tolerates no exploitation of the weak, and no ever-widening gap between the rich and the poor. It abolishes all class distinctions and gives power to the working people. The idea is good, but has such a system been created anywhere yet? But pertinent is the question: Who will create such a system? Man, of course, but what sort of man? Only men of the highest order, men free from greed and all selfish thoughts, can create such a system, if at all. It has to be a system based entirely upon freedom, equality and justice. One wonders if there shall ever be such a system. Even the attempt to create such a system has to be made by perfect men and women.

But which comes first—the perfect system or the perfect men and women? It must be perfect men and women first. Throughout history, idealists have tried to create a just social order but have failed. They have not been content with good wishes only, but have even used forces. They have been

ruthless in their methods, so ruthless that often the remedy has been worse than the malady itself. This has happened because they themselves are imperfect. Whatever an imperfect man does is imperfect. It is imperfect because his means are imperfect. No attempt at social reform can succeed unless the people who make the attempt are good and the means they adopt are good. This is where religion comes in. Religion is important because it insists on perfection, all-round perfection. A good society is a society where everybody is trying to live a good religious life. To be religious means to be committed to the highest principles of religion—truth, goodness, and beauty. To be committed is not enough; one must try hard to practise those principles, also. It is only in such a society that peace and justice can prevail, that men and women, irrespective of their varying beliefs and practices, can live with honour and dignity, can feel equal to each other.

But has religion succeeded in achieving this? Buddha and Christ have come, but there is no let-up in wars and conflicts yet. If religion is for perfection, what sort of perfection is it that religious men and women fight each other? How is it that they cause bloodshed? Such people are religious only in name; a truly religious man cannot go against his principles of love and goodwill. Buddha suffered from his adversaries but never uttered a word against them. Christ was crucified but prayed for the forgiveness of those who crucified him.

It is not the fault of religion if people misuse it. If electricity is misused, it is not the fault of electricity. A truly religious man can never hurt others. If he does so by mistake, he takes the earliest opportunity to make amends for it. True religion lies in love, goodwill and friendship. It is truth, justice and equality. A man may say he is religious, but he is not religious if he does not possess these qualities. The test

of a truly religious man is in how far he has been able to conquer his ego. He is humble, not only before God out also before man. He may think he is right, but he does not want to impose his view upon others. He does not want to force people to come to his way of thinking. He may think his sect is the best but he respects other sects as much as he respects his own. He never interferes with the freedom of others. Even when he feels his own freedom is being curbed, he will not use violence to protest. He will protest peacefully.

It is not that religion does not permit strong and heroic action for a just cause. It does, in extreme cases. Even this heroic action should be used with caution. In no case should there be the spirit of vindictiveness. A strong action may be taken only in the last resort and only to the extent necessary for self-defence. Only that heroic action is permissible which is used to prevent further violence. It may be used only to uphold justice, truth and peace. Sri Krishna advised Arjuna to fight out the big war at Kurukshetra, in order to reestablish justice in a society where untruth and injustice reigned.

A truly religious man uses even a strong action with moderation, and not for selfish reasons, not even for a particular section of people, but for the entire community irrespective of creed, religion or nationality. Today there is hardly a society which is not rocked by conflicts of one kind or another. Often these conflicts are marked by senseless cruelty. Anger, hatred, vengeance and other animal passions seem to have got the upperhand. Man has lost his reason. His sanity is in doubt.

What is the remedy? The remedy is simple: man has to go back to religion. Only light can dispel darkness, only love can conquer hatred. What the world needs today is religion, of course, true religion. Poverty and unemployment no longer pose a challenge to man; they can be tackled and are being tackled. His greatest enemy now is he himself. His very survival is at stake. He can save himself only if he improves his own being, if he becomes, or at least tries to become what religion requires of him: love and goodwill towards all. In other words, he must practise his religion.

RAMAKRISHNA—VIVEKANANDA MOVEMENT*

DR. V.K.R.V. RAO

I am most grateful to Swami Ranganathanandaji for having asked me to come here in spite of my very indifferent health; but I had to come partly because he asked me and partly because it was a Ramakrishna-Vivekananda seminar and I just could not escape.

I have attended many seminars in my life but this was a most exciting seminar where discussion was completely free. Nobody felt inhibited in expressing views

for or against various ideas and actions, but the discussion was friendly, very harmonious, and was underlined by a spirit of dedication and a genuine interest in the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Movement.

*Presidential speech delivered by Dr. V.K.R.V. Rao on the occasion of the concluding open session of the first three-day National Seminar on Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Movement, held at the Ramakrishna Math, Hyderabad on 22 October 1983.

I must add that though the Seminar was hosted by the Ramakrishna Math in Hyderabad, this has been sponsored by the Ramakrishna Mission and the Belur Math. Excepting for the one single intervention which was done this evening to clear the scientific philosophical points by a Swami, no monk, no Swamiji of the Ramakrishna Mission took any part in the discussion either as participants or even as observers, because their intention was not to build up a worship image of the Ramakrishna and Vivekananda. They were not involved in trying to push their own idol or their own worship into other people. We want an objective, impartial, independent evaluation of the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda ideology and ideas, and they also thought this was an appropriate time for the Seminars to be started.

We have all heard from the Chief Justice Mr. Keshava Reddy all about Swami Vivekananda and what he stood for. I would only say that no time was more relevant than now for holding such a seminar for the general public other than regular devotees who are coming to mission centres, and attend the Mission chapels. If there is any time when there was need for much greater national involvement, national appreciation, and understanding of the ideas and ideology of Ramakrishna-Vivekananda, I think this is *now*; because everything which Swami Vivekananda stood for, is accepted in theory by everybody, but in actual practice we have not been able to achieve the results we wanted. I think this is important for us to find a way out now. Politicians have been trying to find a way out of what has been happening in the country, and they have not succeeded so far. Intellectuals have been trying to find a way out for the various problems the country is facing, whether in terms of divisiveness or communal disharmony or poverty or oppression of women or exploita-

tion of so-called untouchables, but no solution has been found. Somehow we seem to have lost our national moorings. I think this was the time for studying in depth the ideas of Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda. People are not yet sufficiently acquainted with these ideas, and their relevance to the existing Indian situation. These great ideas have not got the historical perspective of what they have stood for. It is important for us to remember that the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda ideology is an outcome of a long tradition of Indian spirituality and Indian culture, and the main motive force behind that movement is the building up of spirituality, and the use of the same spiritual dynamism and dedication for bringing about material advancement, and this material advancement is equally important for the retention and advancement of spirituality among the people in this country. This was, as I understand, the major motivation behind the organization of the seminar. Swami Vivekananda was repeatedly saying that we have a special genius of this country; and this genius lies in the basic spirituality—an instinctive search for the higher and the diviner aspects of life. This genius lies in religion. But religion in what sense? What kind of religion? Religion as a source of harmony or as an instrument of discord? What we have been finding is that religion has become an instrument of discord rather than an instrument of harmony, and this is because we have not realized the truth of what was preached from the most ancient days in this country, from the times of Vedas and the Upanishads.

The Rig-Veda says, *ekam sat viprah bahudhah vadanti*—‘Truth is one, the sages call it by various names’. This Vedic idea was experienced and realized in his own life by Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna, and that knowledge was transmitted to his disciples and to Swami Vivekananda, for the good of

both this country and the rest of the world. All religions are only different ways of worshipping the same God. India is the most multi-religious country in the world. I do not know of another country in the world where there are so many faiths and their followers in such large numbers as we have in this country. Unless it is recognized that all these various faiths, though they are following different practices, different forms of working, different rituals and so on, are basically only different ways of attaining the same god head, they will never learn to have mutual respect for each other. What is needed today is not mere tolerance but mutual respect for each other, mutual acceptance of each other. Devotion and commitment to one particular religion for seeking and finding God, must not generate hatred or distrust towards the followers of other religions. Unless that kind of a new concept of religion as preached and practised by Swami Vivekananda, is widely propagated today, religious exclusiveness will continue.

You heard the chief justice mentioning that Swami Vivekananda says that he worships the god of all the religions. He regards all places of worship as his own place of worship. All the prophets of various religions, he regards as his own prophets. Now this wonderful catholicity of religion has got to permeate the minds of the masses. The Ramakrishna-Vivekananda movement, I hope, gets all the ground as it has started so well in Hyderabad, so that the movement will be able to put these ideas across among the masses of this country. It is not the politicians, or the custodians of law and order, or the constitutional machinery of Government that can solve the problems of communal disharmony. The problem can only be solved by the acceptance of the broad and catholic ideas of religion. This concept of religion as we find in Ramakrishna-Vivekananda movement is not a new concept. It was

only a revival of the old concepts, going back to our own ancient tradition, but taking away from the traditional religion all the awful things that gathered about it.

Then again, Swamiji's use of spirituality for material advancement is something new. We are all accustomed to thinking in terms that we must have our own *moksha*, individual salvation, live in the forest, worship God alone. Here is the man who came saying : I do not want *moksha*. I do not want to go to heaven. I want to be born and reborn again and again, because I find God in the illiterate. It is the Vedanta philosophy which accepts the existence of divinity in every human being. And this Vedanta philosophy as interpreted by Swami Vivekananda insists that every human being must get the opportunity to become equal to every human being, and therefore anything that stands in the way of attaining this equality or realizing that individual potentiality or divinity, is an obstruction which is got to be removed.

Swamiji said that we must lead, we must drive ahead, and wipe out the poverty from this country ; we must wipe out illiteracy from this country ; we must wipe out the oppression and suppression of different classes of Indian masses, which they have been receiving for ages. We must restore to the masses a feeling of independence, a feeling of self-reliance, and a confidence so that they can realize for themselves that they belong to the same mettle as anybody else, that they have got the same divinity, as Christ or Buddha. With the help of this knowledge and confidence they will be able to remove themselves their own shackles, and reach the same levels which can be reached by the others. If the preaching of these Vedantic and spiritual ideas is the most important function of the Ramakrishna Vivekananda movement, then this is an equally important counterpart of the same movement, this uplift of the weaker sections

of the society, and the oppressed and the suppressed sections of the entire Indian society, including women.

It is also important that the upper classes not merely do service; their styles of life also have to change. There is got to be the spirit of respect to the divine in man, the spirit of equality. Equality is not only a means for lifting up some people. It also means that all people have got to come to a level, not necessarily the same arithmetical level, but the distance and disparities between the up and the low, must not be what they are today. In other words, what politicians are talking about, what political scientists are talking about, what leaders of political parties and political movements have talked about in other countries as well as in this country, Swami Vivekananda talked about quite a long time before any of them talked about these ideas. Still he talked about these ideas not for political end, but as a way of fulfilment in religion. He says the genius of India is religion. So use religion; give it a proper connotation; rescue it from all the obscurantism into which it has fallen in this country; give it back its original purity; give it back its Vedantic identity, and make that spiritual conviction and that Vedantic identity, the cornerstone not only for personal salvation, not only for self-realization, but also for national uplift, for the removal of poverty, for the removal of ignorance, for the removal of exploitation of women, and for giving the country self-reliance, independence, courage, and fearlessness. All these things are very very badly needed in this country today. Some urgent plans must be made to do these things. There are movements, there are societies, there are organizations. But the spirit, the motivation, the spiritual motivation which is required for the purpose, has been lacking and mere secular humanism is not able to supply that fire, that zest, that zeal, that readiness for courage, readiness

for sacrifice which can be given by religion, because religion is the one thing, in which, right or wrong, vast masses of the people still deeply believe.

I think, therefore, our task will now be putting the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda in the proper Indian historical and cultural tradition, making it a part of something which India had, which India lost, and which has been restored to India by a great Avatar like Sri Ramakrishna who transmitted it to India and the rest of the world through his great disciples like Vivekananda. I think the time has come that we should make use of the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda ideals for the purpose of national regeneration, for the purpose of the uplift of the masses of this country, for the purpose of resolving all the various innumerable economic, social, political, religious, divisive, and other kinds of problems that we are facing. And through these ideals we should bring about a state of affairs when spirituality will be used as an instrument for the material, moral, cultural, harmonious development of the nation. We must aim at not just materialism, not just material development, not just following the footsteps of the West, imitating blindly the West, and becoming a prey to all evils of affluent society, as the West is today. We must, at the same time, emphasize the need for plain living, austere living, high thinking, realization, meditation, a search for God, a search for identification of oneself with the other people, so that spirituality will emerge, spirituality will help, spirituality will remain, and spirituality will grow. Then it will become correct to say, that India is a country that offers an example to the rest of the world, how the use of spirituality can and does become an instrument for harmony, development, both material as well as moral, and spiritual.

These three days have offered me the most exciting sessions. For a long time I have been very much influenced by Swami Vivek-

ananda in my own personal ideas, and whatever little work I have been able to do in my own small sphere is because of the zeal, the fire of Vivekananda. There is no substitute for him. His words have got that fire. None of us can translate his words, and if we try to translate them, they do not have heart, or even one tenth of the effect that they had when you read the words of Swami Vivekananda in original.

I think it is very important that this Movement should grow. Not only should there be National Seminars and publications on these ideas, but they should be spread everywhere. We are studying now the talks of Mahatma Gandhi in a number of universities. I think the time has come when we should have all over the country, in our universities and colleges, a special study of the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda ideology. It is not a political ideology with which one may try to capture political power, but I want the ideology to permeate all political parties. I want this spiritual ideal of respect to the divine in all men and women, to go into all political parties. And that can be

done only through the new generation, the younger generation. They have to be brought to the picture, and made aware of what they stood for and then also given the opportunity to experience for themselves in social reality, what Vivekananda meant by spirituality and how he made his Practical Vedanta an instrument for national regeneration and amelioration of the conditions of the poor people.

I think the National Seminar has got a good start, and I do hope and pray that with the grace of Sri Ramakrishna and the blessings of Swami Vivekananda, this National Seminar will multiply. I hope that the ideas disseminated in the seminar and the philosophy and ideology of Ramakrishna-Vivekananda we have discussed for these three days will permeate the masses, the students, the young people, the universities, and all the colleges in this country, so that before the centenary of the founding of the Ramakrishna Mission comes, there will be visible effect of the impact of the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Movement, in the general tone, temper, and mood of this country, leading to its prosperity.

THE TAO OF PHYSICS REVISITED*

DR. FRITJOF CAPRA

The vision

The origin of *The Tao of Physics* lies in a powerful experience I had in the Summer of 1969 on a beach in Santa Cruz. The description of this experience which I gave on the opening page of the book is still the best I can find:

I was sitting by the ocean one late summer afternoon, watching the waves rolling in and feeling the rhythm of my breathing, when I

suddenly became aware of my whole environment as being engaged in a gigantic cosmic dance. Being a physicist, I knew that the sand, rocks, water, and air around me were made of vibrating molecules and atoms, and that these consisted of particles which interacted with one another by creating and destroying other particles. I knew also that the earth's atmosphere was continually

*The key-note address delivered at the symposium celebrating the 10th Anniversary of *The Tao of Physics* at San Francisco, on 1 February 1986 sponsored by the California Institute of Integral Studies.

bombarded by showers of 'cosmic rays', particles of high energy undergoing multiple collisions as they penetrated the air. All this was familiar to me from research in high-energy physics, but until that moment I had only experienced it through graphs, diagrams, and mathematical theories. As I sat on that beach my former experiences came to life; I 'saw' cascades of energy coming down from outer space, in which particles were 'created and destroyed' in rhythmic pulses; I 'saw' the atoms of the elements and those of my body participating in this cosmic dance of energy; I felt its rhythm and I 'heard' its sound, and at that moment I *knew* that this was the Dance of Shiva, the Lord of Dancers worshipped by the Hindus.

One year later I left California to continue my research at Imperial College in London, and before leaving I designed a photomontage—a dancing Shiva superimposed on tracks of colliding particles in a bubble chamber—to illustrate my experience of the cosmic dance on the beach. This beautiful picture symbolized for me the parallels between physics and mysticism that I had just begun to discover. And one day, in the late Fall of 1970, when I sat in my apartment near Imperial College and looked at the picture, I suddenly had a very clear realization. I knew with absolute certainty that the parallels between modern physics and Eastern mysticism would some day be common knowledge; and I also felt that I was best placed to explore these parallels thoroughly and to write a book about them.

Five years later, in the Fall of 1975, *The Tao of Physics* was published by Wildwood House in London; in January of 1976 it came out in this country, published by Shambhala Press. Now we are ten years later, and today I want to ask myself several questions: Did my vision come true? Are the parallels between modern physics and Eastern mysticism indeed common knowledge today or, at least, are they becoming common knowledge? Is my original thesis still valid, or does it

need to be reformulated? What has been the main criticism of my thesis and how would I answer that criticism today? And finally, what are my own views today, how are they evolving, and where do I see the greatest potential for future work? In this lecture and in the subsequent discussions I want to present my answers to these questions as carefully and as honestly as I can.

Impact of the book

Over the past ten years *The Tao of Physics* has been received with an enthusiasm that went beyond my wildest expectations. When I wrote it, friends in London told me that 10,000 copies sold would be a big success, and I secretly hoped that, eventually, 50,000 copies would be sold. Today the sales figures are close to one million worldwide; *The Tao of Physics* has been translated into more than one dozen languages; further translations are planned, and all editions are still in print and continue to sell well.

This tremendous response has had a strong impact on my life. During the past ten years I have travelled extensively, lecturing to professional and lay audiences in the United States, Europe, and Asia, and discussing the implications of the 'new physics' with women and men from all walks of life. These discussions have helped me enormously in understanding the broader cultural context of my work, and I now see that context as the main reason for its enthusiastic acceptance. Again and again I could witness how the book and my lectures generated a strong resonance in people. Again and again men and women would write to me or would tell me after a lecture: 'You have expressed something I have felt for a long time without being able to put it into words.' These were generally not scientists, nor were they mystics. They were ordinary people,

and yet were extraordinary—artists, grandmothers, businessmen, teachers, farmers, nurses—people of all ages, just as many over fifty as under. Quite a few were old people, and those have been the most moving letters, from women and men over seventy, over eighty, and in two or three cases even over ninety!

What did *The Tao of Physics* touch off in all these people? What was it they had experienced themselves? I have come to believe that the recognition of the similarities between modern physics and Eastern mysticism is part of a much larger movement, of a fundamental change of world views, or paradigms, in science and society, which amounts to a profound cultural transformation. This transformation, this profound change of consciousness, is what so many people have felt intuitively over the past two or three decades, and this is why *The Tao of Physics* has struck such a responsive cord.

The paradigm shift

In my second book, *The Turning Point*, I have explored the social implications of the current shift of paradigms. My starting point for this exploration has been the assertion that the major problems of our time—the growing threat of nuclear war, the devastation of our natural environment, our inability to deal with poverty and starvation around the world, to name just the most urgent ones—are all different facets of one single crisis, which is essentially a crisis of perception. It derives from the fact that most of us—and especially our large social institutions—subscribe to the concepts and values of an outdated world view, to a paradigm that is inadequate for dealing with the problems of our overpopulated, globally interconnected world. At the same time, researchers at the leading edge of science, various social movements,

and numerous alternative networks are developing a new vision of reality that will form the basis of our future technologies, economic systems, and social institutions.

The paradigm that is now receding has dominated our culture for several hundred years, during which it has shaped our modern western society and has significantly influenced the rest of the world. This paradigm consists of a number of ideas and values, among them the view of the universe as a mechanical system composed of elementary building blocks, the view of the human body as a machine, the view of life as a competitive struggle for existence, the belief in unlimited material progress to be achieved through economic and technological growth, and—last, not least—the belief that a society in which the female is everywhere subsumed under the male, is one that is 'natural'. During recent decades all of these assumptions have been found severely limited and in need of radical revision.

Such a revision is indeed taking place. The new paradigm that is now emerging can be described in various ways. It can be called a holistic world view, emphasizing the whole rather than the parts. It can also be called an ecological world view, and this is the term I prefer. I am using the term 'ecological' here in a much broader and deeper sense than it is commonly used. Ecological awareness in that deep sense recognizes the fundamental interdependence of all phenomena and the embeddedness of individuals and societies in the cyclical processes of nature. This deep ecological awareness is now emerging in various areas in our society, both within and outside of science.

The ecological paradigm is supported by modern science, but it is rooted in a perception of reality that goes beyond the scientific framework to an awareness of the oneness of all life, the interdependence

of its multiple manifestations, and its cycles of change and transformation. Ultimately, such deep ecological awareness is spiritual awareness. When the concept of the human spirit is understood as the mode of consciousness in which the individual feels connected to the cosmos as a whole, it becomes clear that ecological awareness is spiritual in its deepest essence, and it is then not surprising that the new vision of reality is in harmony with the visions of spiritual traditions.

So now I can clearly spell out the broader context of *The Tao of Physics*. The new physics is an integral part of a new world view that is now emerging in all the sciences and in society. The new world-view is an ecological world-view that is grounded, ultimately, in spiritual awareness. Therefore it is not surprising that the new paradigm, as it emerges in physics and in the other sciences, will be in harmony with many ideas in spiritual traditions.

My original thesis, then, is still valid and has also become much clearer by

being reformulated and put in a larger conceptual context. At the same time, it has been confirmed by recent developments in other sciences, notably in biology and psychology, and I now stand on much firmer ground. It is becoming ever more apparent that mysticism, or the perennial philosophy, as it is sometimes called, provides the most consistent philosophical background to the new scientific paradigm.

This recognition is not yet common knowledge, but it is certainly spreading, both within and outside of science. In the wake of *The Tao of Physics* there have been at least a dozen very successful books about the relationships between modern science and mystical traditions and there have been several big international conferences on this subject featuring distinguished scientists, including several Nobel Laureates, as well as eminent representatives of spiritual traditions. My original message has been vastly amplified by these events.

(To be continued)

“SATYAKAMA-SATYA-SAMPRADEYA”

‘Truth—The Aspiration and the Tradition’

(A Play in four scenes depicting some vital aspects of the Eternal Religion and Educational Culture of India.)

SWAMI SASTRANANDA

(Continued from the November '87 issue)

Haridrumata: Satyakama!—You have now been granted knowledge and experiences of a very high order. But they should not end with you. The tradition of such knowledge and experiences should flow on without interruption. The line of ‘progeny’ should not be cut off, so you would have to

enter the life of a householder. You should become an Acharya, a teacher, and conduct your own Gurukula. Don’t be cast down because of separation from me. This aged body will not also survive for long; its days are numbered. All the knowledge and virtues that came to me, the entire treasure

has now been passed on to you. You must in turn, pass it on, appropriately to future generations. This is my wish and command!

Y. Satyakama: Your words are to me indeed scriptural commandments. But, I am totally opposed to marrying and living the life of an ordinary householder. I am firmly resolved to lead a life of total celibacy. So far as passing on to others the treasures of education, knowledge, experiences and virtues gifted to me, I am in full agreement; that task I shall undertake with great joy. But to me truth & brahmacharya, celibacy are foremost. Moreover I do not see eye to eye with some of the customs and practices, rules and regulations that prevail in the name of tradition. I may get caught in them if I take up the task of teaching and become an Acharya of a gurukula. In my view, for acquiring education and knowledge, what is important are the qualities, earnestness and dedication of the aspirant and not the details of his lineage, position and level in society etc. How is it ever possible to reconcile these contradictory elements?

Haridrumata: My son! That too is possible, definitely possible. I am also a man of tradition—but in its true sense. What is acceptable to me is the tradition which stems from what is true and good, and to pass it on, generation after generation to worthy recipients, in a way which is both dignified and beneficial to mankind. Even so, I am of the view that so long as we have to function in this world of ordinary people, it would not be useful to criticise or condemn unilaterally social rules and regulations, accepted and respected by a vast mass of people.

A really intelligent person is one who, while continuing to function in the framework of traditional society, commands the confidence and respect of people at large,

and then makes them willingly accept his own cherished ideas, words and ways of life. "Speak the truth," is all right; but "Speak what is acceptable," also is necessary. Likewise, "Do what is right," and side by side, "Do that in an acceptable way" is also needed. This is not to say that one should lower the level of truth just for the sake of popularity. Never! Who is a great teacher, a superior guide? He who, using his own special intelligence, skill and talents can teach people what is really good for them, in a way beneficial and acceptable to them; he who, through his own humility and patience can influence and win them over to his own cherished ideals. And that is his real greatness.

Y. Satyakama: Extraordinary greatness indeed!

Haridrumata: Have you forgotten, Satyakama—how I handled your own situation? Could anybody and everybody have so boldly set aside the normal rules of a gurukula and admitted you? True, none was bold to say anything openly against it. But amongst themselves, behind my back, they were certainly passing adverse comments, that your honourable mother was a servant, and of low caste, that you could be one even outside the pale of Aryan society since your parentage itself was not known—and as such unworthy of the sacred thread and Vedic studies. But, the moment I understood the honesty, guilelessness, uprightness and loyalty to truth, of yourself as well as your mother, I took you as a brahmana, as of the highest caste; I took you as a superior brahmana. I accepted you boldly and gladly. That way it was for the good of all!

You may also adopt this approach; but for that, one needs great self-confidence, courage, patience and humility.

Y. Satyakama: Sir, the more days pass, the more I see your approach to life and your actions, the more I appreciate your large heart, deep knowledge, farsightedness and pure love; the more my love and regard for you grow! Your ideas and sentiments, ideals and guidance appeal to me more and more. You have now shown how without violating my own nature and cherished way of life, I can yet adopt myself to social situations. I shall act accordingly. The expectation, faith and confidence which you have reposed in me, holy Sir, will certainly not go in vain!

Haridrumata: Satyakama, you get married only for the purpose of conducting the gurukula and serving your mother. Accept a worthy woman as your spiritual partner. Let your married life be solely dedicated to the quest of the Divine, adoration of the Divine and to divine actions. Look upon her as a veritable goddess and, without having any physical relations, you may continue to remain a true celibate even though formally married. That way you carry on your task and mission of propagating education and knowledge, building up of worthy characters and continuance of a worthy tradition.

Y. Satyakama: But, if people begin to criticise saying, "This Satyakama has broken the commandment? He has flouted our tradition? He has cut off the line of progeny?"

Haridrumata: Son, such a criticism is not valid. 'Progeny' does not mean mere physical issues. It may also mean spiritual children too—son or daughter! Those who are born of the body are the physical, usual, progeny. But those who have been attracted by the guru's mind and intellect, by his lofty ideas and ideals, who are inspired and nourished by them and shape

their lives also accordingly—are his spiritual children or progeny. They are certainly more near than, and superior to the mere physical progeny. It may sometimes happen that the same person may be both a physical and a spiritual progeny, but that is few and far between. For a worthy teacher or guru, his spiritual children are nearer and dearer to him than his physical issues; they are truly his 'own'.

Satyakama, all those whom you teach, those whom you initiate into the path of worship and meditation and those whom you guide in the path of realizing Brahman or the Divine—all these are your progeny. How can then will you ever be 'bereft of progeny'? You will see for yourself that such a line of progeny will not consist of just one or two, but many—even numerous. That way, how many 'Jabalas' will come in future—who knows? Anyhow—thereby the worthy tradition of Satya or Truth will be perpetuated, without break and gloriously. Who then will dare to call you, the father of such progeny, as 'childless'!

Through such a life harmonising unbroken celibacy as well as the 'married' life of a teacher, your resolve also is fulfilled and tradition also stands honoured. Is it clear?

Y. Satyakama: It has been made clear to me sir, in a most complete, happy and satisfying way. I shall act too, accordingly. Having my spiritual marriage, Brahma Vivaha with a pure maiden, approved by yourself and my mother, while yet remaining a celibate, I shall begin a gurukula. Establishing my mother there, as the 'Deity in mother's form', and honouring her advice, I shall conduct the gurukula in the shade of her blessings.

And now, may I have a few special hints from you in the matter of accepting and training students or disciples?

Haridrumata: Whoever the aspirant may be, so long as he is worthy, accept him. It is real merit and worth of students that is important, not numbers. Always keep your eyes open for special and unusual students. Provide suitable opportunities for such. Regular and prescribed course of group-studies for a certain number of years, fixed schedules and definite methods of teaching—and then formal graduation—all these hold good for the ordinary run of students. But where extraordinary students are concerned, each one of them must be provided with his own individual teaching, training and course of development—suitable and fruitful for each. But whether it is an ordinary student or a special one, the true essence and purpose of education must not be missed.

Y. Satyakama: Sir, please indicate that essence and purpose clearly.

Haridrumata: Education is certainly not pouring of, from outside, a mass of words and ideas into the head of the student. It is not even the attempt to fashion the student according to the wishes of the guru. The task of true education or a true guru consists in recognizing the perfection and powers in each student and then helping the student to manifest them according to his own genius, and thus shape his own life and personality. For the ordinary student, external help, motivation, support and rules are necessary. But extraordinary students must have ample stimulation, encouragement and opportunities for self-reflection, self-study and independent search.

Y. Satyakama: Is such a thing easy to carry out?

Haridrumata: You yourself are a great illustration of this. I never made you study,

making you sit by my side and every day instructing you, "do this; don't do this!" I gave you a few appropriate and important directions and provided you the opportunity to blossom out by yourself. I sent you to nature's own calm and serene sylvan environment. I encouraged you to become introspective. Since you had the worth in you and along with that faith, devotion and intense longing, knowledge sprang and shone out from within you—and you yourself know how all that happened. Don't you?

Y. Satyakama: True Sir. Even so, had I been staying with you and got your direct guidance from time to time, the progress would have been perhaps speeded up!

Haridrumata: No, not so! Had you held on to me, or had I held you and made you walk along, your progress—the progress of an extraordinary student like you—would have actually been hampered, instead of being accelerated!

So, when you also come across some extraordinary pupils, encourage them to be self-reliant, self-introspective and to independently seek knowledge of the Self. Perhaps in the beginning such pupils may think that the guru is indifferent to them and become displeased. As a rule people have the herd mentality. Their tendency is to be one of the herd and progress only at the slow, comfortable pace of the herd. But the uncommon souls must become heroes who will march along alone. You need not mind if such disciples feel hurt for a little while, or even get angered! But you must not fail to extend to them fully pure love and trust, to watch them constantly and help them to progress only in a self-reliant way. Let the chick come out of the egg-shell by itself. If it is so essential, a light peck at the final moment would suffice. It is enough if the guru's

'help' is only this much! Only such pupils are your true disciples—your mind-born, spiritual children. It is they who will make your spiritual line grow and who will prove to be gems illumining your race.... Is it all clear?

[As Haridrumata is ending, Curtain 2 closes and action proceeds in Stage I.]

A. Satyakama: Upakosala! Now perhaps you have understood my outlook and way of thinking, which I have acquired as a result of the guru's grace. I have the same love and trust for you which Acharya Haridrumata had for me. In my eyes, you too are an uncommon disciple. It is only because of that I am keeping you with me so long. Remember he lasts who 'endures'! I also lived on only after 'enduring'. You also 'endure', live on, and live a great life!

Upakosala: Sir, I am now beginning to realize the actual situation.

A. Satyakama: The mistress of the home had informed me of your being sad and your decision to undertake a fast. I kept quiet, thinking that it was good for you to fast and that you should act up to your words. I was not for letting you weaken or grow into a dependent person, on account of the softness or tenderness of others. The mistress had also informed the news to my revered mother. But mother had replied, "I shall not, in the name of sympathy or compassion intercede on behalf of this boy and try to influence Satyakama... He is a mature teacher—and knows full well what he should do. Let this Upakosala grow into a superior disciple. Let him cultivate the patience and endurance needed for that!"—Yes, that was her response. You see her heroic fibre! Yes, one should depend on Truth alone. Truth must be held on to.

But there should be no threats in the name of Truth. Any way, now you have at last got the 'Upadesha' and the knowledge you were after?

Upakosala: Yes—to some extent...but...

A. Satyakama: But....?

Upakosala: Even though the experiences I had were of a lofty nature, still there is still lurking in my mind a sense of incompleteness, a sense of dissatisfaction. This must now be remedied by you, Sir. Be gracious and make me 'full' and fully satisfied!

A. Satyakama: The teachings you received from Agni are all right and proper. But they are knowledge which relate only to the external universe, to the external 'lights'. An important part is still to be taught. I shall do that.

Upakosala: Bhagavan! Please do be gracious. Make my life blessed.

A. Satyakama: Listen! The Light and Radiance of Brahman shines everywhere; it is all-pervading. But man can have its most intimate and direct experience only in his own heart, in his own inner Self. It is that Light, which shines in the hearts, minds, and senses of all of us—specially in the eye. That blissful, infinite Brahman resides in all of us, in the 'city' formed by the body-mind-intellect-heart complex. He shines therein. So, He is also known as 'Purusha' or Lord of the City. He whose mind, heart and life are pure, and the face calm and serene and thus becomes 'auspicious'. In such an 'auspicious' countenance, specially in the eye, that Purusha's light shines most. (Introspects a little)

Upakosala: How did you come to have experience of this 'Purusha', Sir?

A. Satyakama: It was also revealed to me later that on the day when I was looking at the Bull—the steady, lumpid and shining eyes of that Bull which gave me my first teaching—it was the Light of the 'Purusha' or the Divine which I saw therein.

The light which shines in your face now is also that Light Divine. It is because of that I also hailed you, 'Your face shines like that of a Knower of Brahman', repeating the words which Revered Haridrumata had used in my case.

Son, become meditative for a while. Try to become merged in the inner Self. It is the infinite, eternal, blissful Light of Brahman that also shines in your soul or Atman. Realize that, see that, touch that. Be it the individual or the universe—everything is pervaded and interpenetrated by that Light. See that the sun, moon and stars are all mere specks shining in the infinite and luminous Self that you are! Realize! Be Blissful and blessed!

When the identity of the Atman and Brahman, the individual and supreme Self, is experienced, then you go beyond death. Freed from all kinds of fear, you become fearless, immortal. All your desires then stand fulfilled. Nothing remains to be desired. Thereafter, you who is of the nature of the Divine which is the unity of Atman and Brahman, will become the channel for fulfilling the worthy desires of others.

As the Atman, it is you who are shining everywhere, in all the worlds. When you

experience this you become one whose every desire is satisfied, who is fully contented, fulfilled and blessed!

[Upakosala meditates for a while—and half-opening his eyes says:]

Upakosala: Sir, the truth that you imparted is now beginning to manifest in my mind. Lo! The feeling is now arising that my heart and my life are no longer empty or barren but full and fulfilled. You are the 'Full' and 'Perfect'—Purna—I too am becoming 'Purna', by your grace. Brahman is Purna—the universe also is Purna.. All, everything is Purna.

"Purnamadah purnamidam purnat purnamudacyate".

(Upakosala himself begins to chant the mantra—and a majestic voice resounds it from the background. Thrilled, he opens his eyes, and approaching Satyakama bows down.)

Sir, By your grace and training, my whole life has today become indeed blessed and fulfilled.

[As Upakosala again bows down, followed by Samasrava also Curtain 1 closes]

[End of Scene IV and of Play]

Harih Om Tat Sat

(Concluded)

SANTA BARBARA: A HOME OF THE HOLY MOTHER

PRAVRAJKA VARADAPRANA

Of the many people who have visited Sarada Convent in Santa Barbara, all are struck by the extraordinary peace and beauty found there. Situated up in the hills, surrounded by natural chaparral, the temple and convent overlook a magnificent view of the Pacific Ocean, with the mountains behind. As one visiting Swami said, "The ocean is Mother and the mountain is Siva ; here you have both."

There are presently eleven nuns living in the convent ; seven sanyasinis, three brahmacharinis and one probationer. People sometimes ask, "Why do American women give up their personal freedom and worldly prospects to join a convent?" The answer seems simple to us ; inspired by the lives and teachings of Sri Rama-krishna and Sri Sarada Devi, we want to lead a life dedicated to God and to reach the ultimate freedom and goal of life.

Sarada Devi is for us the example of perfect womanhood, embodying the ideals of love, compassion, and spotless character along with the highest spirituality. In our sophisticated and complex society, the loving nature of this simple village woman is very appealing. Many are drawn to her in the very beginning of their association with Vedanta. Others grow in appreciation of her as their spiritual lives develop. Many have been initiated with the Mother's mantra. It is touching to see the devotion of men as well as women to the Holy Mother.

Sarada Convent in Santa Barbara is a part of the Vedanta Society of Southern California, and is a branch of the Hollywood center presently headed by Swami Swahananda. The Vedanta Society has a convent in Hollywood as well as in Santa Barbara. Women monastics and devotees

have always taken an active part in the work of the centers in America, and the nuns offer hospitality to the women devotees who come.

The Santa Barbara convent came into existence in 1947 as an extension of the Hollywood convent. In the same year the first brahmacharya vows for nuns were given in Santa Barbara. Seven senior Swamis were present on this auspicious occasion: Swamis Yatiswarananda, Prabhavananda, Satprakashananda, Akhilananda, Vividishananda, Vishwananda and Devatmananda. That afternoon each of the Swamis gave an inspiring talk outdoors under the olive trees to a large group of devotees.

The beautiful Vedanta Temple in Santa Barbara was dedicated in 1956 when Swamis Madhavananda and Nirvanananda came to take part in the dedication ceremonies. Since then the temple has received two awards for its beauty and contributions to the community. Many people come to meditate in the peaceful atmosphere of the temple and to attend the daily puja or arati.

From very early times there has been a close relationship with Sri Sarada Math in India also. Swami Prabhavananda was a champion for the establishment of convents in India as well as in the West, and helped in their support. Nuns from our convents visit the Sarada Math when they are in India, and we were happy to have a visit from two Sarada Math nuns in 1985.

We have heard many reminiscences of Swamis who were disciples of the Holy Mother or who had the blessed opportunity of having some association with her. This has made the Mother more living for us, and has helped to establish certain religious traditions in the convent.

Swami Prabhavananda, founder of the Vedanta Society of Southern California, used to call Santa Barbara "Mother's place" and the Ramakrishna Monastery at Trabuco "Father's place." The main center in Hollywood was known as "Mother church." He always reminded us that the convent was Mother's place and sometimes said, "Mother walks here." He cited her as the example of purity, simplicity and modesty. Sometimes when one of the nuns would laugh too loudly he would correct her saying, "Remember, the Holy Mother was always modest."

The Swami often related his experiences with the Holy Mother at Udbodhan and in her village home at Jayrambati where he first met her as a boy of fourteen years. (Note: see *Prabuddha Bharata*, March 1969.) He said he thought at that time she was just a simple village woman, like his mother, only later he realized her greatness. "She forced herself on me," he used to say. "When Holy Mother was living nobody recognized her greatness except the direct disciples. She kept herself hidden. After she attained Mahasamadhi, then perhaps some began to recognize—and then only when she revealed herself."

The Swami used to go to Udbodhan every Saturday when he was a student to take the dust of Holy Mother's feet just because of the pleasant sensation he had when he touched her feet. He said it was like an electric shock, only it was soothing and made him feel purified. The Swami would sometimes say that Mother was even greater than Thakur because she remained in an exalted state even while performing her numerous duties.

Although the public work of lectures, classes, Ramanam and special pujas are held in the big temple, the real heart of the convent is the little shrineroom in the eucalyptus grove. This is called "Mother's shrine" and is the private shrine for the nuns and lady devotees who come to the convent.

Here the ten-item puja of Sri Ramakrishna is performed daily as it is in the main temple, and also a ten-item puja to the Holy Mother. The footprints of Sarada Devi which were taken during her lifetime are kept on the altar and worshipped daily. From early times diksha has been given in this shrine, and with years of meditation the shrine has acquired an intense spiritual atmosphere.

We think of the kitchen and dining room as Mother's special domain. Her picture is kept in the kitchen and flowers are offered to her before the food preparation begins. The food is cooked for Thakur and Mother, and she is the presiding deity of the kitchen.

In the dining room also there is a painting of Sri Sarada Devi. When occasionally someone takes food without chanting the "Om Brahmaṛpanam" we say, "Jai Ma, Mother's house," indicating that Mother doesn't like her children to wait.

On the birthday of Sri Sarada Devi a special 16-item Puja and Homa is performed and attended by many of her devotees. Chanting, bhajan and usually an English song to Holy Mother is sung. At arati "Sarva Mangala" is sung every evening along with the other arati hymns, and "Prakritim Paramam" is sung Tuesdays and Saturdays. The Mother is saluted with "Jai maha mayi ki jai" after arati and meals. Thus many of the Indian traditions have been adopted as well as our own traditions.

We have frequently been told that Sri Ramakrishna and Sri Sarada Devi are one. One can repeat the name of Sri Ramakrishna and think of Sri Sarada Devi as she loved to hear his name. It is the Divine Mother, the Shakti power, call that Kali or Durga, that has incarnated in the forms of Sri Ramakrishna and Sri Sarada Devi.

It has been our tradition to celebrate Durga Puja in Santa Barbara, and Kali Puja in Hollywood. One year at Durga Puja we sang bhajans only to Durga and

Kali. The Swami corrected us saying, "You must always sing at least one song to Holy Mother—she is our Durga." Since then we have always included at least one song to Holy Mother.

For several years the Devi Mahatmyam (Chandi) has been recited weekly in the shrineroom in English translation. Many of the nuns also recite it regularly in their rooms. Portions of the Chandi are also chanted in Sanskrit on special occasions.

Sri Ramakrishna came for the purpose of preaching the universality of religion and for the elevation of women. The worship of God as Mother is an uplifting and ennobling ideal much needed in our society. In the Judeo-Christian tradition mostly the Fatherhood of God has been stressed.

The need for the maternal aspect has been filled by the Holy Mother. Feminists have found an ideal to follow in this simple village woman. Many have come to realize that real liberation is not so much outside as of the spirit. The Motherhood of God and the aspect of the Divine Mother in women gives a deeper meaning to the whole idea of women's liberation. For many young women who have gone through a drug or alcohol problem, endemic in our society, the forgiving nature and compassion of

Holy Mother has been a support and refuge.

The Holy Mother was so humble and yet she was a spiritual powerhouse. She commanded the respect of all and was given first place in the Ramakrishna Order after the death of Sri Ramakrishna.

The Holy Mother is gracious and easy of access. Only a little meditation on the Mother, a little prayer, brings results. One Swami told us, "When the mind is disturbed, pray to the Mother. She will take you by the hand." Even now she can't deny her children anything, just as she couldn't deny her children when she lived on earth. All that is required of us is a little love and faith, a simple yearning of heart.

The ideal of the Motherhood of God and the living example of Holy Mother's life is especially important for women to follow. Meditation on her qualities of purity, motherly love, selfless service and her high spiritual moods will help to develop some of those qualities in us.

We have been assured that the Mother does care for us, her children. She is not far away—she dwells in our hearts. She is our own, for she is our very Self. We must make the effort to realize that truth and to remember it every moment of our lives.

SWING BACK TO RELIGION

S. RAMAKRISHNAN

Upwards of 10 million people had their holy dip at the Triveni Sangam during the Kumbha Mela in 1977. The offerings at Tirupati, Guruvayur, Nathdwara and other temples are ever on the increase. In 1933 the offerings at Tirupati amounted to Rs. 3 lakhs and in 1976 the figure rose to Rs. 12 crores. More and more devotees are visiting the not-easily-accessible Sabarimalai temple

atop a hill amidst thick forests in Kerala.

Whether it is fashionable Paris, conservative London or the skyscraper city of Manhattan—one finds groups of people intensely interested in God and religion.

The audiences that flock to hear celebrated religious preachers like Swami Ranganathananda, Swami Chinmayananda, Swami Akhandananda, Dongre Maharaj, Anjam

Madhavan Namboodiri, and other saintly men, are ever on the increase, quantitatively and qualitatively.

Demand for books such as the Ramayana, Mahabharata, Gita, Upanishads, and those dealing with the lives and teachings of saints and sages has, during the last ten years, gone up hundred-fold. There is a spurt in the renovation of old temples, and consecration of new ones.

In the last century, may be a Max Mueller or a Paul Deussen showed some interest in Hinduism—that too largely of an academic nature. But, to-day more and more people in the West, belonging to all strata of society, seem to be attracted by the broad tenets of Sanatana Dharma to the point of practising it.

The revival in religion, which we observe as a world phenomenon, is a backlash of the lack of faith which plagued the young minds especially, for quite a time.

It was Northcote Parkinson, the celebrated wit and philosopher, justly famous for his Parkinson's laws which constitute, in my view, the greatest satire on the laws of economics, who said in one of his characteristic epigrams that "industrialisation at its best produces Hippies."

There is more to this statement than what meets the eye. The Hippie cult, the inevitable out-come of the relentless pursuit of material progress, began with the industrial revolution in the 19th century. It is a slap on the face of material affluence and a groping towards God or Light, or call it whatever we may like. In their blind search for freedom from affluence-born ennui, many youngsters take to "dope" and alas, are invariably gone for ever like poor animals caught in a mire sinking to their slow death. A few escape because of the "hope" held out by religion.

It is this redeeming role of religion that is significant today. Certainly it cannot be said that the whole world has overnight

become religious or God-minded; such a thing there never was—even during the Vedic times. In the Vedas, do we not come across the *Lamentation of a Gambler*?

The world has always been peopled by atheists and theists, atheists including agnostics, and theists including the fervent followers of religion to the lukewarm or near-indifferent type of believers.

Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of God, who came to redeem mankind was crucified, and the kinsfolk of Sri Krishna, the God who came to re-establish Dharma, killed themselves in a drunken brawl, all of which only go to prove that religion and irreligion have always existed side by side, and it would be foolish on the part of anyone to assert that the world has gone to dogs or that it has suddenly turned divine. But then, we cannot ignore the general trends just as we speak of a specific direction of the flight of a swarm of bees though there will be stray bees flying in the opposite direction.

What then is responsible for the present "Swing Back to Religion" trend which is evident the world over? There is a deep-seated reason which is briefly dealt with below.

The nineteenth century perhaps marked the culmination of the Renaissance revolt against decadent religion. That century was certainly the most anti-religious period the West has ever known. And what were the reasons for it?

In the wake of the Industrial Revolution, the greatest event of that century, man came to possess powers of which he had never dreamt, and almost concluded that he had discovered the key to ceaseless "Progress". With Darwin's (1809-1882) theory of evolution synchronizing with the dawn of the industrial era, it almost seemed that God could be safely dispensed with at least as far as the sphere of living and development was concerned.

Newton's (1642-1727) discovery of the

laws of gravitation had already come as a rude shock to many believers who thought that now God had no place in the physical universe.

And it was left to Sigmund Freud (1856-1939) to dislodge God from the human consciousness with his startling discoveries in the field of psycho-analysis.

But in the twentieth century, Darwin, Newton and Freud, as also the theory of the inevitability of "Progress" have all been found wanting.

Does not evolution also imply involution? Does not the enlightened man help the survival of the weak, in a sense defying the Darwinian theory of the survival of the fittest?

When it comes to the realm of science, discoveries in the realm of nuclear physics have destroyed man's belief in matter. "In the 19th century a table was a table; now it is a cluster of whirling electrons which can just as well as be called energy as matter," said a scientist.

Sir James Hopwood Jeans, the distinguished British physicist and astronomer, (1877-1946) says: "The universe begins to look more like a great thought than a great machine. Mind no longer appears as an accidental intruder in the realm of matter. We are beginning to suspect that we ought rather to hail it as the creator and governor of the realm of matter. Not, of course, our individual minds, but the Mind in which the atoms, out of which our individual minds have grown, exist as thoughts."

And did not Albert Einstein himself proclaim that "Science without religion is lame and religion without science is blind"?

Many of the findings of modern science come very close to, if not corroborate, some of the fundamental concepts of Indian philosophy such as that the entire universe is the manifestation of one Supreme *Shakti*

or Primordial Energy.

And Freud's findings in the sphere of human consciousness have been largely improved upon, if not superseded, by later men like Carl Jung, the eminent Swiss psychologist (1875-1961), who was awed by the spiritual experience of a sage like Ramana Maharshi.

In his introduction to Dr. Zimmer's book *Der Weg Zum Selbst* (The way to the Self or The Life and Teachings of Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi) Jung says: "The identification of Self with God will strike the European as shocking. It is a specifically oriental realization, as expressed in Sri Ramana's utterances. *Psychology cannot contribute anything further to it, except the remark that it lies far beyond its scope to propose such a thing.*"

What do all these show? Only one thing. Those who were looking to the scientists for the repudiation of God have come in for the biggest shock. The "progress" promised by the technological age has also proved to be a mirage, a will-o-the-wisp. Today man has known that culture is something quite different from civilisation and that industrial advancement can only ensure the latter and not the former. In fact, material affluence has only taken man farther away from the "Peace that passeth understanding"—the goal of religion.

Is it then any wonder that we see today a swinging back of the pendulum—from materialism to religion?

How to accelerate the pace of this swing back and how to slake this spiritual thirst, how to transform and direct this earnest yearning into constructive channels so as to avoid a slide back, is the challenging task before our religious heads and leaders, educationists, and constructive and social workers who stand and strive for the reenthronement of the Majesty of the Moral Law.

VAISHNODEVI—THE MYSTIC EXPERIENCE

SUMITA ROY

Communion with the divine in an atmosphere of sanctity, silence and serenity, is probably the most enlightening experience of life. It sears the mind with a fire of inspiration. Pilgrimage to Vaishnodevi, the abode of Divine Mother certainly falls in this category. Before we made the trip the sceptic in me cautioned, 'A trip to the cave in some obscure mountain to worship some stones! Not enough to warrant a journey of more than a hundred kilometers'. But once amidst the giant purple mountains with their steep slopes, and proudly rising lofty heads embracing the clouds, there was no place for doubt or disbelief in the mind. Just a glimpse of the three forked peak was enough to lift the mind into the realm of the spiritual, far away from the demands and doubts of this world.

The scenic beauty of the surrounding Himalayas—a tabernacle of gods and goddesses—brings poetry even to the most hardened heart. A place of pilgrimage in this holy mountain has indeed an unusual beauty of its own. Here everyone is seen silently conversing with nature. The entire area is charged with a tradition of piety and purity, which slowly sinks deep into the soul of all pilgrims. Even the most casual traveller feels uplifted with a feeling of well-being, contentment, and bliss. To us who came to Vaishnodevi with a hunger of the soul, it was like a home-coming after years of aimless wanderings. At once, we could perceive the Mother's welcome, a loving smile, and a warm embrace from the Primeval Mother of the universe whose presence even the mughal emperors had once felt in this holy spot.

The first thing one noticed was the lush greenery of the fertile land. It was as though mother earth had bestowed her

entire treasure in this thrice-blessed spot. At times the whole panorama was dressed in clouds, and at other times washed with rains or brightened up by golden sunlight. Life takes on a new meaning as one encounters the fascination of this lovely landscape of the Himalayas. The brisk, invigorating mountain air gives strength to the tired body and the spent-up mind.

One of the wonderful experiences of this holy spot was the sunset. The sheer breath-taking beauty of it filled every one of us with awe and amazement. None could remain impervious to such a supreme splendour. Everyone looked on, unblinking, as though the sun was setting for the first time in the history of the earth.

As darkness descended, all of us felt a hush of eager anticipation. The long stretch of the serpentine trekking path up the mountain was now lighted up with hundreds of bulbs, and from a distance the whole scene was reminiscent of Deepavali, the festival of lights. It was indeed a journey through the path of light, to the abode of Godhead. Anywhere else, this fourteen kilometre trek would have exhausted a person. But here, with each step, a new eagerness, energy and enthusiasm filled us. The thought of the Divine Mother waiting for all of us held us spellbound. Probably such a mood of eager expectation for Mother inspired the lines of *Devi Mahatmyam*: 'Salutations to that Devi, salutations to her again and again, who is known as Vishnu-Maya present in all beings. Salutations to that Devi, salutations to her again and again, who is present in all beings as Mother.'

As we ascended the mountain path our thoughts were now centred on Mother only, the Mother who creates, sustains and destroys the universe, the Mother who

never refuses to give shelter to those who come all the way to seek Her grace and to ensure Her eternal protection in life. The radiance of Mother's beauty and glory was reflected, as if, in every direction. Some invoked Mother's power with their bhajans. The songs transmitted strength to the needy, who were struggling to take the next higher step. The youngsters enthused the older people with their zeal. The whole mountain path reverberated with the mystic chanting—repeated over and over again—*save bolo jai Mata ki, milkar bolo jai Mata ki*. The difficult climbing up turned, as it were, into a great spiritual experience. Every step was a sacrifice for God. And the repeated chantings brought a slow and steady heightening of our consciousness. The everyday world was left far behind as we rose higher and higher on the way to the Divine Mother.

At last we reached the cave. The mouth of the cave appeared quite ordinary and unostentatious, but it brought to our mind a feeling of great expectations. It was the moment of culmination of the hopes and aspirations of many long years of our life. For how many days did we dream of this very moment! One had to bend down, and slide in, through a very small opening and lower the feet into icy water. We, too, entered in. Ah, what a feeling! The cool water cleansed both the body and the Spirit as we waded through it. Each step in the cave generated a new power of unimaginable magnitude. It is impossible to put into words the mood of our divine experience during those few moments. But how true it was to one who experienced it! In that epiphanic moment, one communed with Mother in the form of rock. The ice, the tingling fresh water and the people who chanted in one voice, all melted into one miraculous tranquility. The congregation chanted again: *Prem se bolo jai Mata ki, phir se bolo jai Mata ki*. Not only the three stone-spots of Mahalakshmi, Mahakali and

Mahasaraswati in the temple complex, but every element of nature seemed to be suddenly vibrating with a tangible manifestation of the Divine Mother. It was a moment of harmonious integration between one soul and the other, between man and nature. It was indeed a moment of fulfillment and unalloyed bliss. And everyone shared it, rich or poor, young or old, sinner or saint.

The chantings continued. And with every repetition it brought a trance-like state of acute concentration, when each soul emanated strong, and potent signals of innate spirituality. A vibrant divinity filled the cave, and every person present was engulfed in its waves. With each breath the lungs, nay, the entire being was filled with the pure and holy atmosphere of the cave. The spirit in us was rejuvenated for all times to come. A biting cold wind was blowing outside. Inside, the warmth of the cave made us feel as though the child had found a new and perfect solace, having sucked the peace from the Mother's body, the cave. This was the Mother's gift to her devotees, a great spiritual rebirth, a life of heightened consciousness, and divine assurance. Who would like to leave this tangible presence of eternal mother?

As we journeyed back the heart cried out, 'Mother, oh Mother! we do not want to go back. We want to remain here, near you, always, forever!'. But the Mother's reply dispelled all gloom. 'You are not going away from me, my children. From now onwards, wherever you go, I go with you. Can you not feel my presence within you, around you, and beside you? Do you not see that I have been awakened in you? Do you not feel that I am protecting and guiding you?'

'Yes, yes, beloved Mother, we can sense it. We now know that you *are* enshrined in our hearts and minds. In the monotony of our everyday existence whenever we

will feel tired, sad or frightened, we will never forget to take refuge in you. And in that moment of time, we will be transported to your eternal Bhavan, this holy cave, which, though thousands of kilometres away, will yet be so near.'

TWO PARABLES ON PRACTICAL RELIGION

RABBI ASHER BLOCK

One parable, stemming from Rabbinic tradition, may be called 'Free as a Bird'. The other is an apologue tied in with a teaching from Eastern lore and be termed 'Rich as Butter'. What both have in common is the desire to stress, graphically, the need for *practicality* in spiritual affairs even as that is seen and acknowledged everywhere in the secular world.

(a) Legend has it that when God was in the process of creating the animal kingdom, he bestowed upon each of its denizens some means of protection. The lion he endowed with powerful claws, the elephant with thick hide, the deer with swift legs, and thus on and on for many others in their turn.

One small being, the bird, stood patiently aside, awaiting its distinctive gift. At length, fearful of being overlooked, it humbly ventured: 'And what, O Lord, wilt Thou grant me?' In response, the Lord then attached two special limbs to its back.

But the bird was visibly troubled and disappointed, thinking that now, with that extra burden to carry, its condition was worse than before.

Whereupon the Lord reassured this gentle creature, saying:

As long as you do not rightly use what I have given, it may indeed seem like a hardship or impediment to you; but the moment you learn to utilize My endowment aright, it will become *not weight but wings* and raise you aloft to unsuspected heights of safety and freedom.

This legend may be said to illustrate allegorically how different types of people see and react to Moral and Spiritual Law. To some, even among those within the religious communities, that Law or set of standards appears like a load or handicap. However, those who perceive It thoughtfully and employ It properly as the dual framework of creative living, (for which it was intended) will—so all the world's spiritual teachers assure us!—experience true upliftment and genuine liberation.

(b) Another version of this same basic lesson comes to us through the second parable. This may be applied to the generally lackadaisical attitude with which people relate to sacred terminology and sacred ideas. For example, words such as God, spirituality, and the like are 'in the air'; people have been using them for ages. Whole institutions (temple, church, mosque, synagogue) actively promulgate their use; consequently, millions of persons, both within those institutions and without, feel constrained to use them. In most communities, even in our heavily secularized society, it is still considered respectable to do so...

However, whereas the original users of these terms usually had experiences within their lives to instil content and reality in them, most of us do not. When we use words or express ideas about Divinity, Heaven, Holiness, Spirituality, Self, Immortality, and the like, it is almost inevitable that we shall blur or dilute their meaning through our own ignorance—which is to

say, a lack of our own trained and experienced knowledge. We may here depict this tendency as follows:

A dairy farmer once assured a novice customer of his, that the milk from his cows was 'saturated with butter.' (He meant, of course, that it was rich, and when properly churned, produced an excellent product.) The customer, untutored in ways of the farm, assumed that the two were practically alike. Whereupon he invited all his friends to taste of his butter, and proceeded to pour for them just plain ordinary milk.

It is this type of misapprehension and distortion that has plagued so much of the history of religion. Isaiah, as well as other prophets and sages—after long and intensive personal search and growth—have testified that 'the earth is filled with God's glory'. It is such an entrancing report, and many there are who begin to bandy it about. Either they do not understand, or conveniently overlook, the major pre-condition that must ever go along with the 'announcement' they have heard.

When you and I look out upon the earth, do we—*can* we—see other than a conglomeration of things: quiet landscapes and violent storms, well being and suffering, peace and war, and so on. With such a jumbled spectacle, is it not idle to pretend that 'God's glory is all-pervading' or that religion can raise us 'to the very skies'? But, then, does that mean that the saints and prophets have lied to us?

See what appalling confusion there can be on this subject when superficial notions play havoc with our outlook. It is quite like when one blandly asserts that 'milk is veritably butter'....Yet we know that the

farmer did not lie in so testifying! For he, in his own experience, had *fulfilled the conditions* for butter-making. And so it has been with all the genuine men of God. They knew and fulfilled the requisites for Divine Manifestation... And so must we, if we yearn to be enriched and free.

Martin Buber wrote an essay on 'The Way of Man According to the Teaching of Hasidism', and concluded it in the following manner.

'Where is the dwelling of God?'

This is the question with which the Rabbi of Kotzk surprised a number of learned men who happened to be visiting him.

They laughed at him: 'What a thing to ask! Is not the whole world full of his glory?'

Then he answered his own question.

'God dwells wherever man lets him in.'

This is the ultimate purpose: to let God in. But we can let him in only where we really stand, where we live a true life. If we help the holy spiritual substance to accomplish itself in that section of Creation in which we are living, then we are establishing, in this our place, a dwelling for the Divine Presence.

In so much of present-day religion so little is said about the indispensability of devotion or spiritual practice—namely, *how* to use our 'wings', *how* to turn milk into butter, how to transmute earth into Heaven (which is to say, a place of God's Presence). We must recognize that the Divine Presence is indeed a reality, but only a *potential* one as far as the bulk of humanity is concerned. For our part, earnest effort is called for—'creative work'—in order to bring that potentiality forth.

NOTES AND OBSERVATIONS

ABUJHMARH: VIVEKANANDA'S DREAM COMING TRUE

(Illustrated)

Nearly a century ago, Swami Vivekananda said with his prophetic vision that a new India will arise from the hills and jungles, from the peasants' cottages and the labourers' farms, from the fishermen's huts, and the cobblers' shops. But in order to give birth to this new India, Vivekananda exhorted India's educated young men and women to come forward and to dedicate their lives inspired with the national ideals of 'Renunciation and Service'.

The Ramakrishna Mission which started these service programmes nearly 80 years before, is today expanding its area of activities. The latest frontier opened by the Mission, for an integrated tribal development programme for the almost unknown hill tribes of remote Bastar hills, has been taken up by the Ramakrishna Mission Vivekananda Ashrama at Raipur. Swami Atmanandaji, ably assisted by his brother monks and other dedicated workers have made a splendid beginning of this tribal work which is expected to be a pioneering work for tribal development in the post-independent India.

The Bastar district lies at the extreme south-east corner of Madhya Pradesh in India. It is 39,114 sq. km. in area and thus larger than Kerala or Belgium and nearly as large as Holland. But it is most sparsely populated and backward. The greater part of Bastar district is a plateau, about 600 meters high. The land surface along Paralkote-Keshkal-Kutru area is maintained at a height of 600 to 750 metres throughout the central part of the district. In the western part it is so dissected as to possess a local relief of 150 to 300 metres giving it a hill form, known as Abujhmarh Hills which are situated in the southern

part of Narainpur tehsil. Abujhmarh region is about 95 kms. long from north to south and 55 kms. broad from east to west. A large part of this area is rugged and dissected by numerous streams. Today Abujhmarh is the new centre for the Mission's worship of God in man, the tribal humanity of Madhya Pradesh, neglected throughout the history.

Abujhmarh has been described as a 'tangled knot of hills', a back-of-the-beyond country, having an inaccessible geographical terrain that remains cut-off from the rest of the world for nearly half the year. The word 'abujhmarh' or the 'Unknown Highlands' is a combination of two words—one, the Hindi word 'Abujh' meaning unknown, and second, the Gondi word 'Marh' meaning highlands. And Abujhmarh, true to its name, still continues to be more or less an unknown and unsurveyed area. Its population as per 1984 survey conducted by the Abujhmarh Development Agency was 16,026 spread over in about 230 villages.

Because of their extreme geographical isolation for long, the Hill Marias have very primitive economy, their mainstay being the slash-and-burn cultivation practised on the steep hill slopes. They also collect forest produce like chironji, resin, cocoons etc. They make brooms of fulbahari grass, some bamboo articles, and rope from grass. They grow all their requirement of food crops but have to depend on the outside world for their meagre necessities of salt, chillies, tobacco and clothes. Barter system is still prevalent and in the sale of their produce and purchase of their requirements, they are most unscrupulously and liberally exploited by the town traders.

Literacy is very low, and ill-health stalks the land with malnutrition and diseases like malaria, yaws, leprosy, and scabies, and high rate of infant and maternal mortality. But their near total isolation from the outside world seems to have spared them the pangs of unending wants. They are a shy people, extremely suspicious of the outsiders who have tried only to exploit them so far. They form, indeed, one of the most improvable of the aboriginal tribes of India. Here, woman is considered as a partner in economic endeavour rather than a burden on the family. So once educated, girls can bring about the much-needed social change rather speedily.

Problems of Abujhmarh:

The main problems of Abujhmarh, apart from extremely poor communication, are:

- (i) Lack of medical facilities, high death-rate and, particularly, high infant mortality rate ;
- (ii) Lack of educational facilities and extremely low literacy ;
- (iii) Their economic exploitation by various agencies ;
- (iv) Unwillingness of government servants to work in the area.

Base camp at Narainpur

Abujhmarh is cut-off from the rest of the world for nearly half the year. Narainpur, in Bastar district, the doorway to Abujhmarh, has, therefore, been selected as the ideal location for the Base Camp of the Mission's activities. Narainpur is a tehsil headquarters well-connected with the outside world all through the year, and thus the Narainpur base camp makes it possible for the Mission to keep close contact with government machinery and the rest of the country. Narainpur is about 275 km from Raipur and 125 km from

Jagdalpur, the district headquarters of Bastar.

First phase of activities at the Base Camp

The State Government has donated a 60 acre piece of land to the Ramakrishna Mission Vivekananda Ashrama, Raipur, for its Base Camp at Narainpur where the following schemes have been taken up:

- (i) A Model School ;
- (ii) A 100-seated Hostel for boys ;
- (iii) A 30-bedded fully equipped modern Hospital with outdoor and mobile services.
- (iv) A vocational training centre to train men and women in agriculture, horticulture, dairy-farming, animal-husbandry, bee-keeping, pisciculture etc., besides many other indigenous trades such as carpentry, smithy, pottery, tailoring, weaving, knitting, straw-rope making bamboo, terracota, bell-metal and wood-carving works etc ;
- (v) A Fair price shop complex to cater to the daily purchase and sale needs of the tribal people ;
- (vi) A centre for non-formal education and
- (vii) Training of tribal youths in self-reliance and cultural values to bring them in the mainstream of our national life and thus make them an integral part of our society at large.

Work inside Abujhmarh

Besides the above, the Mission has also spread its activities inside Abujhmarh by establishing service centres at Irakbhatti, Kutul and Kohkameta to cater to the educational and medical needs of the local population and provide for them self-employment opportunities. Service-centres at many other places will follow suit, subject to the availability of men and money. The government of Madhya Pradesh has assured full support to the

project during the seventh five-year plan.

The service-work at the 42-acre campus site at Narainpur commenced on 2 August 1985. The progress of work, during this short period of 15 months is as follows:

A. At Narainpur

(i) The out patients' department of the hospital, 'Vivekananda Arogya Dham' was inaugurated by Hon'ble Sri M. L. Vora, Chief Minister, Madhya Pradesh, on 26 January 1986, which, on an average, is treating 200 patients daily completely free of charge.

(ii) 'Vivekananda Chal Chikitsalaya', the Mobile Medical Unit which was also inaugurated by the chief minister on 26 January 1986, is rendering its valuable free services to nearly 100 villages of the interior areas.

(iii) 'Vivekananda Vidyapeeth', a residential school for the tribal boys, to be run on public school pattern, was started on 2 July 1986 with 73 boys on roll in classes 1 to 4. 60% of whom happen to come from inside Abujhmarh, trekking long distances—30 to 40 kms. And this enrolment has been made despite the tribals peoples' usual indifference towards and total disregard for formal education.

(iv) 'Vivekananda Vanavasi Yuva Prashikshan Kendra', a Vocational Training Centre for tribal youth in the age-group of 16 to 35 was inaugurated on 2 August 1986 by Sri K. R. Sangameshwaran, Managing Director, Bhilai Steel Plant, with 20-trainees to be trained in one batch, with a six-month course. Two such courses will be conducted every year to build up a band of dedicated multipurpose workers for the Mission's

centres inside Abujhmarh as well as for institutions being run by the government and other voluntary agencies.

(v) TRYSEM scheme has been adopted to give training to the rural and tribal youth in the following trades to open up self-employment opportunities for them in their rural surroundings: tailoring, carpentry, photography, smithy, weaving, agriculture-cum-horticulture, bee-keeping, sericulture, bamboo work, and sawai rope winding etc.

(vi) A fair-price shop complex to make available consumer goods readily to the rural poor at reasonable price.

B. Inside Abujhmarh

The Mission has already started 2 service-centres inside Abujhmarh—at Irakbhatti and Kutul (34 kms. and 43 kms respectively from Narainpur). The Mission is running a school, a Health Post and a fair-price shop at each of these centres. Three more such service-centres inside Abujhmarh—at Kohkameta, Kachapal and Nednar—are expected to start functioning very soon.

The entire scheme will take years to bring the desired fruit. But already a stir has been made in this sleeping domain of remote Bastar. The Government of India has assured its full support to the scheme during the seventh five year plan. But it deserves the whole-hearted cooperation of other voluntary agencies as well, for the total awakening of this remote Bastar region through Abujhmarh where Swami Vivekananda's dream is today coming true through the untiring service and dedication of his inspired followers.

NEWS AND REPORTS

THE GENERAL REPORT OF THE RAMAKRISHNA MATH AND THE RAMAKRISHNA MISSION

(FROM APRIL 1984 TO MARCH 1985)

(We are presenting here a brief summary of the latest report of the Ramakrishna Math and the Ramakrishna Mission, which will give our readers some information about the activities of these twin organizations. The report was issued by the General Secretary in November 1986 from the Headquarters at Belur Math, Dist. Howrah, West Bengal 711 202, India.—*Ed.*)

INTRODUCTION

History

Shortly after the passing away of Sri Ramakrishna, the prophet of harmony of all religions, in August 1886, a monastic Order bearing his name was organized in pursuance of his own instructions, with a monastery (Math) at Baranagore, a northern suburb of Calcutta, by his Sannyasin disciples headed by Swami Vivekananda. It gradually set up a twofold ideal before it: To create a band of Sannyasin teachers of Vedanta as propounded by Sri Ramakrishna and practically illustrated by his own life; and in conjunction with the lay disciples to carry on missionary and philanthropic work, looking upon all, irrespective of caste, creed or colour, as veritable manifestations of the Divine. For sometime the latter work was carried on through an association called the Ramakrishna Mission Association, started by Swami Vivekananda in May 1897, shortly after his return from the West. In 1899 he transferred the Math, which had changed places by now, to its present site at Belur, across the Ganga, about six kilometres north of Calcutta, where it set itself more vigorously to the task of training a band of monks inspired with the twin ideals of Self-realisation and service to the world. Soon after this, the Math authorities took upon themselves the work of the Mission Association.

Though the Ramakrishna Math was registered as a Trust in 1901, for the efficiency of the work of the Mission Association and for giving it a legal status, a society named the Ramakrishna Mission was registered in 1909 under Act XXI of 1860 (see Appendices A and B). Its management vested in a Governing Body. Both the Math and the Mission gradually extended their spheres of activity as a result of which a number of branches in different parts of the country and abroad came into existence.

Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission

Though Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, with their respective branches, are distinct legal entities, they are closely related, inasmuch as the Governing Body of the Mission is made up of the Trustees of the Math; the administrative work of the Mission is mostly in the hands of the monks of Ramakrishna Math, and both have their Headquarters at Belur Math. The Math organization is constituted under a Trust with well-defined rules of procedure. The Mission is a registered society. Though both the organizations take up charitable and philanthropic activities, the former lays emphasis on religion and preaching, while the latter is wedded mainly to welfare service of various kinds. This distinction should be borne in mind, though 'Ramakrishna Mission' is loosely associated by people with Math activities also. It is necessary, moreover, to point out that the appropriation of the name of Sri Ramakrishna or Swami Vivekananda by any institution does not necessarily imply that it is affiliated either to Ramakrishna Math or to Ramakrishna Mission.

The Math and the Mission own separate funds and keep separate accounts of them. Though both the Math and the Mission receive grants from the Central and State Governments and public bodies for their social welfare activities, the other activities of the Math are financed from offerings, publications, etc., and the Mission is supported by fees from students, public donations, etc. Both the Math and the Mission accounts are annually audited by qualified auditors.

Summary of Activities

The following notable developments took place in the Ramakrishna Mission during the year under report:

A branch of the Mission was started at Agartala

with the land and buildings received from 'Ramakrishna Ashrama, Agartala'. Foundations were laid for a temple at Chandigarh, for a prayer hall at Sarisha, for a temple and monks' quarters at Visakhapatnam, for an administrative block at Ranchi Sanatorium, for a housing scheme at Rambagan under Narendrapur and for a fair price shop complex at Narainpur under Raipur. A temple-cum-prayer hall at Narendrapur and a prayer hall at Sakchi under Jamshedpur were dedicated.

The 'Abhujmarh Rural Development Project' of Raipur was inaugurated at Narainpur. Subsequently the first unit of residential quarters, the out-patients department of the primary health centre and a mobile medical unit were added. 'Ramakrishna Darshan', a museum on the life and message of Sri Ramakrishna and 'Samaj Sevak Sikshanamandira', an institution for training youths in rural development work were declared open at Saradapitha, Belur. A well-equipped medical diagnostic centre, attached to the T. B. clinic at New Delhi was inaugurated. The dispensary building at Manasadwip, the two-storeyed primary school building at Madras Mission Ashrama, the lecture hall-cum-children's library at Salem, the two-storeyed library and reading room building at Shillong, the renovated dormitory block at Cherrapunji, the higher secondary school building at Narottam Nagar, the library building at Ranchi Mission Ashrama, the ground floor of the new school building at Malliankaranai under Madras Students' Home and the extension building of the 'Home for Invalid Women' along with the renovated old block of the same at Varanasi Home of Service, were declared open.

Mobile medical services were commenced by Itanagar and Rajahmundry centres. An eye-camp was conducted at Agartala with the help of the mobile ophthalmology team of the Government of Tripura.

During the year under review, the following important developments took place in the Ramakrishna Math:

Foundation was laid for a temple at Rajahmundry where the monks' quarters, kitchen-cum-dining hall, office block as also the library and reading room were declared open. A marble image of Sri Ramakrishna was consecrated and the kitchen-cum-dining hall building was declared open at Contai. A 5,000 litre solar water system was inaugurated at Rajkot. The first floor of the primary school building at Nattarampalli and the first floor of the monks' quarters at Dhaka

(Bangladesh) were declared open. A mobile medical unit was inaugurated at Nagpur.

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE YEAR

Our Vidyalaya campus, Coimbatore was chosen as the venue for the UNESCO regional planning seminar and workshop on 'Special Education', where besides the hostcountry, Indonesia, Phillipines, Thailand and Vietnam were represented. A Special General Meeting of the Ramakrishna Mission was held at Belur Math on the 14th of July, 1985. To mark the occasion of the 500th anniversary of Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, the Headquarters conducted a medical unit, a book-stall, an exhibition and filmshows at Navadwip, with the help of Seva Pratishthan, Udbodhan and Narendrapur centres.

Two teachers of our schools at Along and Madras were honoured by the Government of India with the 'National Award for Teachers' for the year 1985. As before, the academic results of our educational institutions were excellent. Our students secured the 2nd, 4th, 6th, 10th, 11th, 13th, 15th, 16th and 20th positions in the Madhyamik Examination 1985 and the 3rd, 4th, 7th, 9th and 13th positions in the Higher Secondary Examination 1985, as also the 1st, 4th, 6th, 9th and 10th positions in the Junior Diploma Engineering Examination 1985, in West Bengal. The 1st position in the H. S. L. C. Examination 1985 of the Meghalaya Board and the 10th position in the High School Examination 1985 of the Uttar Pradesh Board were also bagged by our students.

Centres

Excluding the Headquarters at Belur, there were in March 1986, 123 branches in all, of which 53 were Mission centres, 22 combined Math and Mission centres, and 48 Math centres. These were distributed as follows: 2 Mission centres, 5 combined Math and Mission centres and 3 Math centres in Bangladesh; 1 Mission centre each in Sri Lanka, Singapore, Fiji, Mauritius and France; 1 Math centre each in Switzerland, England, Argentina and Japan; 12 Math centres in the United States of America, and the remaining 46 Mission centres, 17 combined Math and Mission centres and 29 Math centres (92 in all) in India. The Indian centres were distributed as follows: 30 in West Bengal, 11 each in Uttar Pradesh and Tamil Nadu, 7 in Bihar, 6 in Kerala, 4 in Karnataka, 3 each in Orissa,

Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Arunachal Pradesh and Maharashtra, 2 in Meghalaya and 1 each in Tripura, Gujarat, Rajasthan, Delhi, Madhya Pradesh and Chandigarh. Moreover, attached to some of the branches, there were 27 sub-centres where monastic workers resided more or less permanently.

Types of Work

Medical Service: The Math and the Mission institutions under this head served the public in general, irrespective of creed, colour or nationality. Prominent of these are the hospitals at Calcutta, Kankhal, Lucknow, Itanagar, Ranchi, Trivandrum, Varanasi and Vrindaban. In 1985-86 there were altogether 13 Hospitals with 1811 beds which accommodated 53,094 patients, 83 Out-patient Dispensaries which treated 44,36,325 cases including the old ones and 19 Mobile Dispensaries which treated, mostly in rural and tribal areas, 5,43,750 cases. Besides, some centres had emergency or observation in-patient wards attached to their dispensaries. The Veterinary section of the Shyamala Tal Ashrama treated 10 cases. The Sanatorium at Ranchi and the Clinic at New Delhi treated Tuberculosis cases alone, while large sections of Seva Pratishtan, Calcutta and the hospital at Trivandrum were devoted to maternity and child-welfare work. At Trivandrum there was also a department of Psychiatry. Research in different branches of Medical Science as also Post-graduate degree and diploma courses were conducted at Seva Pratishtan, Calcutta.

Educational Work: During the year the twin organizations conducted 5 Degree Colleges of general education, at Madras, Rahara (North 24 Parganas), Coimbatore, Belur (Howrah), and Narendrapur (South 24 Parganas), with 4,995 students on their rolls. The last two were wholly residential, and the colleges at Madras and Coimbatore had attached hostels for residing students. In addition, there were 3 B. Ed. Colleges at Belur, Coimbatore and Mysore with 389 students; 1 Basic Training School at Coimbatore with 39 students; 1 Post-graduate Basic Training College at Rahara with 102 students; a Sanskrit College at Trichur with 42 students; 4 Junior Basic Training Institutes at Rahara, Sarisha and Sargachhi with 295 students; a College of Physical Education, and an Institute of Agriculture with 141 and 91 students respectively at Coimbatore; 4 Polytechnics at Belur, Belgharia, Madras and Coimbatore with 1,383 students; 10 Junior Technical and Industrial Schools with 834 students; 6 Vocational Training Centres with 286 students; 96 Students' Homes and

Hostels, including some orphanages with 11,556 boys and 1,484 girls; 42 Higher Secondary, Secondary and High Schools with 24,439 boys and 11,648 girls; 26 Senior Basic and M.E. Schools with 4,722 boys and 3,854 girls; 44 Junior Basic, U.P. and Elementary Schools with 7,354 boys and 3,399 girls; and 768 L.P. and other grades of Schools with 31,126 boys and 4,877 girls; 248 Adult Education and Community Centres with 6,474 students; A Postgraduate Institute of Medical Sciences with 26 students, was conducted by the Seva Pratishtan of Calcutta. Training of nurses and midwives was undertaken by Seva Pratishtan of Calcutta, Sevashrama of Vrindaban and also the Math Hospital at Trivandrum, the total number of trainees being 251. Two Schools of Languages with 3,888 students, for teaching different Indian and foreign languages were conducted by Institute of Culture, Calcutta and Hyderabad Math Centre. The Ashrama at Narendrapur conducted a Blind Boys' Academy, an Institute of Commerce and a Village-Level Workers' Training Centre with 170, 164 and 3,000 students respectively. The centre at Ranchi (Morabadi) ran a training centre in farming (Divyayan) with 2,721 (773 in-campus) students. The centre at Rahara conducted a Rural Librarianship Training Centre (residential) with 31 students. Thus there were altogether 1,02,682 boys and 26,852 girls in all the educational institutions run by the Math and the Mission in India, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Singapore, Fiji and Mauritius.

Recreational Activities: Some of our centres conducted Balaka and Yuvaka Sanghas which provided scope for recreational, cultural and spiritual activities for youngsters at stated periods outside their school and college hours. In this regard, the centres at Allahabad, Bangalore, Malda, Mysore, Hyderabad, Salem and Saradapitha had activities worth mentioning. The range of activities included devotional singing, Vedic chanting and participation in indoor and outdoor games. Films on religion, sports, science and health were screened. Some of the centres distributed free milk and snacks to the participating children.

Work for Women: The organizations have ever been conscious of their duties to the women of India. Typical of the work done for them are the Maternity sections of the Seva Pratishtan, Calcutta and the Hospital at Trivandrum; the Domiciliary and Maternity Clinics at Jalpaiguri and Khetri; the Invalid Women's Home at Varanasi; the Sarada Vidyalyaya at Madras; the Girls' High Schools at Jamshedpur; the

Sarada Mandir at Sarisha and the three Training Schools for nurses at Trivandrum, Vrindaban and Calcutta. The Madras Math also conducts a High School and a Primary School for girls.

Rural Uplift and Work among the Labouring and Backward Classes: Rural and Tribal Welfare Work has come to occupy a prominent place in the scheme of services rendered by the Math and Mission centres. This work is accomplished in three ways: (a) Through our centres located in rural and tribal areas, primarily for this purpose; (b) Through our urban centres which have taken up development projects in rural and tribal areas; (c) Through our educational and medical institutions in urban areas where rural people form a significant percentage of the beneficiaries.

Such activities may be broadly grouped under: (i) General (ii) Agriculture (iii) Education and self-reliance and (iv) Medical.

(i) General: Attempts were made to create an awareness amongst villagers regarding sanitation and cleanliness. Drinking water was provided by digging bore-wells and tube-wells. Construction of pucca houses, low-cost latrines, etc., enabled a healthier living. Religious and moral classes were conducted and cultural functions were arranged.

(ii) Agriculture: Free soil-testing was done and farmers were taught improved methods of cultivation and also provided with agricultural inputs and financial help. Projects such as wasteland development, fruit and forest trees planting, etc. were undertaken.

(iii) Education and self-reliance: Free schools were run for children who were also provided free board and lodging and aids like stationery, clothing, etc. Also Adult and non-formal education centres were conducted. Night-schools for labourers and working-children evoked good response. Training schemes were organized for learning lathe-turning, carpentry, bee-keeping, pisciculture, dairy and poultry-farming, weaving, incense-stick making, etc., to enable the rural and tribal folk to achieve self-reliance.

(iv) Medical: Mobile dispensaries supplied free medicines to a large number of patients, organized free diagnostic and eye-operation camps and generally helped spread of health education.

In addition to the more prominent village Ashramas like those at Cherrapunji, Sarisha, Ramharipur, Manasadwip, Jayrambati, Kamarpukur, Chandipur, Sargachhi, Along, Narottam Nagar, Chengalpattu, Kalady, Trichur and Nattarampalli, a number of rural sub-centres—both permanent and semi-permanent—are run

under the centres at Belur, Sarisha, Trichur, Ranchi, Narendrapur and Cherrapunji besides one under Madras Students' Home. Of these, special mention may be made of the numerous village sub-centres started for educating the hill tribes in Meghalaya and a farming centre at Ranchi, specially meant for Adivasis and scheduled castes. Welfare work of various kinds was done among the Nagas, Kukis, Mizos, etc. by the Silchar Ashrama. Our educational, medical and cultural activities in Arunachal Pradesh are also proving very useful and popular. During the year, the organizations ran in rural and backward areas 17 Secondary or High Schools, 47 Senior Basic, Junior Basic, M.E. and U.P. Schools, 53 Primary Schools, 56 Night Schools, 6 Vocational Training Centres, a Rural Librarianship Training Centre, a Village-Level Workers' Training Centre, a College, 3 Schools, a Chatuspathi and a Pathashala, all for Sanskrit study, an Institute of Agriculture, 247 Adult Education and Community Centres, 428 Non-formal Education Centres, and an Institute (Divyayan) for training village youths in farming—with a total of 62,777 students. The organizations also conducted 3 Hospitals treating 1,392 cases, 40 Out-patient Dispensaries treating 10,31,147 patients and 19 Mobile Dispensaries serving 5,16,499 patients besides running 133 milk-distribution centres and a number of libraries with 3 mobile units, all located in rural and backward areas. In addition to such varied activities, preaching and educative tours, screening films and slides and such other efforts were also undertaken. The statistics given in this paragraph form part of the figures furnished under 'Medical Service' and 'Educational Work'.

Pallimangal (Integrated Rural Development): The Math and the Mission Headquarters directly conducted Pallimangal activities as a pilot project in 17 villages in and around Kamarpukur, Jayrambati and Bali-Dewanganj. The day-to-day field works were managed with the help of trained young men as Pallimangal cadre, under the supervision of monks.

The followig programmes were implemented by the Headquarters during 1985-86 with a total expenditure of Rs. 7,74,943.

Agriculture: (i) Soil analysis was done for 162 plots, in the soil testing laboratory at Kamarpukur and accordingly farmers were advised. (ii) Fertilisers worth Rs. 16,158 were given on credit to 48 farmers. (iii) 6 Quintals of Sannhemp was distributed on credit to 72 farmers at 50% subsidised rates. (iv) Spraying machines and power tillers were provided to 53 farmers on concessional hire charges.

Pisciculture: Expert guidance was provided on composite pisciculture.

Bee-keeping: 15 persons were given special training in inspection of box, extraction, bottling and marketing of honey.

Artificial Insemination Centre: It served 70 cases.

Credit for Small Business: Materials worth Rs. 13,450 were given on credit to 18 persons.

Cottage Industry: Nearly 150 trained persons ran independently a number of cottage industries such as tailoring, weaving and incense sticks manufacturing units. Improved methods of jute spinning, dyeing, weaving, etc. were taught. 50 new persons were trained in cottage industry during the year.

Training of the Handicapped and Destitutes: Handicapped children and destitute women numbering 23 were imparted work education during the year. 16 of them were given hand-looms, yarn, sewing and knitting machines, etc. worth Rs. 18,020 to help them achieve self-reliance.

Educational: Two free coaching classes were run and 60 non-formal schools run by the Kamarpukur Math were supervised, by the Pallimangal cadre.

Mobile Medical Service: (i) 39,998 patients were treated in and around Kamarpukur, Jayrambati, Koalpara and Bali-Dewanganj. (ii) Free eye operation camp was conducted at Kamarpukur and 72 cataract cases were operated and given spectacles.

The following programmes were implemented by the branches: (i) 5 mobile dispensaries (Mission) were run and 2,52,485 cases [Bombay 1,07,771, Kankhal (2 Units) 57,278, Raipur 41,767 and Vrindaban 45,669] were treated; (ii) Vocational training was given, distribution of nutrition-food and clothing programmes were undertaken and financial assistance was given to needy persons, by the Bombay centre; (iii) 3 mobile dispensaries were run by the Math centres at Madras (through Nattarampalli centre), Hyderabad and Bangalore: cases treated 63,761 in more than 150 villages.

Mass Contact: The various activities of the Math and Mission are spread over both rural and urban areas. The participation of lakhs of people in the annual celebrations is indicative of the steady growth in the spreading of the message of Ramakrishna-Vivekananda. The Ashramas and temples, situated all over the country, draw multitudes of people throughout the year. Our medical institutions provide free or concessional medical facilities to lakhs of poor patients. In the field of education, a considerable number of poor students avail of

free facilities of board and/or lodging in our educational institutions. The free libraries and reading rooms maintained, attract a large number of readers. The publication centres, sometimes, bring out subsidised edition of select books to enable the masses to have access to them.

Spiritual and Cultural Work: Both the Math and the Mission centres laid emphasis on the dissemination of the spiritual and cultural ideals of India, and through various types of activity tried to give a practical shape to the teaching of Sri Ramakrishna that all religions are true. The centres established real points of contact among people of different faiths through public celebrations, meetings, classes, publications, etc. More than 130 libraries containing a large number of books and journals were conducted by them. Attached to the libraries, reading rooms were maintained in many places. A college, a Chatuspathi and a Pathashala, for Sanskrit studies were run. At least 10 centres published books on religious subjects and 12 journals in different languages. Special mention should be made of the Institute of Culture, Calcutta, which has published *The Cultural Heritage of India* (5 Volumes so far) and which has been trying to bring together eminent men and women of India and other lands in cultural fellowship. The Math centres at Mayavati, Baghbazar (Calcutta), Madras, Nagpur, Mysore, Rajkot, Trichur and Bhubaneswar, in particular, have to their credit a considerable number of useful publications. Some of our foreign centres too are publishing valuable books. It may not be out of place to tell here of the continuous preaching of Vedanta through classes and lectures for quite a few years now, being carried on by Swami Nihshreyasananda in Africa (Ramakrishna Vedanta Society, 35, Rhodes Avenue, Box BE 128, Belvedere, Harare, Zimbabwe).

Relief and Rehabilitation Work: The Mission and Math undertook relief and rehabilitation works. The Headquarters as well as some of the branches were involved in these works.

The following primary relief works were conducted during the year:

(a) **Flood and Cyclone Relief:** In West Bengal through Manasadwip centre and in Orissa through Bhubaneswar centre. Flood relief was also conducted in Assam through Silchar and Karimganj centres, in Tamil Nadu through Madras Math and in Bangladesh through Dhaka centre.

(b) **Gas Disaster Relief:** In Bhopal of Madhya Pradesh by the Headquarters.

(c) Distress Relief: In Meghalaya through Cherrapunji centre.

(d) Fire Relief: In Andhra Pradesh through Visakhapatnam centre.

(e) Refugee Relief: In Tamil Nadu through Madras Mission Ashrama. Besides, free education facilities were provided to 810 Sri Lanka refugee students.

(i) Drought Relief: In Gujarat through Rajkot Math centre.

A sum of Rs. 13,83,404 was spent towards primary relief work. Besides, relief articles worth Rs. 11,09,877 were distributed amongst people afflicted by various calamities. The materials distributed were as follows:

680 food packets, puffed rice 586.5 kg, rice 18,126 kg, dal 1,950 kg, wheat 39,170 kg, atta 90 kg, chira 10 md, sweets 459 kg, jaggery 10,085 kg, sugar 1 md. 30 sr., buns 39,655 pcs., fruits 2,434 nos., tea 2 kg, biscuits 1,180 pkts., milk powder 10 bags and 380 kg. drinking water 13,00,000 litres, saris 4,781 pcs.; dhotis 3,766 pcs., children's garments 22,891 pcs., adult garments 2,390 pcs., woollen blankets 700 pcs., cotton blankets 178 pcs., cotton chaddars 2,390 pcs., lungis 590 pcs., old woollen sweaters 5,723 pcs., old clothings 14,091 pcs., lanterns 300 pcs., utensils 2,955 pcs., K. oil 100 litres, text books 9,615 nos., paper 2,774 qrs., pens 436 nos., ink-pots 422 nos., pencils 506 nos., slates 40 nos., medicine 7 pkts., solid phenyl 2 tins, water-purifying solution 10 ph., bleaching powder 25 kg, chlorine tablets 1,000 nos. and grass-fodder 2,000 kg.

The following rehabilitation work was conducted by the Headquarters:

One wing of Thakurnagar Girls High School in Gaighata Block of North 24 Parganas, West Bengal which was razed by a devastating tornado, was rebuilt at a cost of Rs. 3,77,847.

Annual Celebrations: Most of the Math and the Mission centres appropriately observe the days sanctified by the advent of great saints and prophets. The general features of the celebrations of the birthdays of Sri Ramakrishna, Sri Sarada Devi (the Holy Mother) and Swami

Vivekananda are: Special worship, *Homa* (offerings in the sacred fire), chanting of scriptural texts, Bhajan and *Sankirtan* (often in chorus), distribution of *Prasad* (sacramental food) to the devotees, feeding of the poor in large numbers, and lectures by eminent speakers, including the Swamis of the Order. Thus the message of Sri Ramakrishna and his direct associates is steadily spreading, and many young and ardent souls are coming into closer touch with the ideals of the Math and the Mission. In co-operation with the local public, a few centres celebrate some of the popular Hindu festivals, accounts for these being maintained separately.

RAMAKRISHNA-VIVEKANANDA BHAVA PRACHAR

Under the auspices and direction of the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Bhava Prachar Committee, Allahabad and Ja'paiguri centres conducted Youth Conventions where the participants exhibited tremendous enthusiasm and keen interest in the proceedings.

The National Youth Day was observed in most of our centres. The celebrations included processions, meetings, symposia and distribution of folders and booklets containing the message of Swami Vivekananda.

THE PLAN OF THE REPORT

The activities of the Math and the Mission have been presented in this Report in five sections. Section I deals with the Math and the Mission Headquarters; Section II with Mission centres only, classified into (A) Institutions mainly medical, (B) Institutions mainly cultural and educational, and (C) Institutions of general services; Section III with combined Math and Mission centres; Section IV with Math centres in India; and Section V with centres outside India. They will be taken up in order. The descriptions given in this Report are very short, since most of the centres publish reports of their own, to which reference may be made for details.

'He who knows the Supreme attains the highest.'—Tait. Upa II.1.1

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VEDANTA

By Swami Vivekananda

(A lecture delivered at Lahore on the 12th November 1897)

Two worlds there are in which we live, one the external, the other the internal. Human progress has been, from times of yore, almost in parallel lines along both these worlds. The search began in the external, and man at first wanted to get answers for all the deep problems from outside nature. Man wanted to satisfy his thirst for the beautiful and the sublime from all that surrounded him; man wanted to express himself and all that was within him in the language of the concrete; and grand indeed were the answers, most marvellous ideas of God and worship, most rapturous expressions of the beautiful. Sublime ideas came from the external world indeed. But the other, opening out for humanity later, laid out before him a universe yet sublimer, yet more beautiful, and infinitely more expansive. In the *Karma Kanda* portion of the Vedas we find the most wonderful ideas of religion inculcated, we find the most wonderful ideas about an over-ruling Creator, Preserver and Destroyer, and this universe presented before us in language sometimes the most soul-stirring. Most of you, perhaps, remember that most wonderful sloka in the Rig Veda Samhita where you get the description of chaos, perhaps the sublimest that has ever been attempted yet. In spite of all this we find it is only a painting of the sublime outside, in spite of all this we find that yet it is gross, that something of matter yet clings on to it. Yet we find that it is only the expression of the Infinite in the language of matter, in the language of the finite, it is the infinite of the muscles and not of the mind. It is the infinite of space and not of thought. Therefore in the second portion, or *Jnana Kanda* we find there is altogether a different procedure. The first was to search out from external nature the truths of the universe. The first attempt was to get the solution of all the deep problems of life from the material world. *Yasyaite Himavanto mahitva*—"Whose glory these Himalayas declare." This is a grand idea, but yet it was not grand enough for India. The Indian mind had to fall back—and the research took a different direction altogether from the external, the search came into the internal, from matter into the mind.

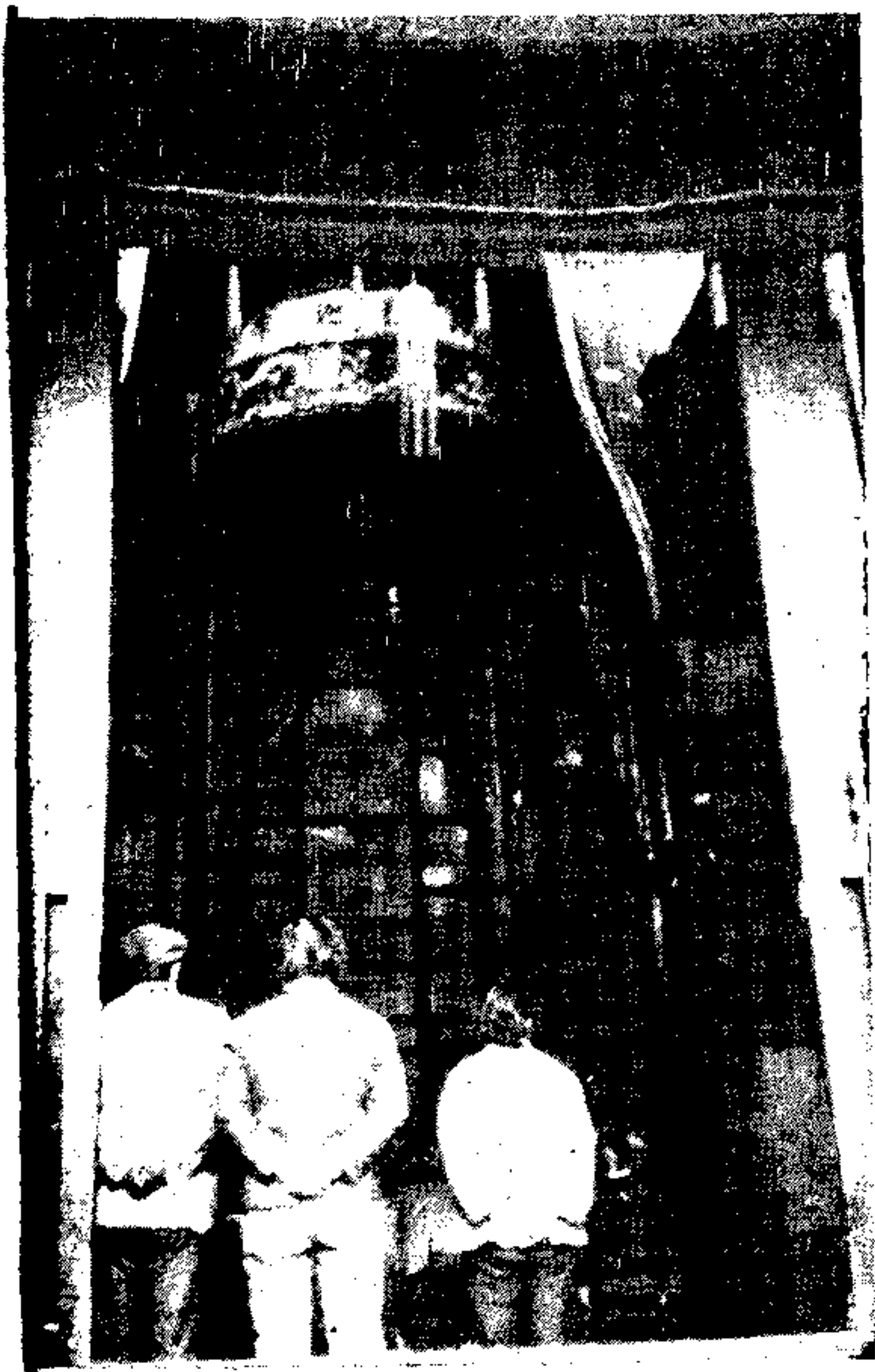


Wenshu Si : Devotees offering
joss sticks in courtyard.

Emei Shan ; Baoguo Si : Outer
courtyard and front gate.

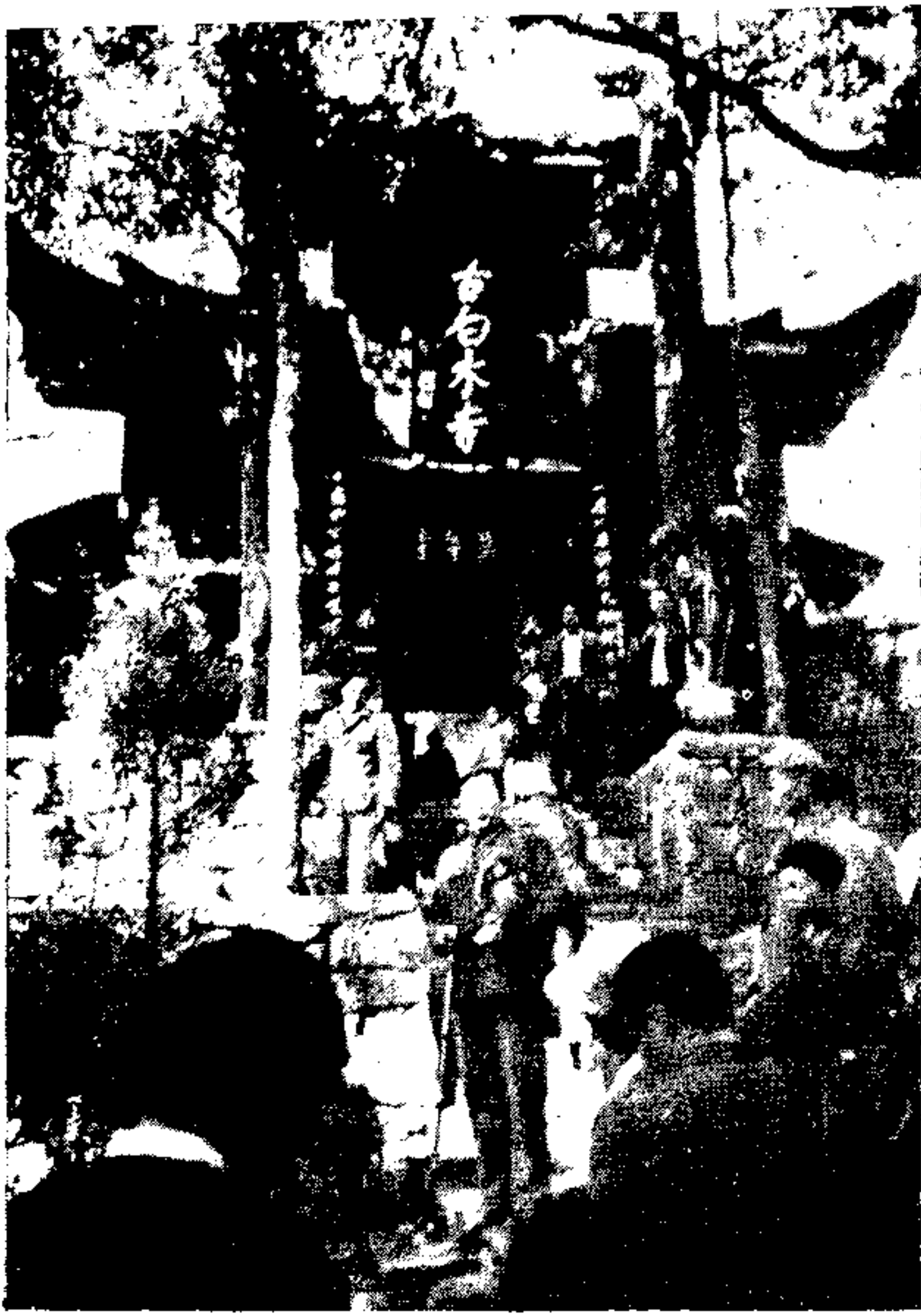


Emei Shan ; Baoguo Si : Crowds in front of large hall.

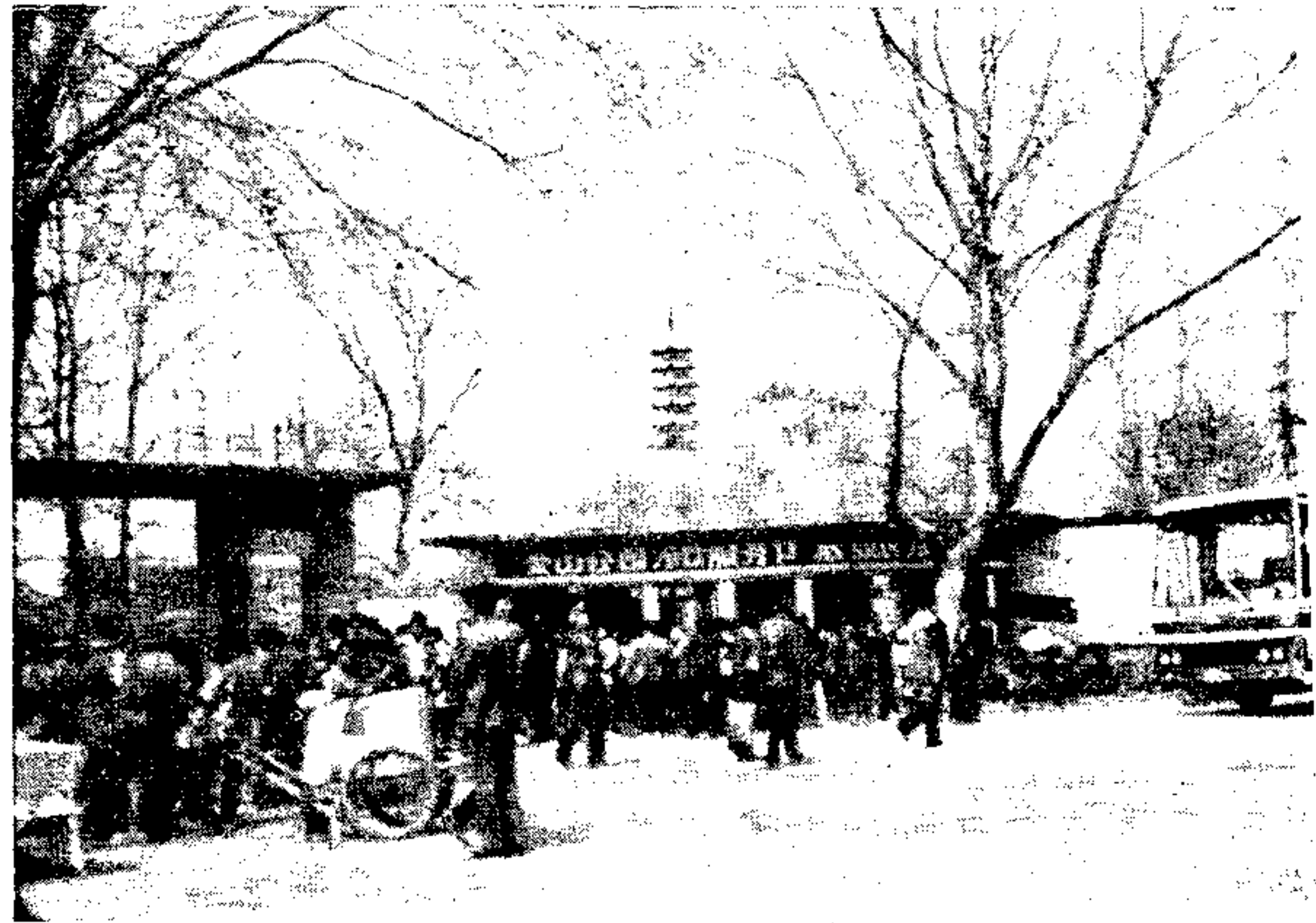


Emei Shan ; Baoguo Si : Chinese
tourists admiring shrineroom.

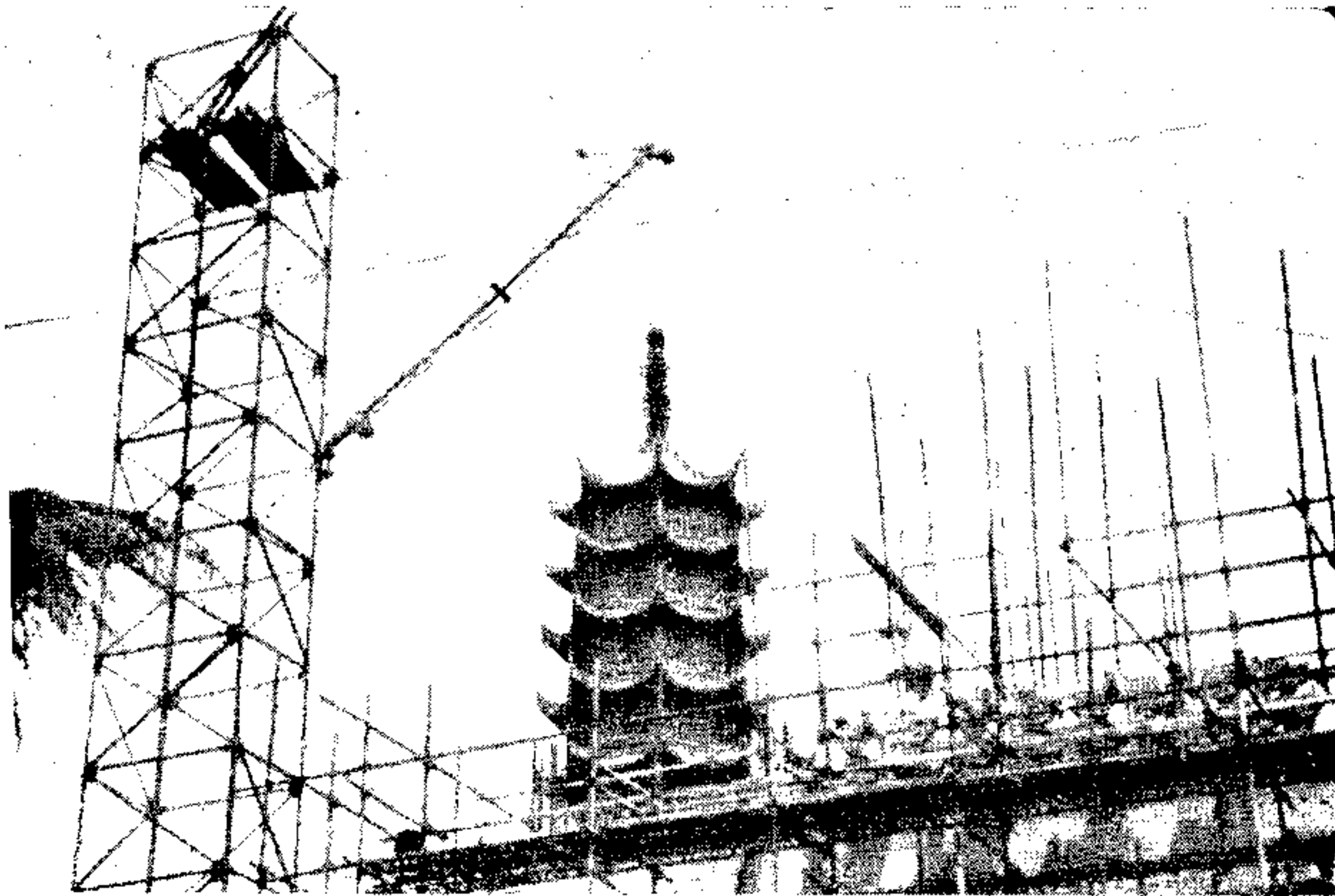




Emei Shan ; Wanniansi : Chinese tourists
outside the front gate.



Jin Shan : Bus stand and
entrance gate to park.



Jin Shan : View from inside front gate :
pagoda and construction.

Jin Shan : Front gate to monastery





Jin Shan : Recreation area at foot of Jin Shan.

Jiao Shan : Chinese tourists disembarking from ferry on Jiao Shan side.



Jiao Shan : Tourists approaching Jiao Shan front gate.

Jiao Shan : Tien Wang Dian, new temple under construction almost directly in front of Ding Hwei Si.



RELIGIOUS MOTIFS ON INDIAN STAMPS



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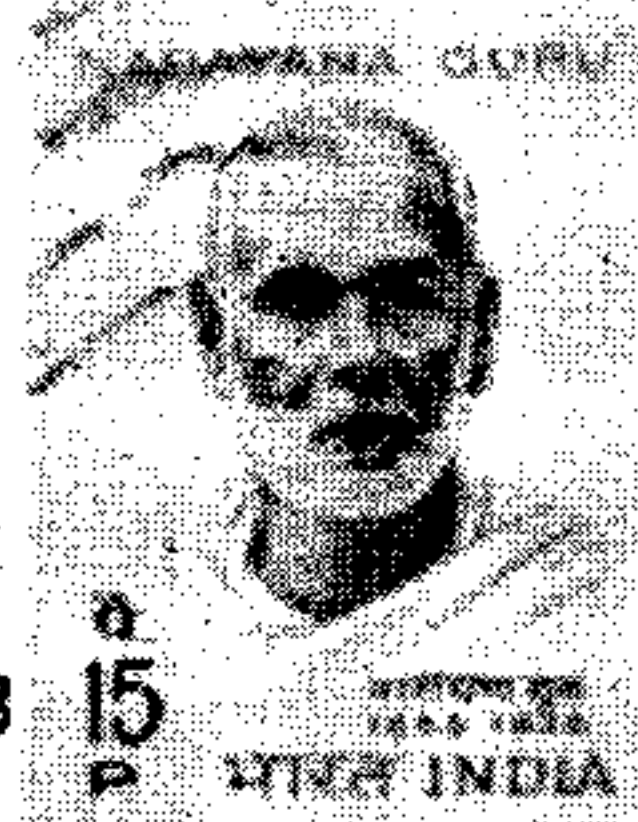
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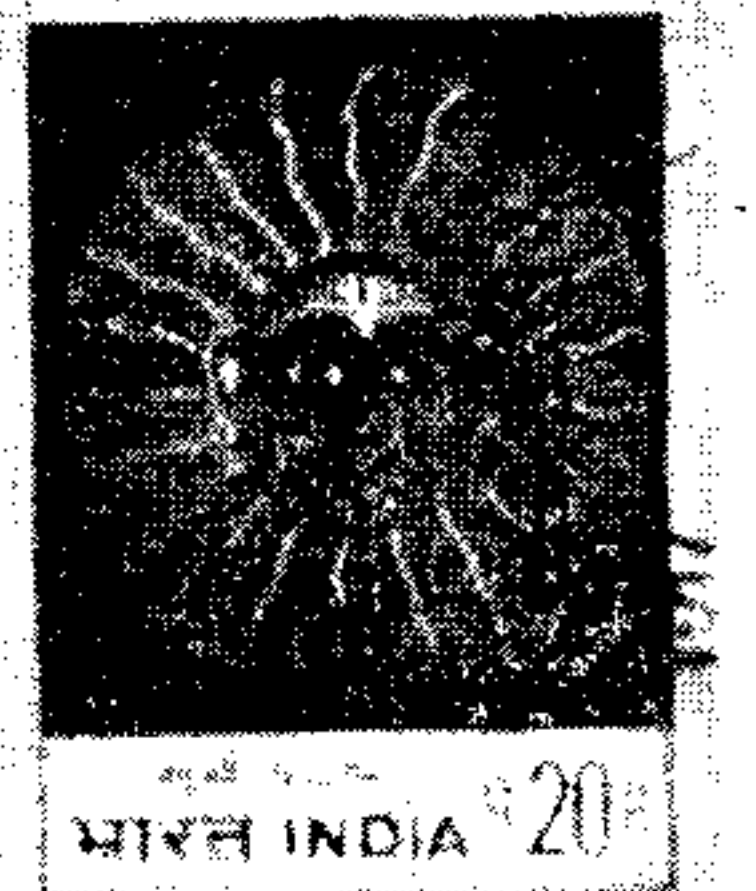
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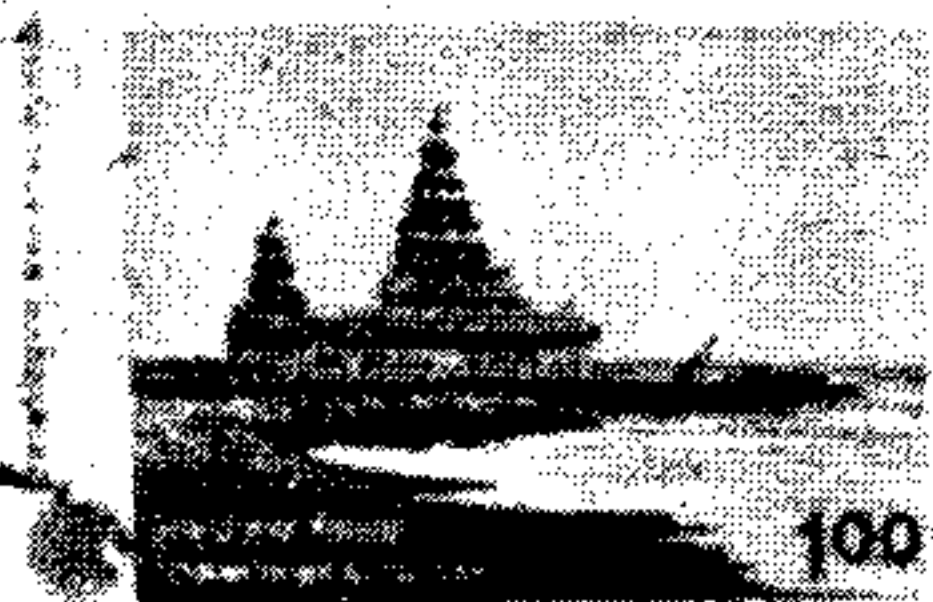
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RELIGIOUS MOTIFS ON INDIAN STAMPS



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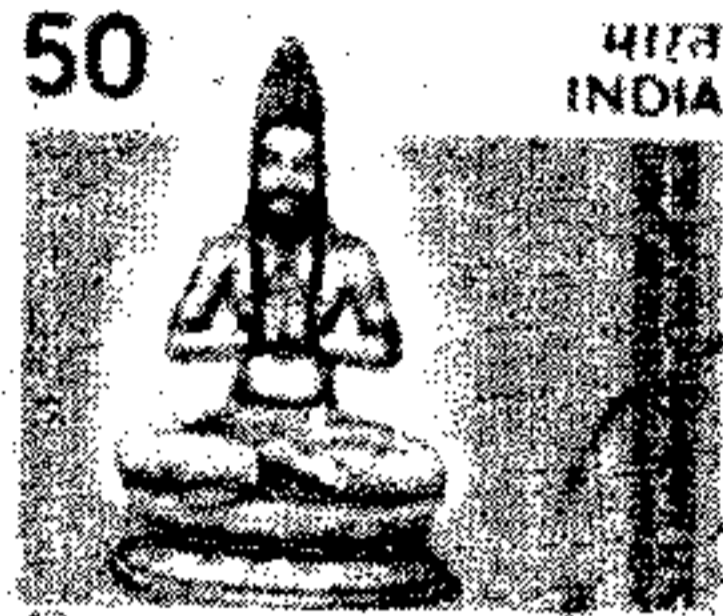
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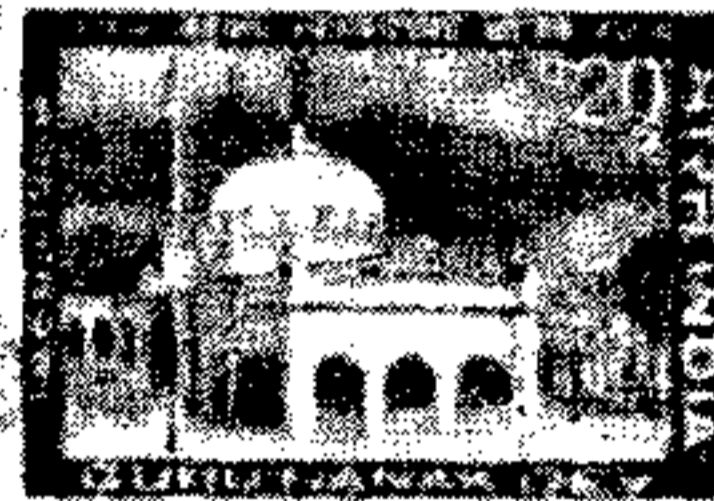
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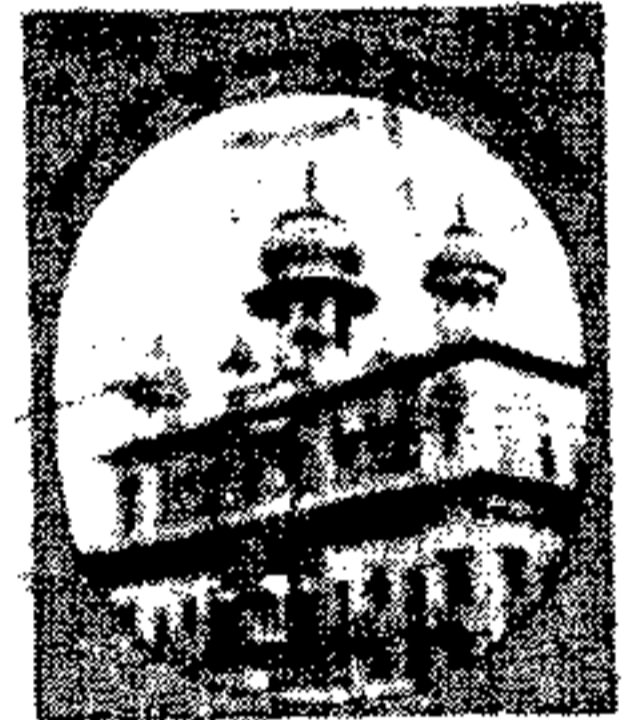
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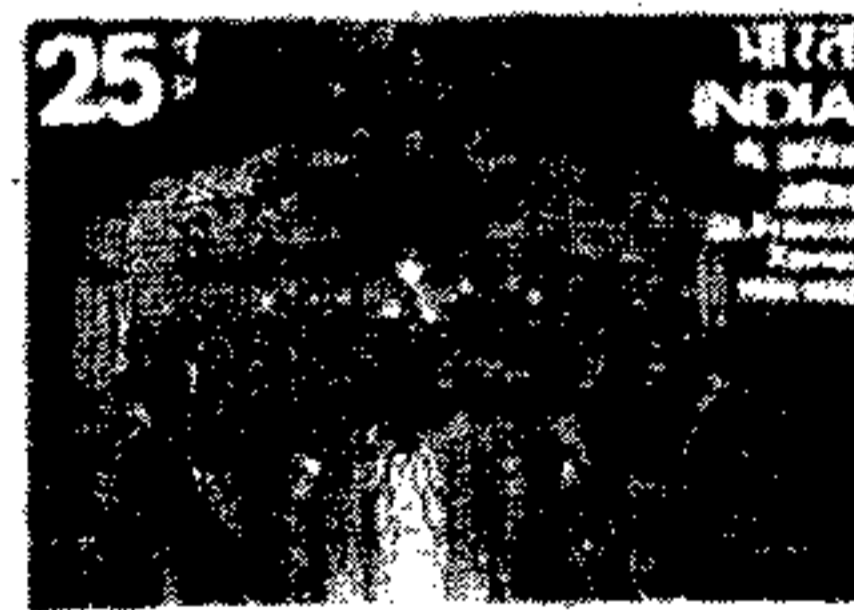
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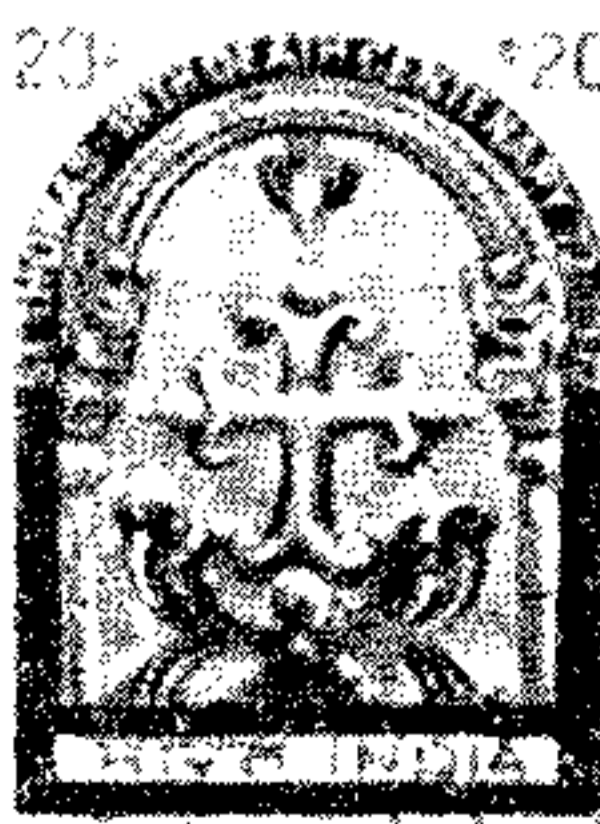
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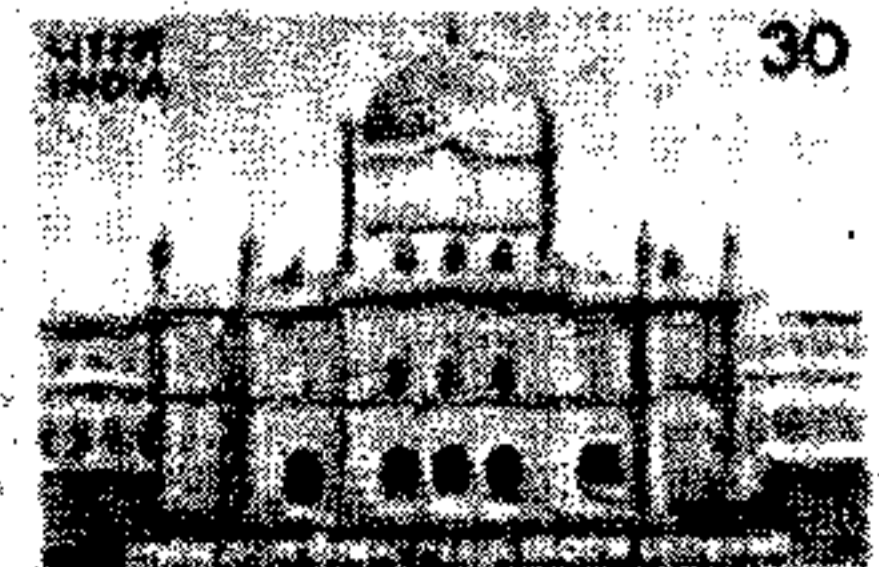


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RELIGIOUS MOTIFS ON INDIAN STAMPS



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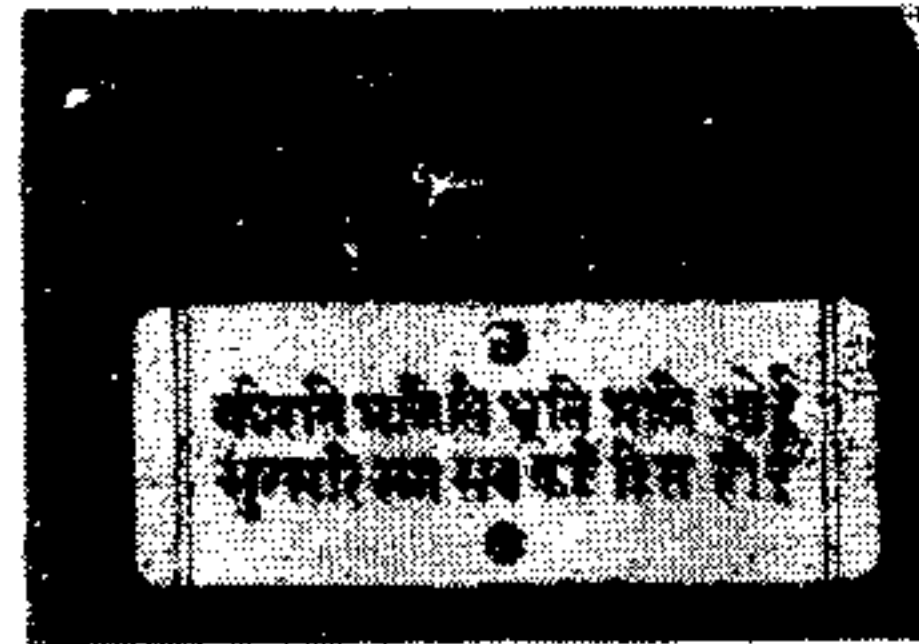
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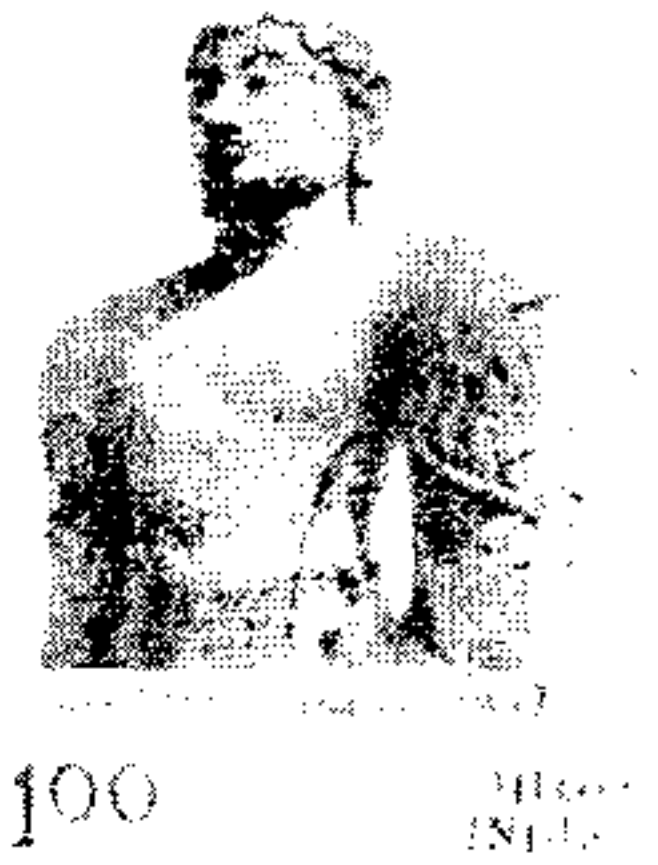
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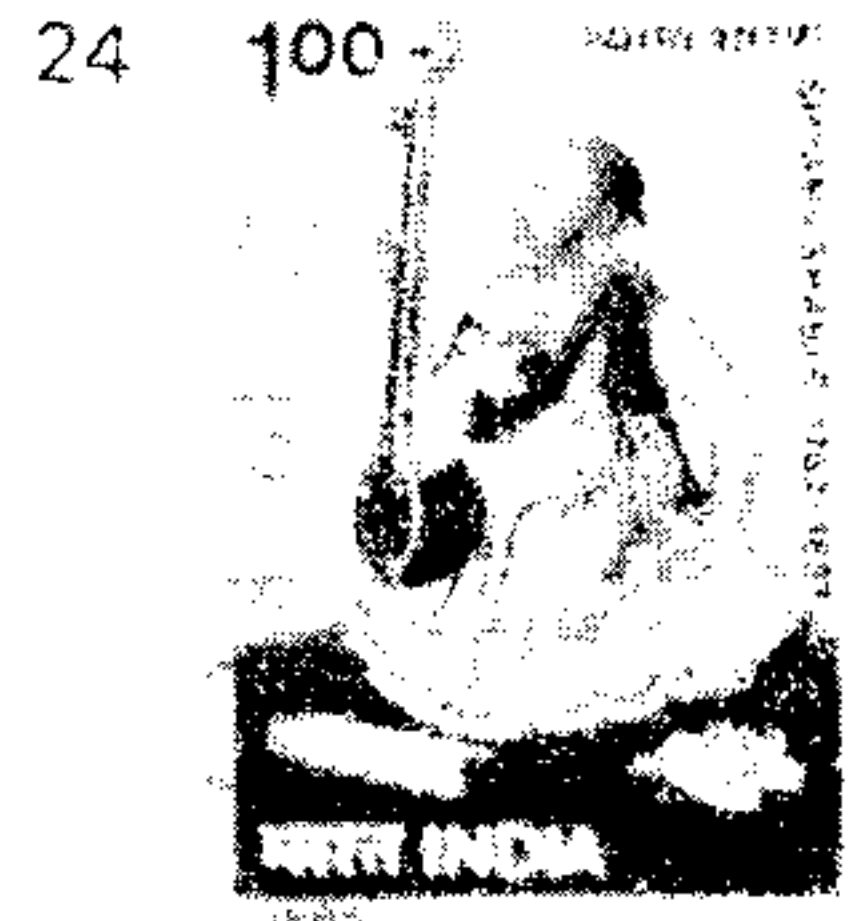
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ABUJHMARH TRIBAL DEVELOPMENT WORK

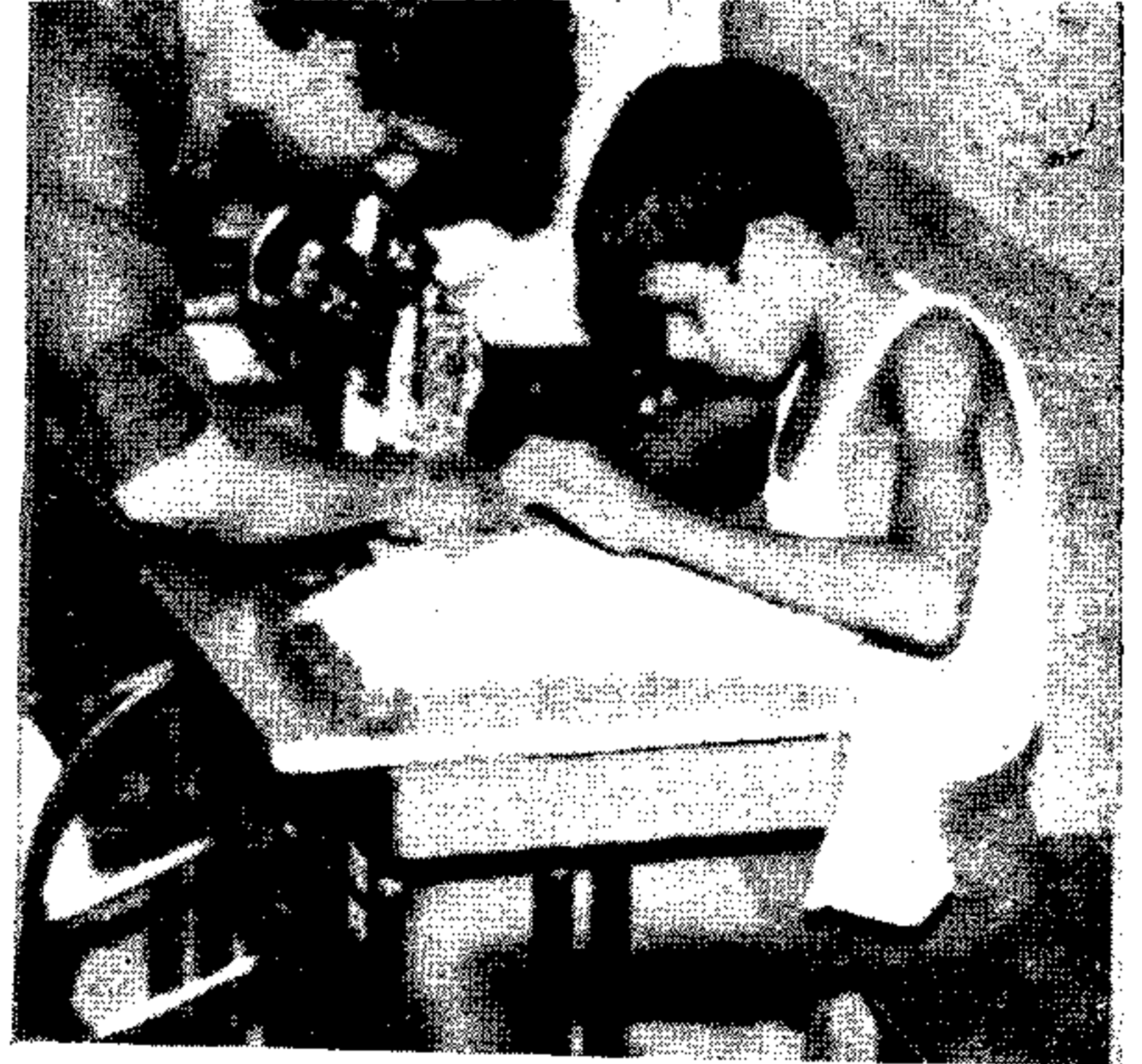


A Swami meets the tribals.

They participate in ashrama celebrations.



Mass-Drill for Students with parents watching.



1. Vivekananda mobile Dispensary
2. Students learning Tailoring
3. Students in Craft Class
4. Students in Dining Hall
5. Ceremonial procession by boys